

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY'S LAST WAR, 1914-1918

(ÖSTERREICH-UNGARNS LETZTER KRIEG, 1914-1918)

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Under the Direction of
Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, and Rudolf Kispling

Edited by
Eduard Czegka, Jaromir Diakow, Maximillian Ehnl, Fritz Franek,
Walther Heydendorff, Rudolf Prochaska, Ernst Wiss Haupt, and
Georg Zöbl

Translated by Stan Hanna

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TABLE OF CONTENTS TO THE SEVENTH VOLUME (1918)

I. The World Situation at the Start of 1918.....	1
A. Political developments in winter 1917-18.....	1
1. The war policies of the contending countries.....	1
a. Tidings of peace from the East and West.....	1
b. Signs of trouble in the camp of the Quadruple Alliance.....	3
c. The Western Powers and Italy.....	7
2. The conclusion of the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest.....	10
3. The fall of Czernin and the decline of Austria-Hungary's standing.....	14
B. Military plans of the two sides.....	16
1. The Central Powers plan to attack.....	17
a. Calculations and decisions of the high commands.....	17
b. The planned use of the Austro-Hungarian Army.....	20
2. The enemy coalition's defensive plan.....	24
II. Austria-Hungary's Armed Forces in the Last Two Years of the War.....	28
A. Consumption and replacement of personnel.....	29
1. In 1917.....	29
2. In 1918.....	34
3. Analysis of the casualties and the available manpower.....	40
B. The last reorganization of the Army.....	50
1. General guidelines.....	50
2. New organization and other changes in the infantry.....	54
3. The horse shortage and the cavalry.....	75
4. Completion of the artillery expansion.....	78
5. Achievements of and limitations on the armaments industry.....	90
6. Development of the air force.....	93
7. New organization of the technical troops.....	99
8. Development of the transportation services.....	106
a. Railroads and railroad troops.....	107
b. Motorization and the supply trains.....	111
9. The medical services.....	112
C. New tactics.....	114
D. Spirit and inner cohesion of our Army.....	118
III. The Occupation of Ukraine.....	124
A. Winter on the Eastern front.....	125
1. Situation between the Black Sea and the Pripyat, 1 January to 18 February 1918.....	125
a. Developments on the Russo-Romanian front.....	125
b. The Army Groups of Böhm-Ermolli and Linsingen.....	132
2. The advance of the Germans and the threat to attack Romania (18 February to the start of March).....	135
3. Austria-Hungary decides to enter Ukraine, 19-27 February.....	138
B. The advance into Ukraine.....	145
1. From Zbrucz to the Black Sea (28 February to mid-March).....	145
2. The race to Odessa.....	152
3. Occupation of the territory between the Bug and Dnieper (mid-March to mid-April).....	154
4. The push into the Donets area and to the Sea of Azov (mid-April to the end of May).....	164
C. The break-up of the former Eastern front (March to mid-June).....	169
IV. The West and the Orient through mid-June.....	173
A. The German offensive in France.....	173
B. The southeastern theaters in the first half of 1918.....	180

1. The Macedonian front.....	180
2. Events in Albania through mid-June.....	184
a. The pause in fighting in winter; the operational plans.....	184
b. French and Italian attacks from the end of April through mid-June.....	188
c. The partisan movement in Serbia in spring 1918.....	192
3. Winter and spring 1918 in Turkey.....	193
V. The Last Offensive of the Aus-Hung. Army.....	197
A. Winter 1918 in the Southwest.....	197
1. New organization of the front.....	197
2. Actions and hardships in the winter months.....	199
3. Development of the operational plan.....	210
a. Suggestions of FM Conrad and orders of the high command.....	210
b. Changes to the plan.....	214
4. Build-up by railroad for the June offensive.....	223
5. Logistical preparations.....	225
6. Actions on the Southwestern front during spring (from the start of April to the start of June).....	233
7. The overall order of battle on 15 June.....	241
8. The revival of Italy.....	259
a. Reconstruction of the Army.....	259
b. Objectives of the leadership and deployment of the forces.....	264
9. The last days before the offensive.....	268
a. Orders for the attack.....	268
b. The battle at the Tonale Pass.....	275
c. The final order unleashes the main assault.....	279
B. The June Battle in Venetia.....	281
1. The first day of battle (15 June).....	281
a. The battle on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau.....	281
b. The attack in the Grappa area.....	294
c. The k.u.k. XXIV Corps digs in on the Montello.....	306
d. The Isonzo Army crosses the Piave.....	312
e. Measures of the higher-level HQ on 15 June.....	322
2. The offensive continues on the Piave (16-18 June).....	326
a. The fighting on 16 June.....	326
b. Decisions and troop movements on 16 June.....	330
c. The Isonzo Army on 17 and 18 June.....	334
d. Fighting on the Montello on 17 and 18 June.....	341
3. Activities of Conrad's Army Group from 16 to 19 June.....	345
4. The turning point of the Piave battle.....	350
5. The Italian counter-offensive, 19-20 June.....	354
a. The Italian attack is repulsed on the Montello.....	354
b. Actions of the Isonzo Army on 19 and 20 June.....	358
6. Boroevic's Army Group withdraws to the east bank of the Piave.....	364
a. The decision to break off the battle.....	364
b. Evacuation of the Montello.....	371
c. The retreat of the Isonzo Army.....	375
7. Aftermath of the battle.....	381
a. Plans, decisions and orders.....	381
b. Fighting on the island at the mouth of the Piave (24 June to 5 July).....	386
c. Italian counterattacks on the mountain front (24 June to 15 July).....	390
8. Observations.....	402
a. The causes of the defeat.....	402
b. Military consequences of the June Battle.....	410
c. The dismissal of FM Conrad.....	411

VI. The Balkans and the East in Summer 1918.....	416
A. The summer campaign in Albania.....	416
1. The attack by the Italians and French.....	416
a. Operational plan of the Entente.....	417
b. Initial actions on 6 July.....	419
c. The Entente thrust to the Semeni (7-13 July).....	421
2. Developments in Albania after the arrival of GO Pflanzer-Baltin.....	428
a. Further plans of the opposing sides.....	428
b. Actions from 14 to 23 July.....	431
3. The counter-offensive by the k.u.k. XIX Corps.....	432
a. Events through 28 July.....	432
b. New decisions by both sides.....	437
c. Retreat of the XVI Italian Corps (30 July-7 August).....	438
d. A pause in operations (8-21 August).....	441
e. The offensive resumes to capture Berat and Fjeri (22-26 August).....	442
f. The fighting ends; further plans.....	446
B. The Macedonian theater of operations in summer 1918.....	449
C. Events in the East through mid-September 1918.....	457
1. The Eastern Army in Ukraine.....	457
a. Military developments from June to mid-September.....	457
b. The economic exploitation of Ukraine.....	460
2. Protection of the Monarchy's eastern borders and the Romanian question (June to mid-September).....	464
VII. The End Approaches.....	467
A. The tide turns on the German Western front.....	467
1. The last German offensive, 15-17 July.....	467
2. The Entente counter-attack, 18 July-14 August.....	474
3. Intervention of the North American Army, 15 August-15 September.....	479
B. The Southwestern front in the high summer of 1918.....	486
1. The situation after the June offensive.....	486
2. Italian pinning attacks in the second half of July.....	488
3. Plans and concerns of the Aus-Hung. leadership.....	493
4. Plans of attack are abandoned; the Belluno meeting of 21 August.....	500
5. Local Italian attacks in August.....	505
6. The k.u.k. Army is kept on the defensive.....	517
7. Events along the Southwestern front in September.....	525
C. The overall military-political situation in summer 1918.....	532
1. The enemy's political and military goals.....	532
2. The outlook for the Central Powers.....	543
a. The domestic political situation.....	543
b. The second meeting of the Emperors at Spa, and Austria-Hungary's peace initiative.....	549
D. The collapse of Bulgaria.....	552
1. The breakthrough battle on the Dobro polje (15-17 September).....	552
2. Bulgaria's separate peace.....	558
3. Events in Albania in the second half of September.....	565
E. Building a new front in the Balkans.....	566
1. The first measures after Bulgaria's separate peace.....	566
2. Fighting in the Vranje-Leskovac area, 3-8 October.....	570
3. Creating FM Kövess' Army Group.....	574
4. Fighting around Nish, 9-12 October.....	580
5. The withdrawal of Armeegruppe Albania.....	583
6. Impact of Bulgaria's collapse in Romania and Ukraine (mid-September to mid-October).....	587
F. The retreat of the German Western armies, 26 September to mid-October.....	591
G. Last actions and surrender of Turkey.....	598
H. The Central Powers reach the end of their strength.....	604

1. The joint peace offer.....	604
2. The domestic political and economic crises in Austria-Hungary.....	606
3. Emperor Charles' manifesto.....	614
VIII. The Collapse of Austria-Hungary.....	618
A. Awaiting the Italian offensive.....	618
1. The Southwestern front in the first three weeks of October.....	618
2. The k.u.k. Army on the eve of the last trial of arms.....	625
a. The order of battle.....	625
b. The material and psychological situation through mid-October.....	660
c. Preparations to evacuate Venetia.....	665
d. Domestic and foreign political developments around mid-October.....	668
e. Evaluation of the situation by the principal commanders.....	675
B. The last defensive battle on the Southwestern front, 24 to 29 October.....	681
1. The Italian plan of attack.....	681
2. The orders of battle.....	686
3. Defensive victory in the Grappa mountains, 24-28 October.....	695
4. Italian pinning attacks on the Asiago plateau, 24-28 October.....	703
5. Mutinies behind the front of 11 th Army.....	705
6. The main allied assault on the Piave, 24-28 October.....	710
a. Preliminary fighting on Papadopoli Island, 24-26 October.....	710
b. The first two days of battle, 27 and 28 October.....	712
c. Mutiny spreads to the front-line troops of Boroevic's Army Group.....	726
d. The day of decision - 29 October.....	744
e. The peace request of 27 October.....	755
f. Secession of the nations.....	759
C. Retreat and disintegration of the Aus-Hung. Southwestern armies, 30 October to 2 November.....	766
1. The 6 th and Isonzo Armies retreat behind the Livenza, 30 and 31 October.....	766
2. Events on the mountain front, 30 and 31 October.....	775
a. Final actions of the Belluno Armeegruppe.....	775
b. The dangerous crisis of FM Krobatin's Army Group.....	783
3. The Italian plan of pursuit and the condition of the Aus-Hung. Southwestern armies.....	789
4. The Italians break through by the Sieben Gemeinde on 1 and 2 November.....	793
5. Armeegruppe Belluno retreats to the Fassana Alps, 1 and 2 November.....	802
6. The 6 th and Isonzo Armies withdraw behind the Tagliamento River, 1 and 2 November.....	806
D. The armistice.....	813
1. The vain attempt to win an immediate armistice.....	813
2. The demands of the enemy coalition.....	818
3. Conclusion of the armistice.....	822
a. The decisive meetings at Vienna.....	822
b. Acceptance of the armistice conditions at the Villa Giusti.....	835
E. The war's end on the Southwestern front.....	841
1. The Italians advance to Trent, 3 and 4 November.....	841
2. Retreat of the Belluno Armeegruppe, 3 and 4 November.....	849
3. Last actions of the 6 th and Isonzo Armies, 3 and 4 November.....	851
4. The men of the Southwestern armies return home.....	863
F. The last weeks of the war on other fronts.....	870
1. The evacuation of Serbia.....	870
a. The enemy commanders' plans for an offensive.....	870
b. FM Kövess decides to retreat.....	874
c. Defensive actions in the Kragujevac-Paracin area, 24 to 26 October.....	880
d. The retreat behind the Danube and the Sava.....	884
2. The disintegration of Kövess' Army Group.....	891
a. The end of the border defense against Serbia.....	891
b. The withdrawal of Pflanzer-Baltin's Armeegruppe from northern Albania and Montenegro.....	897

3. The evacuation of Wallachia.....	901
4. The evacuation of Ukraine and the end of the Eastern Army.....	903
5. The end of the war in the West.....	906
G. The conclusion of peace.....	908
IX. The World War Reviewed in Retrospect.....	911
A. The most important issues of the war.....	911
1. Relative strength and resources of the combatants.....	911
2. Waging war on exterior and interior lines.....	915
3. Questions regarding overall command.....	916
B. The major phases of the war.....	918
1. The period of the greatest military opportunities (in 1914-15).....	918
2. The crisis of the Central Powers (in 1916).....	927
3. The beleaguered fortress (in 1917).....	928
4. The year of decision (1918).....	931
5. Austria-Hungary's armed forces in their last struggle.....	933
X. APPENDICES.....	935

I. The World Situation at the Start of 1918

A. Political developments in winter 1917-18

1. The war policies of the contending countries

a. Tidings of peace from the East and West

The world political situation in the winter of 1917-18 was influenced primarily by the November revolution in Russia and its profound effects. The foreign policy of the new rulers of Russia was "World Revolution." The fighting between states and peoples was to be transformed as soon as possible into a war between classes as envisioned in the Communist Manifesto. Domestic political considerations also compelled the Bolsheviks to put an end to the foreign war as soon as possible. They could be sure of consolidating their power only if they completely dismantled the old Army, which had been falling apart anyway for a long time, and replaced it with a military force which would obey them unconditionally.

The call for peace issued by the government of the People's Commissars on 28 November 1917 was directed at all the warring countries. But it found a somewhat favorable response only from the Central Powers and their allies. At Brest-Litovsk they and the Russians concluded on 15 December an armistice that was initially to last for four weeks (but could be canceled with seven days' notice). Romania, though reluctant, was forced to also participate. As of Christmas 1917 the representatives of the Soviet state, raised to power by the revolution, were negotiating peace terms in the citadel of Brest-Litovsk with the representatives of the Quadruple Alliance, led by the German State Secretary for External Affairs (von Kuhlmann) and the Aus-Hung. Foreign Minister (Graf Czernin). The Russian peace program created pitfalls for the allies. Because of the general situation, Germany and Bulgaria didn't want to unconditionally accept "peace without annexations or indemnities." Austria-Hungary and Turkey feared, not without reason, that the demand for "self-determination" for all nations was a clear attack on the very existence of their states. Nevertheless the Quadruple Alliance, with secret reservations, declared that they could accept the Russian conditions as a basis for discussion as long

as the Western Powers participated with the same intentions. But the Western Powers didn't join in. And so the representatives of the Quadruple Alliance soon had to recognize, at the very latest when People's Commissar Trotsky came to Brest-Litovsk after New Year's Day, that when they accepted the Russian slogans - even with qualifications - they were caught in a net from which it wouldn't be so easy to escape.¹

The Bolsheviks' revolution and their peace appeal "To all the world" awakened considerable excitement among the hungry or starving masses of the central European populations, who yearned for peace. As earlier, the ferment was increased by the pronouncements that came simultaneously from the West, from President Woodrow Wilson. In order to support the new Italian government, the United States of America declared war on Austria-Hungary on 7 December 1917. To the peoples of the Danube Monarchy the President justified this act because their government was completely dependent on Germany. At the same time he referred to his claim, which had already been expressed in the response to the Pope's peace proposal, that the world was by no means hostile to the German people but could never conclude peace with the current rulers of Germany because of the treaties they had broken. A month later, on 8 January 1918, Wilson published his "14 Points", based on a memorandum prepared by a committee which had been studying war aims under the leadership of his friend Colonel House. The points summarized his basic ideas for a future, peaceful world; on 11 February he published five further, more general points. Condensed, the 14 Points were:

1. Renunciation of secret diplomacy
2. Freedom of the seas
3. Freedom of trade
4. Reduction of armaments
5. Impartial adjustment of colonial claims
6. Evacuation of the Russian border states and settlement of all Russian questions
7. Evacuation and restoration of Belgium
8. Evacuation and restoration of northern France plus surrender of Alsace-Lorraine
9. Re-adjustment of Italy's borders along clearly recognized lines of nationality
10. Autonomy for the peoples of Austria-Hungary
11. Evacuation and restoration of Romania, Serbia and

¹ This paragraph, and the rest of the section, follows in general the narrative in Glaise-Horstenau's "Die Katastrophe - Die Zertrümmerung Österreich-Ungarns und das Werden der Nachfolgerstaaten" (Vienna, 1929), pp. 134 ff. We have also taken account of more recent publications.

- Montenegro, plus free access to the sea for Serbia
12. Autonomy for the non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire and opening of the Dardanelles under international guarantees
13. Creation of an independent Poland out of all territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations
14. Association of the nations under an international league.

The demands of the 14 Points were considerably more moderate than those which Wilson's allies would make based on their secret treaties (of which he was unaware), which involved territorial gains and other booty. Although the Entente countries, with the exception of Russia, had no interest in his plans for improving the world, they could exploit Wilson's concepts of freedom and self-determination to the disadvantage of the Quadruple Alliance. Thus the President's program soon became a weapon to undermine the resistance of the Alliance. Moreover, many of Wilson's theses also played into the hands of Bolshevik propagandists. Thus in the winter of 1917-18 peace propaganda from the West and East kindled among the peoples of the Central Powers the revolution which by the end of 1918 would knock the weapons out of the hands of their armies. In the second half of January there was considerable unrest among the masses, which spread over the most important industrial areas from Vienna, Berlin and Munich and had a great impact upon war politics. Cries for bread were drowned by even more fervent appeals for peace and social liberation. From this point on the radicalization of the masses made inexorable progress.

b. Signs of trouble in the camp of the Quadruple Alliance

Germany

Since the start of November 1917 Germany had a new Chancellor - the aged Bavarian Graf von Hertling. He was the leader of the Center Party and drew his ministers from a coalition of parties which supported him (it didn't include the Socialists). From the beginning Hertling's policies encountered fierce resistance from the Prussian-Conservative and Pan-German circles, led by the "Fatherland Party" founded in September by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz. As previously, conflict centered around the issues of war objectives and electoral reform in Prussia. Unfortunately the high command weren't able to refrain from entering the political fighting. Realization that unrestricted submarine

warfare had failed to achieve the desired success depressed military circles no less than the politicians. The situation was casting many shadows on the armed forces. The radicalization of the working class was beginning, although not yet substantially, to corrode the structure of the Army. Desertion and shirking duty were increasing. Troops in the East refused to board trains which were supposed to take them to the West. Hundreds of men disappeared while on journeys from one front to another, or while returning from leave. Russia and the Western Powers competed in efforts to stir up the flames of discontent. Ludendorff's attempt at this late hour to respond with patriotic training was a useless remedy. Extreme economic need stimulated and nourished the destructive forces, both at home and at the front.

Nevertheless the determination of most of the Army and, above all, of the officer corps remained unbroken. Therefore these developments didn't disturb the German OHL's confidence in victory, especially since the collapse of Russia had substantially improved Germany's military position. The OHL didn't believe that a compromise peace was possible. Moreover First Quartermaster General Ludendorff, who was responsible for their policies, didn't even think such a settlement was desirable; in his calculations a war which didn't end in victory was the same as a defeat for Germany. The OHL felt that a successful campaign in the West would not only be the best guarantee of victory in the war but also the surest means to surmount the internal problems which afflicted the nation and the armed forces. This attitude permeated the camp of the right-wing parties which opposed the government. The Emperor strove in vain to restore amicable relations between the civilian leadership and the generals. Finally he found himself completely in the shadow of his commanders, renouncing any real influence over the government. Thus in a very critical hour, when the ship of state was being blown to and fro by competing currents, it didn't have a helmsman who might still have been able to steer it into a safe harbor. Meanwhile Wilson's new accusations against the German ruling circles further undermined the central authority of the Empire.

Austria-Hungary

In the 18th century the historic mission of the Habsburg Monarchy, which since the end of the Middle Ages had been to defend Europe from the Ottoman Turks, was replaced by the no less important task of guarding the West from Muscovite ambitions. Now, when the last Mujiks had left the Carpathian valleys and returned to their own borders due to the inner collapse of

Russia, it seemed as if the peoples of the Danube realm felt that the bonds which held them together in a common cause - their self-defense - were no longer needed and could be abolished. Among the Slavic nationalities the Czechs took the lead in completely renouncing the Monarchy and the ruling house; in the Epiphany Resolution (6 January 1918) they demanded unrestricted independence for themselves and the Slovaks, although at first they received very little response from Slovakian circles. Among the South Slavs the idea of a federal union of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had been gaining strength since the Pact of Corfu in spring 1917. In an attempt to at least avoid completely alienating the Poles, the Vienna government in 1917 forcefully advocated in Berlin and Kreuznach the creation of a Polish state. That summer the issue of the oath of allegiance led to serious disputes between the German administration in Warsaw and the Polish Auxiliary Corps, leading in turn to the internment of the Polish leader Pilsudski in Magdeburg. Due mainly to urging from Vienna, in October a regency was established at Warsaw, along with a ministry which had restricted powers. But even among the mostly pro-Austrian conservatives in Galicia the realization was growing that after the fall of Russia their nation could only lose if the Central Powers were victorious. In 1918 they still advocated giving the crown of Poland to Charles of Austria. But Ludendorff's desire to annex a considerable part of Congress (Russian) Poland of course greatly diminished the attractiveness of such plans.

Point 10 of Wilson's war goals pertained to Austria-Hungary. It is evident from the history of its drafting that Point 10 did not envision the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy, but only a wide-reaching federalization. Nonetheless, it was still a disruptive factor. Even the Magyars, whose international standing was so closely connected with the fate of the Danube Monarchy, began to turn away once pressure from Russia subsided. Proletarian elements united with a group of dissatisfied intellectuals around Count Michael Karolyi to offer increasing resistance against the war, the union with Austria, and the alliance with Germany. A simultaneous change in the attitude of the German-Austrian Social Democrats would also eventually have serious consequences. For some time now their fraternal socialist parties of the other nationalities, with some exceptions, had been drawn onto the battlefield of the national struggles, but the Germans had remained true until now to the "Great Austrian" program of their leader Karl Renner. But in fall 1917 the radical socialist Otto Bauer returned from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp, and his views began to prevail. He believed that the German-Austrian proletariat as a revolutionary

class shouldn't stand in the way of the striving of the nationalities for independence, and that the downfall of the Habsburg Monarchy could only be advantageous to his party since German Austria then would probably join industrialized Germany where the Social Democrats were already strong. Simultaneously the party also took a more pacifistic position. Thus a noticeable crack appeared in the determination of the Germans in Austria to defend the state which they had served more faithfully than any other group, and to stand at the side of the German Empire until the end.

Bulgaria and Turkey

In 1915 Bulgaria had hoped to achieve its territorial ambitions in the Balkans with a short campaign at Germany's side. Now the conquered territories had already been behind the Bulgarian fronts for a long time, but the indecisive war was still dragging on and causing severe disappointment. This state, which was barely four decades old and whose economic, financial and political development moreover had been retarded by the costly Balkan wars, couldn't keep up with the demands of the World War. The state administration began to fail. It was difficult to supply the Army and the people, not because there was a shortage of food but because the distribution service was faulty. A bad harvest in 1917 exacerbated the shortages. Subversive activity by the Bolsheviks played a considerable part in the outbreak of riots by hungry crowds at Sofia and in various industrial areas at the start of 1918. General depression and disappointment grew from week to week within the Army, which lacked so many resources and which also offered fertile ground for the enemy's zealous propaganda efforts.²

In Turkey the Ottoman state administration was shaken to its foundations by the heavy and costly fighting at Gallipoli, in the Caucasus, in Iraq and in Syria against three great military powers (Russia, England and France). Firm government and central military leadership on the Western model were impossible in this vast Empire because the state administration failed to meet the needs of the modern world, the finances were ruined, the transportation and communications networks were inadequate, and travel was unsafe. In order to ensure that the Army received the bare minimum of their requirements, the civilian population had

2 Dieterich, "Weltkriegsende an der mazedonischen Front" (Oldenburg, 1928), p. 11. Nédeff, "Les operations en Macédoine. L'épopée de Doiran 1915-1918" (Sofia, 1927), pp. 212 and 293. Kirch, "Krieg und Verwaltung in Serbien und Mazedonien 1916-1918" (Stuttgart, 1928), p. 60.

to go hungry. But even so the soldiers were badly under-nourished; 100,000 combat troops in east Anatolia alone were lost each winter to hunger, sickness and exhaustion. The inherited soldierly virtues could no longer withstand this malady.

Moreover many national groups were becoming dissatisfied, especially the Arabs who'd assembled under the Emir of Mecca and were waging war against their co-religionists with British money and British weapons. The fronts in Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq could be saved only by expending the country's last strength at the last minute (and with the help of Turkey's allies).³ Nevertheless, the Turks not only wanted to recover the Caucasian territories they'd lost to Russia in the war of 1877-78, but even hoped to add further areas inhabited by Turkic-speaking peoples to their state.

c. The Western Powers and Italy

The nations of Western Europe also were by no means untouched by material and spiritual distress caused by the war that had already lasted more than three years.

In France Painlevé's cabinet fell on 13 November 1917 after news arrived of the outbreak of the second Russian revolution. The opposition had accused the ministry of being too lenient to the "defeatists", and Interior Minister Malvy in particular of aiding and abetting them. Clemenceau, at the age of 76, came to power with the slogan "War, nothing but war!" He declared that under his cabinet there would be no more pacifist campaigns or German intrigues, no treason or near-treason. The guilty would be punished by military courts. Caillaux, the leader of the peace party, was arrested at the start of 1918, the French newspaper publisher Bolo Pasha shot as a traitor to the fatherland, and Malvy prosecuted for "misuse of power." The "old tiger" was determined to use extreme methods.

In Italy the great defeat at Flitsch-Caporetto had also led to a change of government. Orlando was at the head of the new cabinet. As we have already described in the narrative of the fall campaign (in Volume VI), the Army and people rallied with astonishing speed from the deep depression caused by the collapse of the front. Along the battle-lines the troops, led by

3 Steuber, "Jildirim - Deutsche Streiter auf heiligem Boden" (Oldenburg, 1922), pp. 78 ff. Pomianowski, "Der Zusammenbruch des Osmanischen Reiches" (Vienna, 1927), pp. 263 and 319.

determined leaders and encouraged by the arrival of allied Entente units, grappled once more with their opponents. On the home front the politicians created a "national defense coalition" which pledged to carry on the war until the Habsburg Monarchy was crushed; for the first time they established relations with the South Slav exiles in London.

"Defeatism" also caused considerable concern for British Prime Minister Lloyd-George. At the end of November Lord Lansdowne declared in an open letter that it was high time to conclude peace. Only with great difficulty was Lloyd-George able to weaken some of the impact which this warning cry had everywhere. Just before Christmas he had to admit that the country still faced difficult times because of the food shortage and the difficulty of finding replacements for the Army. Like the French statesmen, he turned down Russia's invitation to participate in negotiations for a general peace. But pacifist sentiment in the trade unions forced Lloyd-George on 5 January 1918 to deny that England was bound by secret treaties, and to announce his own peace plan which seemed considerably more moderate than earlier pronouncements; among other points, it denied any intention of destroying Austria-Hungary.

Nevertheless, Lloyd-George was at one with Clemenceau and, as already noted, also with Ludendorff in his conviction that a genuine compromise peace was an impossibility. France persisted in demanding from Germany the "Imperial territories" of Alsace and Lorraine as well as - if possible - the creation of a buffer state on the western bank of the Rhine. England couldn't imagine ending the war without rendering the German Empire militarily and economically powerless, and without forcing the Germans to give up their colonies and their position on the high seas. Italy insisted upon the gains guaranteed by the Treaty of London. And all three states, now joined by Venizelos' Greece as a fourth partner, had been promised a rich share of the booty they hoped to extract from Turkey. Further-more there was a demand for the creation of an independent Polish state, to be composed of territory taken from all three of the partitioning powers, which was a threat to the existence of the Central Powers. All these war goals had devoted adherents, even in socialist circles. This was demonstrated during a meeting of international labor associations (of the Entente and neutral states) which was held at London in February; here, cloaked in respectable platitudes, all the demands of the governing circles - as described above - were endorsed.

The Entente correctly recognized that Germany was the key member

of the opposing coalition, and so even peace feelers that involved no obligations to either side were unable to make progress over the unbridgeable chasm which separated the Hohenzollern Empire from their enemies in the West. This was also the fate of German statements that they might be willing to evacuate Belgium, an issue of some concern to the peoples of the Entente states, but of less interest to their leaders.⁴

For a while the contacts which continued between the Western powers and Austria-Hungary in the winter of 1917-18 seemed more promising. The most important of these episodes - and perhaps the most significant peace initiative during the World War - was a meeting which took place in Geneva at the initiative of the British shortly before Christmas. It involved the former Aus-Hung. ambassador to London, Graf Mensdorff, and the Afrikaner General Smuts who was a close confidant of the English Prime Minister. But the mission of the Boer general was only an attempt to induce Austria-Hungary with rather wide-ranging promises to conclude a separate peace; Mensdorff's suggestion that Germany should also be approached met with refusal. The outcome in regards to France was the same in February 1918 when the Aus-Hung. diplomat Graf Revertera once again met with French Major Armand at Freiburg in Switzerland.⁵ On this occasion the representative of Austria-Hungary asked whether France would be willing to forego the re-conquest of Alsace-Lorraine, and thus surmount the most substantial obstacle to peace. Clemenceau responded at the start of March with an emphatic "No." The great German offensive in France, which will shortly be described in outline, put an end to an exchange of letters between Emperor Charles and Wilson, which hadn't gained any particular success due to the American President's hostility toward Europe. All these episodes, as well as others of lesser importance, made it clear that the Western Powers - despite the urging of the emigrant leaders - still wished to preserve the Habsburg Monarchy. But the hard price would be separation from Germany, which wasn't feasible due to the numerous ties between the two Empires.

4 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Of course the "concern" of the English people over the fate of Belgium had been created in the first place by the hypocritical propaganda of their government, which pretended that the German invasion of Belgium was the main reason why the United Kingdom had gone to war.

5 The previous meeting of these two men had been in August 1917, as narrated in Volume VI.

2. The conclusion of the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest

In the stubborn fight which the Entente statesmen waged against the obvious pacifist tendencies within their own camp, the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk were also psychologically important. The Western Powers and Italy refused to participate. Thus it was all the more important for the Central Powers to exploit the events at Brest-Litovsk to increase "defeatism" in the Entente camp, but also to prove to their own peoples with a very visible deed that guilt for prolonging the horrors of war was to be charged not to Berlin and Vienna, but to London and Paris. Thus the political significance of this entire process shouldn't be underestimated, even though the ultimate fate of any settlement in the East would still depend upon the outcome of the war as a whole.

Emperor Charles, who was convinced of the psychological importance of developments at Brest-Litovsk, instructed his Foreign Minister Czernin to conclude a peace treaty without fail. But in his quest, Czernin encountered determined resistance from the OHL, which doubted whether Soviet Russia was a trustworthy negotiating partner. Furthermore the OHL didn't want to abandon their demand for the Baltic Sea provinces, and above all wanted to quickly clarify the situation in the East, if necessary by force, so they could make as many units as possible free for the West. Germany's civilian government held a middle position between these two parties. Numerous differences of opinion on the questions of peace and of war aims arose on a daily basis between the two Imperial powers. During meetings at Berlin in the middle of the Brest negotiations (at the start of February), Czernin therefore was compelled to ask the Germans to indicate which war goals they expected the Danube Monarchy to support in order to keep the alliance alive. This question wouldn't go away, even though it was clear that it was the basis of the disputes between Berlin and Vienna.

Trotsky was soon aware that his opponents were being weakened by their lack of unity. He took advantage of this opportunity and addressed himself louder than ever directly to the peoples of the Central Powers, encouraged by the echoes he'd caused during the January strikes in their Empires. But fortunately the destructive process which was enveloping the territories of the ex-Tsar's realm finally gave the Quadruple Alliance an exit from the impasse caused by dissension on their own side. One after another, large parts of the Russian Empire declared their independence - Ukraine on 20 November, Finland on 4 December, and

Georgia, Turkestan and Siberia in January. The Ukrainian delegation had originally come to Brest-Litovsk together with the Soviets. But they soon declared that "Socialist" - but not Bolshevik - Ukraine was completely separate from Soviet Russia. The goal of the Central Powers was now to conclude peace with this independent Ukraine. If they succeeded, Austria-Hungary would no longer have a border with the Bolsheviks, and thus the Germans wouldn't be limited in their dealings with the latter by their allies' considerations. The Ukrainians were promised the district of Cholm, which for centuries had been a bone of contention between them and the Poles. In a secret clause, Austria-Hungary furthermore promised that eastern Galicia, in which the Ruthenes (Ukrainians) were the majority population, would become a separate Austrian Crown-land. In return the Ukrainians promised to deliver by 1 August at least one million tons of grain. Eventually the Central Powers would have to procure this grain themselves, and then only half of what had been promised. For in the very hours of the night of 8-9 February in which the "Bread Peace" was concluded with Ukraine at Brest-Litovsk, the "Rada" (the government at Kiev which had sent the Ukrainian delegation) was being overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

On 10 February Trotsky broke off the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, declaring that the conditions of the Quadruple Alliance were unacceptable, but that Russia regarded the war as over. Although he hoped that the swift intervention of the German proletariat would save him from surrendering to the war aims of the OHL, he was to be disappointed. On the contrary, Germany had now gained a free hand in Soviet Russia.

The OHL asserted that Trotsky's declaration amounted to a denunciation of the armistice; Emperor William and the Imperial government agreed.⁶ The Germans let the seven-day grace period elapse, and on 18 February their Eastern armies advanced against the Soviet state. Now in Petrograd the Bolsheviks finally agreed with Lenin's long-held conviction that they would have to accept the "imperialists'" peace-terms because only thus would Russia gain the freedom to create a socialist state. The Russians appeared one more time - no longer led by Trotsky - at Brest-Litovsk. On 3 March they signed, under protest, a treaty which obliged them to leave Courland, Lithuania and Poland in the sphere of influence of the Central Powers, to evacuate Turkish territory, and to recognize the independence of Finland, Livonia,

⁶ Ludendorff, "Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918" (Berlin, 1919), pp. 446 ff. K.F. Nowak, "Die Aufzeichnungen des Generalmajors Max Hoffmann" (Berlin, 1929), Vol. II, pp. 214 ff.

Estonia, Ukraine and the Caucasus.⁷

The conditions imposed on the Russians were far less harsh than those which the Entente dictated to their defeated opponents a year later in the suburbs of Paris. But there was a glaring contradiction between the principles which the Central Powers had originally espoused (though with reservations) and the actual settlement. This fact was already being exploited by the Entente military council which met at Versailles between 30 January and 2 February. And there were unfortunate consequences within the countries that made up the Quadruple Alliance. The parties of the Left were increasingly mistrustful of their own governments; the radicals were given new ammunition for their propaganda, which would continue to have an effect until the final collapse.

Moreover the "Bread Peace" destroyed the remaining good will which the Poles still felt for Austria-Hungary. The Austrian Poles joined the opposition. Kucharzewski's cabinet in Warsaw resigned. The Polish legion troops stationed in Bukovina sought to break through the front to join the Polish military units forming behind the Russian lines.

Simultaneously with the campaign against Soviet Russia, the Germans - who'd been asked for help against the Bolsheviks by the Rada which had fled from Kiev - began to advance from Kovel into Ukraine. The Austro-Hungarians played no part in the former operation, feeling no obligation to do so since they had no common frontier with Soviet Russia. But they also hesitated to take part in the Ukraine campaign, since the young Emperor - like the pacifists and socialists of his own country - was determined to avoid re-kindling the war in the East. But the urgent need for Ukrainian grain finally compelled the government at Vienna to let their troops also march forward. This campaign, in which Aus-Hung divisions advanced through Odessa to the Sea of Azov and into the Don basin by mid-April, is described in Part III of this volume.

From the extreme north-western part of the former Tsarist Empire, the Finns had already contacted Germany in summer 1917 to solicit help for their eventual struggle for independence against the Russians. Although the Soviet government did recognize Finland's independence, in January 1918 the remaining Russian troops in the country took over the southern areas. The question of German assistance became urgent. In March German troops, in agreement with Sweden, occupied the Åland Islands. On 4 April GM Graf von

7 The texts of the treaties with Russia and Ukraine appear in an appendix to this Volume.

der Goltz with a small division landed at Hangö; together with the north Finnish national militia of General Baron Mannerheim they liberated the country from the Bolsheviks in six weeks.

The advance of the Central Powers onto Russian soil also led to the conclusion of peace with Romania. Agreement on the terms wasn't easy. Based on a suggestion by Foreign Minister Czernin, Emperor Charles - who was firmly committed to ending the war - had sent the former Aus-Hung. Military Attaché in Bucharest, General Staff Colonel Ritter von Randa, to the Romanian camp. This emissary warned King Ferdinand through intermediaries about the danger posed to monarchical governments everywhere by the Bolsheviks' desire for international revolution, and asserted that if the Romanians sued for peace they would receive honorable terms. It was even conceivable that they could become allies of the Central Powers without having to bear arms against their former partners (the Western powers and Italy). In response the King asked whether the Emperor was speaking for the entire Quadruple Alliance, and was told that if the Romanians took a step in the direction indicated they were sure to receive favorable and honorable treatment from all four allied countries. At the same time (on 4 February 1918) negotiations resumed at Focșani, although only between military representatives, to review the conditions of the armistice since the situation had been altered by the greatly deteriorating relationship between Romania and Soviet Russia. The Central Powers, and Germany in particular, were determined to win a free hand in the East and offered the Romanians the choice between war and peace. The OHL, which always adopted a sharper tone, was already preparing to resume hostilities in cooperation with the Aus-Hung. high command. Several ultimatums were issued, then Czernin met personally with King Ferdinand at the railroad station of Racaciuni in Moldavia, and finally the allies announced that the armistice was coming to an end. Only at this point did the Romanians yield.

Part III of this volume, which deals with the Eastern front, will describe how the Central Powers sought to quicken the slow pace of the negotiations (which went on for a month) with military pressure.

Averescu's Ministry first signed the preliminary Peace of Buftea (on 5 March 1918), after which they gave way to a pro-German cabinet under Marghiloman. Nevertheless the negotiations were prolonged, not because of Romania but due to dissension between members of the Quadruple Alliance, this time Bulgaria and Turkey. The Bulgarians said they would forego annexing all of Dobruja

only if they received border rectifications from the Turks along the Maritza River. Finally Bulgaria had to be satisfied with just southern Dobruja; the northern part of the territory would remain under the joint supervision of the entire Alliance until the Turkish-Bulgarian dispute was cleared up. This solution delivered a further blow to Bulgaria's willingness to continue the war. Meanwhile the Peace of Bucharest was signed on 7 May.⁸ The Romanians surrendered not only Dobruja, but also some parcels of territory along their border with Hungary, at the latter's insistence. But in return they had prospects of receiving Bessarabia, which had seceded from Russia based on a decree by a revolutionary committee. The Romanian Army had to be reduced to twelve divisions. The Quadruple Alliance partners were promised a share of the country's natural resources, and their armies would occupy Wallachia until the peace was ratified.

3. The fall of Czernin and the decline of Austria-Hungary's standing

The Treaty of Bucharest was signed for Austria-Hungary not by Graf Czernin, but by Baron Burian who once more took over the Ballhausplatz on 16 April. Czernin had departed under tragic circumstances. On 2 April, in an address to the Vienna municipal council, he stated that Clemenceau's desire for the German territory of Alsace-Lorraine was the principal barrier to peace, thereby inadvertently alluding to the hitherto secret discussions between Reuter and Armand. The "old tiger" Clemenceau, thirsty for revenge, thereupon revealed the discussion about the future of the territory in the secret "Sixtus letter" of 24 March 1917. Although Czernin had encouraged Emperor Charles' negotiations with his brother-in-law Sixtus, he had known nothing about this letter. Carried away by his own temperament, Czernin stood openly in conflict with his own Emperor as well as with Clemenceau. There were fierce recriminations between the sovereign and the minister, in which long-standing tensions burst out. The clash, in which for a time Czernin suggested that his Imperial master should abdicate, ended with a change in the leadership of foreign affairs.

Czernin's carelessness and its result proved to have fateful consequences for the Monarchy and the ruling house in more than one respect. Due to the unfortunate manner in which the Sixtus Affair became public, the Germans in Austria received the impression that the Emperor had secretly tried to separate

⁸ The text of the treaty appears in an appendix to this volume.

himself from Germany; this severely shook the position of the dynasty within the German Hereditary Lands. Ill feeling was yet more widespread within the ruling circles of the German Empire itself. To appease the Germans, on 10 May Emperor Charles met with them in Spa, where the OHL had moved their headquarters at the start of March. He had to agree to a very close political, military and economic union between the two Empires, which was to continue after the war ended. It is true that fulfillment of this agreement was dependent upon adoption of the "Austro-Polish solution", which was unlikely due to sentiment in Germany. But the published reports of the outcome of the Spa conference spoke only about "completing and strengthening the alliance", without mentioning any reservations. Therefore it was believed that a Middle-European Empire was being formed, which was anathema to the nationalities of the Danube Monarchy (including the Magyars, but excluding the Germans). Prevention of this development was one of the most important war aims of the Entente and of North America.

Undoubtedly Austria-Hungary's international standing suffered considerable damage from these developments, all the more so since circles hostile to the Monarchy had already been growing much stronger within the Entente camp. Northcliffe's Propaganda Ministry, created in London in February 1918, had from its inception not hesitated to resort to the slogan "Liberation of the peoples oppressed by the Habsburgs" in their war of ideas against the Central Powers. This testified to the hopelessness of all attempts to date to separate Austria-Hungary from Germany and to force the Italians to modify the deadly demands against the Danube Monarchy which were part of the Treaty of London. The British Foreign Minister Balfour was still not inclined to deliver a formal death sentence against the Habsburg realm, but he let Northcliffe's propaganda continue. In these same weeks the efforts of Italy and the Yugoslav emigration to move closer together bore their first fruits; the initial great congress of "peoples oppressed by the Habsburgs" met from 9 to 11 April on the Capitol Hill in Rome, where there were further signs of reconciliation between Italy and the Yugoslav delegates.

Shortly before this, Northcliffe had succeeded in winning the Italian General Staff as allies in his fight against the existence of Austria-Hungary. The Italian high command became the starting point for subversive activity against the Danube Monarchy and, above all, against its Army. "A large printing establishment in Reggio Emilia produced thousands of pamphlets each day in all the national languages of Austria-Hungary; they were slung into the opposing trenches using trench mortars, left

at Austrian listening posts by "propaganda patrols", or distributed from airplanes over the k.u.k. armies and over wide stretches of the interior. Other refined techniques were also in use - record players set up between the lines to play national songs, and many kinds of personal temptations. The most effective of the latter was a display of loaves of bread, hoisted on bayonets in the trenches to taunt the hungry Habsburg troops. A most dangerous weapon, wielded with an accomplished style, threatened the spirit of the Austro-Hungarian field forces in the days after the Rome congress."⁹

To the other serious dangers which menaced Austria-Hungary and its armed forces after spring 1918 was added the enmity of Clemenceau; once the failed Sixtus mission had been publicized he was far too great a hater to forgive Emperor Charles and his Empire in the wake of the tragic confrontation that Easter.

Perhaps when Czernin gave his speech to the Vienna municipal council he held the justifiable opinion that the time for seeking compromise had passed anyway, and that the decision was again to be sought with guns. On 21 March, in fact, the guns did begin to thunder on French soil, more heavily than ever before. With regret, Balfour had already decided on 11 January that he could hardly hope to bridge the gap between the war aims of the two parties. Meanwhile inflexible men like Clemenceau and Ludendorff had finally defeated the advocates of compromise, who existed in all camps. Among the ruling classes their influence was to have a strong and lasting effect, nowhere more so than in Austria-Hungary, whose fate would be decided this year.

B. Military plans of the two sides

1. The Central Powers plan to attack

a. Calculations and decisions of the high commands

Undisturbed by the purely political activity which reigned in the warring states during the winter of 1917-18, their General Staffs were early in developing very thorough plans for the military actions in 1918. The Central Powers' high commands proved that they were interested only in concluding peace quickly in the East, so they could transfer units no longer needed on that front to the West and Southwest. The German OHL hoped that if

⁹ Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 203

successful they would keep the North American Army, which was still being formed and was already encountering problems in crossing the Atlantic due to the shipping shortage and the submarine menace, from effectively taking the place of the vanished Russian units during 1918. The k.u.k. high command had similar considerations on the Southwestern front. Thus to the Central Powers it now seemed possible that early and powerful attacks could force their opponents in the West and Southwest to make peace.

But the striking power of the armies of the Quadruple Alliance was already considerably diminished after three and a half years of war. The most important characteristics of the Aus-Hung. armed forces, especially their inner cohesion and effectiveness, will be discussed in the next section. In spring 1918 the Army consisted of 65 infantry and 12 dismounted cavalry divisions plus 12 independent brigades. The prominent men within the OHL, whose judgment was of the greatest importance for decisions regarding the overall conduct of the war, reckoned that the fighting power of the k.u.k. Army was no longer particularly strong. In this context GFM Hindenburg was even more skeptical than his First Quartermaster General.¹⁰ GdA von Krafft, the Chief of Staff to the 14th German Army, had many opportunities during the World War to work with Aus-Hung. formations, most recently in the offensive of fall 1917; when he returned from Venetia on 14 December 1917 he reported that although the performance of the k.u.k. troops was very uneven, "some of them are quite good and could also be employed in the West."¹¹

By the end of 1917 the Bulgarians had called up practically all of their available manpower, even including soldiers of other nationalities (such as Turks, Greeks and Serbs). About 80% of the male population between the ages of 18 and 45 were in military service.¹² The successful defensive fighting in 1917 and the influence of the attached German command HQ had enhanced the self-confidence of the Bulgarians. But the Army, which had been in the field essentially since the year 1912, was tired of

10 Hindenburg, "Aus meinem Leben" (Leipzig, 1920), p. 297.
Ludendorff, "Kriegs-erinnerungen", p. 432

11 Based on a letter from the German Research Institute for War and Military History to the Austrian Military Archive (Potsdam, 11 June 1936).

12 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: However, this figure is somewhat misleading. In Bulgaria railroad workers and others who held essential civilian positions were technically called up but stayed on their regular jobs.

the war. They were also poorly clothed and insufficiently fed. Their discontent was fanned by the unresolved question of Dobruja, which created rancor against their allies, as did the withdrawal from Macedonia of a substantial percentage of the German troops (who anyway made up only the equivalent of about two divisions), who had to be replaced by Bulgarians drawn from the Romanian front. Nevertheless, the OHL believed that although the Bulgarian Army (of 14 infantry divisions plus a cavalry division) might no longer be able to carry out a full-scale offensive they still had enough strength to stand reliably on the defensive.

Turkey was greatly relieved by the collapse of Russia along the Caucasus front. But because of the Turks' efforts to recover former territories which had been ceded to the Russians in 1878 (around Kars, Ardahan and Batum) they didn't shift units from Armenia to the greatly endangered fronts in Iraq and Palestine. The situation was further complicated by the confusing conditions in the Trans-Caucasus, and the uprisings by the Armenians and Georgians. The Turkish Army lacked resources of all kinds - food, weapons and other military equipment. It was at the end of its strength. The result was massive desertion, even among the hitherto distinguished troops from Anatolia. Thus the actual combat strength of the 46 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions had shrunk to an alarming level. Nevertheless Turkey adhered faithfully to the alliance.

The three and a half years of war also had some effect on the German Army, which consisted of 253 divisions (including several still-mounted cavalry units). The high command was concerned by threats to morale, by the shrinking number of replacement troops, by the limited mobility of the units, and by the shortages of tanks and of petroleum.¹³ There was no hope that the situation in these areas would improve; it could only worsen. But at the start of 1918 the Army was no doubt still strong enough to carry out a large-scale offensive which might decide the war. Although consideration was given to a strategy of staying strictly on the defensive (while threatening to attack), this course undoubtedly would have led to defeat, since time was working on the side of the Entente.

Now that the armistice had been concluded with Russia and thus it could be hoped that strong forces would be available from the East, where should the decisive attack be launched?

The decision to attack in the West

13 Kuhl, "Der Weltkrieg 1914-18" (Berlin, 1929), Vol. II, p. 295

An attack on Salonika to drive the Entente units out of the Balkans couldn't decide the war. A strong common effort by Austria-Hungary and Germany against Italy received serious consideration within the German high command. But their staff at Kreuznach believed that the chances of success weren't very great now that the Italians were stationed along the Piave, since an attack from Tyrol could no longer do as much damage to the enemy flank as had been the case when the Italians were still fighting on the Isonzo. Therefore almost all factors indicated that the next offensive should take place in the West. The army commanders on this front also stated that an attack was urgently necessary; by seeking salvation with an assault they could put an end to the nerve-wracking defensive fighting.¹⁴ Unrestricted submarine warfare would continue, but the German leaders recognized that the crisis which it caused Great Britain in 1917 had already been to a large degree surmounted by the island Kingdom. Thus once more the main effort to win a decision would be made by the Army.

Even before this decision for an offensive in the West had been approved by the Emperor, the Imperial Chancellor Hertling had concurred at the start of January.¹⁵ Thus the OHL was strengthened for the decisive campaign by a united government; the assault would start in the second half of March.

To be as strong as possible for the planned offensive, the OHL transferred all available German units from the East, the Southwest and the Balkans. 40 divisions moved to the West from Russia and 8 more from Venetia; several detachments were even withdrawn from the small force in Macedonia. Thus it was possible to increase the strength of the German Western front to 192 divisions, 11 more than the enemy possessed. For the first time in the World War the Germans in France were stronger than their opponents.

But large forces still had to be left in the East due to the unforeseen delays in the peace negotiations, the necessity of invading the Baltic Sea provinces, Belorussia and Ukraine, and the stubbornness of Romania (which held out until the start of March). Thus in mid-March there were still about 50 German divisions pinned down in the East to secure the "armed peace" (although the majority of their troops were over 35 years of age). The younger personnel had been used to build up the divisions in the West. The Eastern armies also had to give up

14 Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", p. 434

15 Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 291

many of their transportation assets, so that 13 of their divisions were now static. Thus it was possible to equip 52 "attack divisions" in the West with greater resources. On the other hand, the "positional divisions" on the Western front had very limited maneuverability. The total strength of the German Western armies (including line of communications troops) in mid-March 1918 was 3 ½ million men; the Eastern armies had 1 million.¹⁶

Since the German forces in the West intended to deliver the decisive attack on their own, their allies in the other theaters of operation were supposed to stand guard, basically retaining their current positions and battlefields. The German high command didn't ask them to do anything but "hold on."¹⁷ This would be a difficult assignment enough for the collapsing armed forces of Turkey. The Bulgarians were expected to do better. And the k.u.k. high command intended to move beyond a purely defensive stance.

b. The planned use of the Austro-Hungarian Army

Ongoing discussions continued between the high commands of the two Central Powers regarding the tasks to be assigned to the Aus-Hung. Army in 1918; the talks had started already during the successful fall offensive of 1917. At that time GdI Freiherr von Arz, Chief of the k.u.k. General Staff, said that in gratitude for the Germans' armed assistance he was willing to send to the West all Aus-Hung. troops which later became available.¹⁸ On 3 November GdI Ludendorff sent a wire to Baden (already described in Volume VI), stating that he would welcome the participation of Aus-Hung. divisions in the campaign he planned to open in the West in spring. On 23 December he again declared his "willingness to eventually reinforce the Western front with k.u.k. units, particularly of heavy artillery."

On 26 December GdI Arz received permission from Emperor Charles to have Aus-Hung. troops participate in the battle against the Western powers, and two days later he sent a telegram to GFM Hindenburg that included the following words: "I fully concur with Your Excellency's intention to launch a decisive blow on the

16 Volkmann, "Der grosse Krieg 1914 bis 1918" (Berlin, 1922) p. 243. Kuhl, Vol. II, pp. 297 ff.

17 Hindenburg, p. 298

18 Cramon, "Unser österreichisch-ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege" (Berlin, 1923), p. 146

Western front in spring 1918, for which you cannot be strong enough. I am empowered by my Supreme War Lord to declare that Austria-Hungary is very willing to participate in these actions, and that commitments regarding the strength of our contribution to the Western front are dependent on the course of the peace negotiations with Russia."¹⁹ At the same time Arz agreed to honor Ludendorff's request that the German 14th Army HQ and the remaining German divisions in Venetia should move to the Western front.

As for Arz's own plans, he informed the German Chief of Staff that he intended - if permitted by the situation in the East - to capture Valona in the spring, so that our troops could move from an area infected by malaria to more healthy environs. This operation should be concluded before the start of the malaria season in early summer. He went on to state that "Larger operations in Italy can be undertaken only with units that aren't employed in the West."

On 30 December GdI Ludendorff responded with thanks for the intended assistance; he believed that discussions about the size of the force shouldn't begin until the situation was clarified in the East. He repeated that the OHL would gladly welcome any k.u.k. divisions that became available from the Eastern front, and in particular the help of heavy artillery batteries with sufficient ammunition. Finally he expressed his pleasure "that both of our high commands are in full agreement concerning the continuation of the war in 1918, that the decision is to be sought in the Western theater of operations, and that all available units of our allied armies will be involved."

But soon there was a shift in opinion within the AOK at Baden regarding the wisdom of sending Aus-Hung. divisions to the Western front. Emperor Charles, as always concerned about bringing peace to his peoples as soon as possible, worried that the contacts with the cabinets of the Western powers would be broken if Aus-Hung. infantry were to attack in the West alongside the Germans.²⁰ When the plenipotentiary-representative of the OHL, GM von Cramon, asked at the start of January 1918 for a binding commitment that Aus-Hung. divisions would take part in the offensive in the West, he received an evasive reply from GdI von Arz, who referred to the still unclear situation in the East. Arz also expressed reservations whether the k.u.k. regiments could withstand the troops and military equipment of the Western

19 Arz, "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges", pp. 206 ff.

20 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Junischlacht 1918 in Venetien" (in Schwarte, Vol. V, p. 498)

powers, and asserted that the non-German peoples of the Monarchy, as well as the Social Democrats, would offer strong resistance to participating in the war in the West. After prolonged negotiations between the k.u.k. AOK and German OHL, finally the k.u.k. Chief of Staff (who'd been promoted to Colonel General on 9 February) announced to the German plenipotentiary "that sending Austrian infantry to the West isn't acceptable to the Emperor."²¹ Instead, artillery was offered (although with little ammunition).

The OHL, whose leaders themselves had different opinions in this question, hadn't taken a firm position; they did believe, as GM Cramon had stated, that ten Aus-Hung. divisions could be used on the Western front to relieve German formations in quite sectors. In the justified confidence in their strength caused by successes to date, the OHL believed they could dispense with the cooperation of Aus-Hung. divisions in the West. On the occasion of a meeting of the Emperors at Homburg on 22 February, Ludendorff thanked GO Arz for the offer of artillery, and there was no further discussion about sending infantry. Starting at the end of February, 46 heavy batteries entrained for the French theater of operations.

The employment of Aus-Hung. divisions in the West was therefore no longer an issue. The k.u.k. high command had a substantial force available to carry out the principal task envisioned by GFM Hindenburg, which was to pin down the Italian Army plus the French and English divisions stationed in Venetia; possibly by attacking they could draw further Entente units from the Western front. On the other hand, due to the new outbreak of fighting with the Russians a fairly large number of troops were still being held in the Russo-Romanian theater of operations in mid-March - 28 infantry and 10 cavalry divisions plus 4 independent brigades. The Albanian front and Montenegro tied down one division and two independent brigades. But in a memorandum drafted on 8 March the k.u.k. AOK stated that enough units were at hand to win success in a new attack against Italy. Due to the difficult logistical and transportation situation, such an offensive couldn't be launched for several months. On 23 March Emperor Charles approved GO Arz's plan for an assault on Italy, and the commanders in the Southwest and the OHL were informed shortly thereafter.

Thus each of the members of the Quadruple Alliance had been assigned their roles for 1918. The armies of the two Central Powers intended once again, as in spring 1916, to attack separately and to aim at different goals. The majority of the

21 Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", p. 148

German field forces were standing ready in the West, where in the second half of March they would advance against the armies of the Western powers and against the North American divisions which had arrived by that time. The main body of the Aus-Hung. Army would strike a decisive blow against Italy several months later. The k.u.k. XIX Corps would try to conquer Valona.

These separate efforts were explicitly approved by the German high command. On 2 April GFM Hindenburg sent a wire to GO Arz: "I believe that Your Excellency's planned offensive against Italy will enhance the overall situation, especially if it starts soon." And also GdI Ludendorff, in his post-war works, very sharply disagreed with the assertion that the offensive of the k.u.k. Army against Italy was an "extra tour."²² He considered the Central Powers' battlefields in Italy and France to be one front. A victory which they won in France or in Italy would inevitably affect the part of the front on the other side of Switzerland, from which the enemy would have to draw units to assist their beleaguered allies. But it cannot be denied that the plan was a violation of the basic principle that all available forces should be concentrated for a decisive offensive at one point and one time, because considerably larger parts of both armies were being left in the East than originally intended, and because it had been decided not to employ Aus-Hung. divisions in the West.

22 Ludendorff, "Kriegführung und Politik" (2nd edition; Berlin, 1922), p. 230

2. The enemy coalition's defensive plan

The commanders of the French and English Armies had already met for the first time in October 1917 to develop plans for the year 1918. On 18 October the French Generalissimo Pétain suggested that if Russia left the war the Entente should at first stay on the defensive in the West. The front should be divided to reflect the relative strength of the two allied forces, while reserves were assembled behind each of the two sectors to deal with an onslaught by the Germans. But if Russia stayed in the fight, then the united armies of England, France, Belgium and North America should attack.

The Chief of the British Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Robertson, wanted like Pétain to await the arrival of the Americans; in his opinion two of their divisions would arrive each month, so that 24 divisions would be on hand at the end of 1918.²³ He wanted to carry out the final battle in 1919, if Germany gave the Entente enough time. But if Russia stayed in the war it would already be possible to seek a decision in 1918. In opposition to Robertson, the English commander-in-chief in France (Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig) wanted to carry out an offensive in the West even if Russia concluded a separate peace.²⁴

But before this question could be resolved, in the last week of October Aus-Hung. and German divisions broke through the Italians' front on the Isonzo and drove them back to the Piave. Six French and five English divisions were sent to Venetia to support their endangered allies. On 7 November at Rapallo a "Supreme Allied War Council" was created, to consist of the Prime Ministers plus a military representative from each of the principal powers. The latter were Generals Weygand (France),

23 Robertson, "Soldaten und Staatsmänner 1914-1918" (in German translation; Berlin, 1927), pp. 454 ff. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: In all calculations regarding the number of available divisions, it must be borne in mind that a US Army division - with an authorized strength of about 28,000 men - was roughly twice as strong as a German, French or English division, or equivalent to a corps in the European forces. (Philip Haythornthwaite, "World War One Source Book" [London, 1993 reprint], pp. 309-310)

24 Ministère de la guerre, "Les armées francaises dans la grande guerre" (hereafter cited as the "French official history"), Vol. VI, Part 1 (Paris, 1931), pp. 9 ff.

Wilson (England), Cadorna (Italy) and Bliss (North America). The Council was set up at Versailles. It was the forerunner to the unified supreme command which had repeatedly been advocated by General Pétain.

On 23 December General Fayolle, commanding the French 10th Army stationed in Venetia, reported to General Foch that he no longer had any concerns about the situation of the Italian forces. The French high command received this intelligence with satisfaction, since they already were awaiting an eventual German offensive. The Supreme Allied War Council now decided to have the Italian Army carry out a stubborn defense. The same role was envisioned for the Macedonian front, where if the Bulgarians and Germans attacked the units could even be pulled back to a shorter line that would protect Greece and especially Salonika.²⁵

It wasn't so easy to reach agreement on the strategy to be adopted along the front in France. The French generalissimo Pétain still advocated delaying actions, as he had earlier (on 18 November 1917); his Chief of Staff General Foch suggested on 1 January 1918 to the Allied War Council that the French and English armies should respond to the impending German onslaught with active defensive tactics. But if there was no enemy offensive, then the allies should themselves carry out attacks with limited goals. In either scenario, it would be possible when the situation later improved to go over to a decisive offensive. To guarantee that there was resolute leadership, Foch wanted to replace the cumbersome Allied War Council with an overall commander-in-chief who would control the front between the North Sea and Switzerland along with all the inter-allied reserves.²⁶

The British Chief of the Imperial General Staff General Robertson wanted to assemble all available forces within France. But the question of whether they should remain strictly on the defensive or engage in an offensive should, as previously, be answered based on the situation of the moment. Robertson very sharply opposed the demand of the British Prime Minister Lloyd-George for an offensive against Turkey. The latter believed that finding a way over the Rhine was too difficult and therefore wanted to force the collapse of the Central Powers' defensive fronts through Italy, Trieste and Vienna or through Jerusalem and Constantinople. The second route in particular seemed promising to Lloyd-George; moreover it would restore contact with the parts

25 French official history, Vol. VI, Part 1, p. 33.

26 Foch, "Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la guerre de 1914-1918" (Paris, 1931), Vol. II, pp. XLVII ff.

of the Russian Army still willing to fight, and with the Romanians. But its use would require new troops for the Near East, as well as shipping to transport them. Robertson, on the other hand, wanted to use every available ton of shipping to bring over American units. Because of this difference of opinion, Robertson lost his position on 19 February, and General Wilson took his place.

According to the latest information, Germany would have about 200 divisions in France at the start of March. Therefore it seemed necessary to create a general reserve for the area between the Adriatic and North Seas, which was regarded as one front. This force was envisioned as consisting of about 30 divisions (13 or 14 French, 9 or 10 English and 7 Italian). For this purpose 3 English and 4 French divisions were to be pulled from Venetia. But the Italian government successfully opposed this plan.²⁷ Instead, General Pétain had his 3rd Army, which made up the northern wing of the French forces, relieved by the English so that the French high command would have an entire Army at its disposal.

In the further course of the lengthy negotiations, a sub-committee of the military members of the Allied War Council was created under the chairmanship of General Foch. Their task was to determine the strength and mission of the strategic reserves and to issue orders regarding these matters to the commanders-in-chief of the allied armies. Each army was to provide a certain number of divisions for this purpose. But after the English had relieved the 3rd French Army, Marshal Haig refused to provide the contingent that was demanded for the general reserve and thereupon the Italians also refused to comply. Thus Foch's committee had no meaningful task.²⁸

Plans for an inter-allied reserve were finally buried at a conference held in London on 14 March. The two commanders-in-chief, Pétain and Haig, declared that they no longer wanted to follow General Foch's suggestions. They felt that to defend against the imminent German offensive it would be sufficient if the leading generals concluded agreements on a case-by-case basis. Later, after about three months, they would be willing to return to Foch's plans.²⁹

The overall situation on 20 March

27 French official history, Vol. VI, Part 1, p. 128

28 Robertson, pp. 472 ff.

29 Tournès, "Histoire de la guerre mondiale" (Paris, 1936), p. 47

On 20 March, the eve of the offensive, 192 German divisions (including 2 dismounted cavalry units) were opposed in the West by 171 infantry and 10 cavalry divisions of the Entente. The latter for now would stay strictly on the defensive.³⁰ As narrated above, despite numerous meetings there was no common defensive plan, no overall command and no general strategic reserve. But Pétain and Haig had taken measures so they could support each other (the former more thoroughly than his English colleague).³¹ Remarkably, the British government were still concerned about a possible German landing in England. Only after the General Staff and the Navy pledged that the island Kingdom was secure was the homeland army diminished to four divisions.

Italy's Army had been primarily concerned, ever since their opponents' assaults had died away, with preparing their front for prolonged defense. At the same time the gaps in the order of battle created during the costly fall campaign of 1917 were closed with new formations. If the Aus-Hung. Army did attack (as was expected by the Italian high command) the current positions would be held very stubbornly in an active defense. Furthermore the Italian generals were initiating all necessary measures so that they themselves could attack at some future date. On 20 March the Austro-Hungarians had about 42 divisions in Venetia (including two dismounted cavalry divisions plus several independent battle groups). The opposing Italian Army had increased once more to 50 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions, and furthermore were reinforced by 5 English and 6 French divisions.

In the East the allied Central Powers still maintained a very significant force of about 100 divisions.³² A considerable portion of the German and Aus-Hung. troops were advancing into Russia and at places were fighting the remnants of the Russian Army, whose numerical strength couldn't be determined. The Romanian Army, with 18 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions, was still a fully intact force, but now they'd found themselves in a completely isolated position. Based on the treaty of 5 March they were pledged to partially de-mobilize.

30 France had 99 infantry and 6 cavalry divisions, England 58 infantry and 3 cavalry, Belgium 6 infantry and 1 cavalry, Portugal 2 infantry and North America 6 infantry divisions.

31 French official history, Vol. VI, Part I, pp. 89 ff.

32 Austria-Hungary had 28 infantry and 10 dismounted cavalry divisions plus 4 independent brigades; Bulgaria had 3 divisions (2 infantry, 1 cavalry), Turkey 1 infantry division. The other units were German.

In the Balkans the main body of the Bulgarian Army (12 infantry divisions) were still intermixed with German command HQ and some other troops; they were tying down the Entente Army of the Orient, which was twice as strong.³³ In Albania an Italian and an Aus-Hung. corps stood opposite one another.

The Turkish Army defended a front between the Mediterranean coast and the Dead Sea with about 40% of their units, which however numbered just around 29,000 riflemen; the opposing English army had about five times as many combat troops. The same ratio existed in Iraq between the Turks (with about 10 to 12,000 riflemen) and the English-Indian units. An army of about 20,000 men secured the Anatolian coast north and south of Smyrna. Weaker forces were stationed at Constantinople and Aleppo. After the conclusion of peace with Russia the 3rd Turkish Army in the Caucasus had been ordered to take control of the Kars, Ardahan and Batum districts. Finally, weak Turkish forces were still stationed in forlorn outposts in Arabia, surrounded by a hostile population.

To summarize, in 1918 the two Central Powers intended to seek a decision with powerful offensives, in which the German Western armies struck the first blow. The renewed actions against the Bolshevik Russians created a very undesirable situation from a military standpoint, since they tied units down in the East. The Entente powers, on the other hand, planned to initially stay on the defensive (except on the Turkish front) while awaiting the arrival of the North American Army. Once they achieved the desired numerical superiority they would go over to the attack. But in a political sense the Entente powers were already on the offensive. Large organizations were working to undermine the Central Powers' will to fight with propaganda aimed at social and national problems.

II. Austria-Hungary's Armed Forces in the Last Two Years of the War

A. Consumption and replacement of personnel

33 In Macedonia there were 8 French, 4 English 1 ½ Italian, 4 Greek and 6 Serbian infantry divisions plus 1 Serbian cavalry division.

1. In 1917

Since the costly Brussilov offensive in 1916, one of the most urgent concerns of the Aus-Hung. high command was the question of whether and for how long it would be possible to procure the necessary manpower to continue the war. Experience indicated by the start of 1917 that in the new year it would be necessary to send 1.8 to 2 million men as replacements to the battlefield; this would clearly be impossible using current methods and without finding a new source of personnel.

Around this time, in the interior there were about 500,000 soldiers who were prepared and selected to serve as replacements (including the XXVIIth March battalions which were already standing ready to be sent to the front). Based on experience to date, it could be expected that another 500,000 men would become available during the year from the ranks of the wounded or sick soldiers who would fully recover. But there were few other potential reserves in the homeland; half a million 18-year-old men would theoretically become eligible in 1917, but it was expected that only 180,000 would be found fit for service. The other 31 yearly classes (ages 19 to 51) had already been thoroughly "combed" several times, so it could hardly be expected that more than 100,000 eligible men would be found among them. Thus in the best-case scenario the Army could only find two-thirds of the soldiers they thought were needed to ensure that the units would remain effective through fall 1917.

It's true that in the interior there were still 1.2 million eligible men in the age groups subject to the draft, but they'd been declared to be essential to the economy and thus exempt from service. Also 400,000 soldiers had been detached to work in military or privately-owned factories that were part of the arms industry. Although these groups constituted a rather substantial manpower reserve, drawing upon them was a ticklish and difficult problem. As described in Volume IV, two "exchange actions" had been carried out already in which older and less healthy front-line troops had changed places with younger and stronger men from the interior, and other fit soldiers could still be found by this method. But currently there weren't enough older and less-healthy men in the units at the front available to take their places in the interior. Moreover, the process of carrying out an "exchange" was lengthy.

Therefore at the start of 1917 it seemed that the only way to ensure that the Army had all the necessary replacements was to extend the obligation to serve in the Landsturm to 17-year-old

men and to those between the ages of 51 and 55. This idea had been proposed several times before but always pulled back. Now when it was raised anew by the high command it once more encountered resistance, most importantly from the Prime Minister of Hungary. Since the first years of the war Graf Tisza had already exerted decisive influence upon all issues of recruitment and troop replacement. Now, probably supported by the Honved Minister GO Freiherr von Hazai - who held similar opinions - Tisza asserted that the undesirable extension of Landsturm duty could still be avoided for as long as it was possible using the existing provisions to identify all the men who were in fact capable of front-line service, as well as those less fit men who could perform lighter duties.

The personnel bureau of GO Hazai

Tisza's line of reasoning made a great impression upon the young Monarch, whose goal anyway was to alleviate the burden of the war rather than to increase it. Therefore he embraced the opportunity to postpone or perhaps entirely avoid an oppressive and unpopular measure. And so, as narrated already in Volume VI, on 8 February 1917 the Emperor named GO Hazai the "Chief of the Replacement Bureau for the Entire Armed Forces." This official was responsible directly and solely to the Supreme Warlord and had almost ministerial authority. His task was to produce sufficient replacement troops in timely fashion and to intervene in all questions regarding the most efficient utilization of the available personnel. The explicit purpose of the new office was to ensure that the Army remained able to fight for as long as possible; the unspoken but often-recognized additional purpose was to avoid extending the draft age until the measure became unavoidable.

The Emperor's decision was spontaneous, taken without the knowledge of the high command and the war ministry, which hitherto had been solely responsible for replacement policy. As a result there were several problems in establishing the authority and tasks of the new "Chief"; most of the actual work of overseeing policy implementation remained in the hands of the old central ministerial offices. Moreover, the war minister still bore full parliamentary responsibility for all measures that were taken. And in the Austrian half of the Monarchy there was a perception, not fully unjustified, that the selection of a Hungarian as Chief of Replacement represented a victory for Hungary in the struggle with Austria for control of personnel matters. In fact in the first two years of the war the Hungarians had provided 200,000 soldiers more than would have

been their expected share based on the relative population statistics.³⁴ Since 1915 the Hungarian government had strived to equalize the burden between the halves of the Monarchy; they were finally successful at the start of 1918, but in the meantime the controversy complicated establishment of the new central bureau.

Meanwhile in a relatively short time, despite all barriers and personal disputes, the new central bureau was up and running in Vienna, along with local offices established at the various higher level HQ in the field and in the interior.

Changes in personnel policy

The first task was to considerably reduce the size of various command, administrative, logistical and procurement offices. New establishments, in some cases substantially smaller, were decreed for all the Army's HQ and for its numerous bureaucratic structures, but also for the combat units.³⁵ To ensure that the size of the new establishments wasn't exceeded, no replacements were to be provided above the limits.

There was a basic change to the entire process. Hitherto the infantry had received their replacements at regular intervals (at first every four weeks, then every six) and always in the same strength (a battalion per each regiment), regardless of how many men they'd lost in the intervening period. Now there was to be an exact relationship between consumption and replacement. The system of creating March battalions was unchanged, and their personnel still had to receive twelve weeks of training at home before receiving assignments. Once placed in the zone of an army, these battalions were assigned to "training groups", which after a further ten weeks of training were considered ready to be

34 The ratio between the total populations of Austria and Hungary was 57.35 to 42.65, but through July 1917 the proportion of citizens of the two states who'd gone to the front was 53.16 to 46.84. So at this point the extra contribution from Hungary was 210,000 men. On the other hand, this was due to specific developments rather than to plan - in the first two years of the war Austria had lost access to a considerable part of its manpower because some areas were occupied by the enemy. And since the Austrians possessed a larger part of the arms industry they were responsible for ensuring that a larger number of men were available as workers. The differences between the two partner-states continued to influence the course of events.

35 The new establishments for units are described in following sections concerning the various combat arms.

incorporated in field units. But now each month a unit would receive only as many troops from the training camps as they needed to reach their established ration strength. This was certainly a more rational system. It was hoped that gradually a large reserve of men would accumulate under the training groups, and that they'd be available to make up for any unexpected losses. But it would be a long time before such hopes could be fulfilled.

There had been many developments in the field forces, on the lines of communication and in the interior which had diverted manpower from the front. Though these projects were in themselves worthwhile, they were secondary efforts which could be either entirely terminated or at least cut to the minimum. The field forces found it possible to either reduce, consolidate or fully dissolve some coast defense forces, the garrisons of most fortresses, the labor detachments that had been fortifying the Bug-Carpathian line and performing cultural work in the occupied areas, gendarmerie cordons, etc. A similar process was applied in the interior to various small replacement units, schools, training courses, sentry posts, railroad security detachments and similar special formations. This "retrenchment" not only released a substantial number of fit soldiers for replacement and exchange purposes, but reduced the burden of finding fresh manpower for a large number of small units.

The third "exchange action"

A series of other measures also helped to better evaluate the men on military service by age and capability, and to uncover new sources of manpower. Thus in April 1917 the third "exchange action" was initiated. The goal was to have all physically fit men up to 43 years of age fight at the front. Soldiers aged 44 to 46 would perform other service at the front or on the lines of communication; only those over age 47 would be employed in the interior. Also, men under 46 who were fit only for guard or auxiliary duties were to perform various services with the army in the field. This was a prolonged and very complicated "action", since all personnel involved had to be replaced at their existing posts before proceeding to either the front or the interior. To make this possible, women and girls were to be employed to a greater extent than hitherto in tasks hitherto performed by soldiers.³⁶ Also some men who'd been drafted but

36 Since 1916 the War Ministry, as well as some individual command HQ, had used "female auxiliaries" for office, house-cleaning and cooking tasks, but only to a very limited extent. The Chief of the Replacement Bureau now emphasized that this

found incapable of bearing arms were now required to serve in an unarmed capacity; this measure in particular caused serious misgivings, although it was consistent with the spirit of the conscription laws. Efforts were made to minimize the number of men on detached missions and to speed up the process of reviewing and re-assigning men in individual cases³⁷; "flying commissions" served both at home and in the field to determine the fitness of the troops in countless locations.

This large-scale effort to provide replacements caused intense activity at all levels of the command structure and considerable paperwork, since all decisions had to be based on ongoing statistical evaluations and a lot of documentation. Some of the "actions" took too long and then weren't fully successful. Ultimately it proved impossible to implement many of the plans. For example, it had been hoped to better utilize the labor force of occupied Poland, where only 15,000 workers had volunteered for service out of a population of 4,000,000 in the areas under Aus-Hung. administration, but this project foundered due to objections from the Poles. Also, by the end of 1917 little had come from an attempt to at least limit the exemptions of the youngest conscription classes, a measure which it was correctly believed would have yielded quite a bit of manpower. But at this time the exempted men were in many instances the backbone of the military economy, and therefore it was difficult to replace them.

The situation by the end of 1917

Moreover, the Army required personnel not only as regular replacements, but also because of some of the organizational changes. The ongoing expansion of the artillery and of the trench mortar units, the increase in the number of machine guns in the MG companies to eight, and later the creation of light MG platoons were all supposed to ultimately replace manpower with machines; however, in the short run the establishment of new units required more troops. The result was that it was impossible to send as many replacements as previously to existing

practice should be extended to many positions with the Army and in the interior, but practical considerations slowed the process. In August 1917 there were 60,000 female auxiliaries in the interior and 27,000 in the field. Just before the collapse in October 1918 there were 107,000 in the interior and 33,000 in the field.

37 Because of the strict rules and the resultant prolonged bureaucratic process of exchanging troops, at times there were 60,000 to 70,000 troops waiting for 3 ½ to 4 ½ months for their assignments.

units. Starting in June 1917 the companies in the March battalions had a restricted authorized strength of just 100 men.

Despite all these problems, however, in general the replacement situation in 1917 was significantly more favorable than had been expected. Throughout the year the Army received the necessary number of men³⁸ without having to extend the Landsturm obligation. In fact, it was even possible - as the Emperor desired - to discharge the two oldest yearly classes³⁹ and to make special exceptions for individual older soldiers or those with family responsibilities; men were also available for details to factories or farms (to help with the harvest). Although it's true that the replacements weren't sufficient to prevent a steady decline in the total strength at the front - and even more so in the combat strength - this weakening had no serious consequences; the great increase in the amount of military equipment of all types made up for the shortage of personnel, while the crisis within the Russian Empire crippled the battle worthiness of Austria's numerically strongest enemy.

2. In 1918

In fall 1917 it by no means seemed certain that the favorable conditions would continue. Even at the end of the year, when it was possible that many soldiers would be returning from captivity, the authorities didn't want to place too much hope in this factor, since the process of prisoner exchange would be complicated and couldn't quickly alleviate the replacement situation.

The statistical situation

Predictions for the coming year 1918 painted a less favorable picture than had developed in 1917. The Monarchy's resources were now really exhausted. More than 70% of all men subject to the draft because of their age had already been called to arms. By the end of 1917, of 11,800,000 men aged 18 to 52 the armed forces had found that only 9,120,000 were fit for service, and 700,000 of these had been exempted before they were drafted.

38 Nine series of March battalions went to the front in 1917, the last (the XXXVth) in December.

39 This involved about 130,000 men who'd been called up in 1915 when they were age 49 or 50. Now they were still performing military service at various installations in the interior even though they were already 51 or 52.

Thus 8,420,000 had been conscripted. Of this total, 780,000 had fallen in action or died from other causes (the figure doesn't include men who died in captivity); 1,600,000 were prisoners of war, 500,000 had been discharged as invalids, 130,000 (from the two oldest classes) dismissed due to their age, 400,000 detached to serve in war industries, and 600,000 exempted after they were drafted. Therefore the total who were no longer in the armed forces was about 4,001,000, leaving 4,441,000 in service as of 1 January 1918 - 2,850,000 with the field forces and 1,560,000 in replacement units and in military commands, offices and installations in the interior.

In the interior - in addition to the men exempt for economic reasons and the invalids - there were only the men aged 18 to 51 who'd already been found unfit for duty (about 2,700,000) plus the 471,000 young men of the 1900 class who were just becoming eligible for the draft. At most it could be expected that 140,000 soldiers could still be found among the former group and 100,000 called up from the latter. The replacement units now had available only small reserves of men fit for front-line duty; it was estimated that they could provide 500,000 convalescents⁴⁰, only half of the manpower that would be needed.

The issue of canceling exemptions

Under these circumstances the Chief of the Replacement Bureau had to continue his various efforts - the exchange action, reduction in authorized unit strengths⁴¹, finding uses for men unfit to bear arms, and increasing the use of women in auxiliary services. But these measures couldn't possibly provide enough personnel for 1918. According to the Chief's calculations, the replacement service would be short by at least 600,000 men. The shortfall could at least in part be made good by reducing the number of men exempted from conscription or detached after conscription to serve in the economy.⁴²

40 In fact, the number of convalescents assigned to March battalions in 1917 was 31,283 officers and 615,586 men. The corresponding figures from January to September 1918 were 20,626 officers and 645,249 men.

41 Even the infantry battalions were reduced, each losing 100 men.

42 At the end of 1917, in the Aus-Hung. Monarchy the workforce included 1,256,000 exempted men plus 448,000 others who'd been drafted but then detached from active service. (In German, these categories were called "Enthobene" and "Kommandierte.") Of these roughly 1,700,000 men, 24% were involved in

This category made up a reserve of the strongest and most healthy men who were still available, but attempts in the past to draw upon the reserve to any great extent had all failed; the Austrian and Hungarian governments, very concerned about their endangered economies, were willing to cancel exemptions only on a case-by-case basis where it could be demonstrated that individual workers were superfluous. Individual reviews required a large bureaucratic apparatus and cost much time, so naturally this method couldn't succeed.

But significant difficulties and hindrances also arose in February 1918 when it was necessary to initiate a general review of exemptions, starting with the six youngest age classes. Numerous exceptions were still unavoidable. Some of the men whose detachment to work in agriculture was canceled later had to be returned to the land, and others soon had to be furloughed for the same purpose. At many workshops and government offices there was fear of an impending labor shortage. Soon the question was raised as to whether economic collapse would be a greater danger than failure to find sufficient replacement troops.

In fact, many groups of workers in many occupations were simply irreplaceable; certain essential operations, such as foundries and airplane or automobile factories, were allowed to keep qualified workers, regardless of their age groups. In some parts of the war industry, on the other hand, it was easier to cancel exemptions, since at the start of 1918 production was declining anyway due to the shortage of coal and other raw materials. Nevertheless, as time passed new exemptions became necessary, even involving the youngest age groups.

The Chief of the Replacement Bureau soon reduced his demand for the cancellation of exemptions from 600,000 to 300,000 men. In the first half of 1918 about 213,000 exempted individuals did take up arms. However, in the same period there were 91,000 new exemptions, so the net number of new troops was only about 122,000.

The number of persons taken out of the economy by this process was certainly not very large; exempted men made up only 5.21% of the total workforce. But in the case of essential industries

agricultural or forestry work, 40% in the war industries (involving about 7000 workshops or factories) or the mines, and 22% in transportation services (railroads or shipping) or communications (postal or telegraphic). The other 14% were either with the civil service or on some special duties.

they would still have to be replaced, and this was another difficult and involved problem. The upshot was that larger parts of the population which normally wouldn't have been working were drawn into the economy. However, since this development had already been making great strides⁴³, there were relatively few unemployed persons still available.

43 In Austria-Hungary before the war there were 1,700,000 men and 8,150,000 women between the ages of 15 and 59 who were unemployed; by the end of 1917 six million of these people had already found work. This is a striking illustration of the extent to which women entered all parts of the economy during the war.

The replacement system in decline

Thus it was only with great difficulty that the authorities in the interior were able to keep creating March battalions. Starting in January 1918 there was once again a new group of battalions each month, although with much-reduced total strength; thus only 100,000 men went to the front per group as opposed to 250,000 in earlier years.⁴⁴

The return of prisoners of war from Russia, which started in January and gathered momentum in April 1918, didn't significantly alter this situation.⁴⁵ By the end of April, 380,000 *Heimkehrer* had already crossed the Aus-Hung. lines, and the number swelled to 517,000 by the end of June. However, due to the complicated release process and the need to give the men essential military re-training, four or five months were required before they could return to the front. Therefore it was believed that *Heimkehrer* wouldn't make up a large part of the replacement units until the XLI March Battalions (in July).

Even leaving political considerations aside, the *Heimkehrer* weren't counted on to greatly increase the Army's overall strength, since sooner or later their return would be balanced by the departure of numerous Russian prisoners of war. The latter were performing an important role as workers in the Monarchy's economy, and even in the Army.⁴⁶ Thus by the end of 1918 the majority of the *Heimkehrer* had to be used to replace the

44 The XXXVI March Battalions were in the interior and ready to go to the front in January 1918. The XLIV March Battalions, the last in the World War, were ready in October.

45 See the appendix at the end of this section for more details on this subject.

46 On 1 January 1918 there were 1,309,000 enemy prisoners in the Aus-Hung. Monarchy, including 908,000 Russians. 362,000 men (248,000 Russians) were employed by the Army in the field, and 947,000 (660,000 Russians) were in the interior. In the latter category the prisoners were distributed as follows:
 . 728,000 (555,000 Russians) were on work details - 438,000 in agriculture, 105,000 in private industry, 127,000 in military workshops, 45,000 in other government workshops, and 13,000 in the forestry sector.

. 219,000 (105,000 Russians) were confined in camps - 48,000 of these, in turn, were in workshops or performed other labor in the camps; 57,000 had short- or long-term illnesses; 84,000 were fit for work but had never been employed, and 30,000 hadn't been evaluated for their fitness.

prisoners of war at numerous workplaces.

Meanwhile, starting in winter 1917-18 the problems of the replacement bureau and maintenance of the Army's fighting strength were decisively influenced, and to a certain extent even overshadowed, by a new element - the nutritional problem. Hereafter concerns about feeding and clothing the armed forces pushed all other issues aside. It can be stated that the shortages also weakened the will of the authorities to deploy the last strength of the Monarchy for the decisive battle. Now more than ever they had to resort to reducing and down-sizing their forces. In March 1918 the age-classes of 1867 to 1869 (almost 300,000 men aged 49 to 51) were placed on furlough, even though several weeks earlier all command HQ had declared that they couldn't possibly implement such a measure.

The wheels of the replacement service machine still turned, but the obstacles increased and the output was ever smaller. Soon the Ersatz units couldn't all meet demands at the same speed; thus in August, when formation of the XLIV March Battalions was supposed to be under way, many areas still hadn't finished creating their XLI Battalions. In the meantime the reduced strength levels on the Russian front and the long pause in operations in the Southwest had caused the replacement question to be neglected. In most cases, in fact, even the diminished March Battalions were able to keep the front-line units up to their authorized strength and occasionally to build up small reserves. The situation would finally change for the worse as a result of the heavier casualties of the June Battle, followed by the first signs of the coming collapse, hunger, and the final illness of the state.

Appendix - the return of the prisoners of war

The AOK had made comprehensive arrangements to implement the necessary exchange of prisoners after the conclusion of peace in the East. Special agents were sent to Petrograd, Kiev and Moscow to oversee the transport of our men from Russia. Offices to process the *Heimkehrer* were set up in the Monarchy's border-lands and in the occupied territories on all the traffic routes leading out of Russia and Romania. After medical examinations and de-lousing, the returnees were placed in quarantine for 14 days and then received 10 days of disciplined re-training. From the processing offices the men were sent by way of "exchange centers" to their own units' replacement formations, where they made up special "*Heimkehrer Ersatz Companies*." After a (usually brief) examination of their reliability they were given either 8 or 12

weeks' leave.⁴⁷

Such a significant, and in many ways unprecedented, mass movement inevitably involved many hitches. At many points the available shelters and rations were inadequate. Meanwhile unscrupulous individuals used lying stories about the treatment that could be expected in the camps to swindle some of the soldiers out of their scanty personal possessions. The downright suspicious reception which the men actually received was correctly regarded as insulting; the entire process, though in part justified, dragged on far too long for men who were eager to return to their own homes. It either awakened or strengthened bitter feelings against the state. Remembering the hardships of captivity, many troops had developed an aversion to soldiering and the war, and didn't want to be sent back to the front. This was especially the case among men who'd been influenced by Bolshevik propaganda. And when the *Heimkehrer* saw misery and need in their own towns, or returned to disrupted families, in many cases their resistance to soldierly discipline increased even more.

Some men didn't return to the Ersatz units after their leave was finished. Instead they reinforced the many draft-dodgers and deserters in the towns and countryside, who were concealed by the population partly due to sympathy and partly due to fear. In many places, but especially in the south of the Monarchy, armed deserters in the forests created robber bands (called "zeleni kadr" - the "green cadres"). The bands caused anxiety and fear in the countryside, and were barely kept in check by expeditions of military and gendarmerie detachments.

3. Analysis of the casualties and the available manpower

Defying all shortages, and quite improbably, the Aus-Hung. armed forces were able to maintain their effectiveness for a long time, a circumstance due in large measure to the fact that the number of casualties was dropping.

Analysis of casualties

TABLE ONE - Total losses of the Aus-Hung. armed forces, based on

47 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Also see the more detailed discussion of this topic in Plaschka, Haselsteiner and Suppan's "Die Innere Front" (Vienna, 1974), Vol. I, pp. 278-84. The authors point out that this elaborate system wasn't always followed out in detail, but agree that it had a terrible effect on the morale of the *Heimkehrer*.

reports from the armies in the field⁴⁸

a) Losses in 1914-16

. 1914

- . Officers: 32,270 - 4827 dead (14.7%), 11,950 wounded (36.5%), 11,287 sick (34.4%), 4706 captured/missing (14.4%)
- . Men: 1,292,164 - 140,226 dead (10.9%), 472,365 wounded (36.6%), 271,969 sick (21%), 407,604 captured/missing (31.5%)

. 1915

- . Officers: 51,453 - 4428 dead (8.6%), 14,429 wounded (28.1%), 24,251 sick (47.1%), 8345 captured/missing (16.2%)
- . Men: 2,110,673 - 177,801 dead (8.4%), 625,406 wounded (29.6%), 699,773 sick (33.2%), 607,693 captured/missing (25.8%)

. 1916

- . Officers: 37,090 - 2449 dead (6.6%), 8401 wounded (22.7%), 19,217 sick (51.8%), 7023 captured/missing (18.9%)
- . Men: 1,716,134 - 90,116 dead (5.3%), 407,442 wounded (23.7%), 787,643 sick (45.9%), 430,933 captured/missing (25.1%)

b) Losses in 1917

. Northeastern front

- . Officers: 12,280 - 537 dead (4.4%), 1667 wounded (13.6%), 9057 sick (73.7%), 1019 captured/missing (8.3%)
- . Men: 561,367 - 20,289 dead (3.6%), 70,873 wounded (12.6%), 416,878 sick (74.3%), 53,327 captured/missing (9.5%)

. Balkan front

- . Officers: 1871 - 64 dead (3.4%), 17 wounded (0.9%), 1779 sick (95.1%), 11 captured/missing (0.6%)
- . Men: 125,721 - 3526 dead (2.8%), 636 wounded (0.5%), 119,484 sick (95.0%), 2075 captured/missing (1.7%)

. Southwestern front

- . Officers: 16,981 - 1327 dead (7.8%), 4215 wounded

48 Figures for the wounded and sick record the number of cases and not the number of persons. A person could be recorded as many times as he had to leave the field due to sickness or wounds. TRANSLATOR's NOTE: The figures appearing here for the years 1914-16 are slightly different from those presented in earlier volumes, presumably due to incorporation of new and more accurate information.

- (24.8%), 9686 sick (57.1%), 1753 captured/missing (10.3%)
- . Men: 763,082 - 41,166 dead (5.4%), 180,355 wounded (23.6%), 459,335 sick (60.2%), 82,226 captured/missing (10.8%)
- . YEARLY TOTALS
 - . Officers: 31,132 - 1928 dead (6.2%), 5899 wounded (19.0%), 20,522 sick (65.9%), 2783 captured/missing (8.9%)
 - . Men: 1,450,170 - 64,981 dead (4.5%), 251,864 wounded (17.4%), 995,697 sick (68.6%), 137,628 captured/missing (9.5%)
- c) Losses in 1918
 - . Northeastern front
 - . Officers: 3057 - 114 dead (3.7%), 66 wounded (2.2%), 2864 sick (93.7%), 13 captured/missing (0.4%)
 - . Men: 163,972 - 5357 dead (3.3%), 1831 wounded (1.1%), 151,547 sick (92.4%), 5237 captured/missing (3.2%)
 - . Balkan front
 - . Officers: 2246 - 125 dead (5.6%), 203 wounded (9.0%), 1805 sick (80.4%), 113 captured/missing (5.0%)
 - . Men: 112,433 - 4362 dead (3.9%), 6216 wounded (5.5%), 86,662 sick (77.1%), 15,193 captured/missing (13.5%)
 - . Southwestern front
 - . Officers: 31,797 - 1511 dead (4.8%), 3724 wounded (11.7%), 14,767 sick (46.4%), 11,795 captured/missing (37.1%)
 - . Men: 1,294,863 - 40,629 dead (3.1%), 131,302 wounded (10.1%), 649,211 sick (50.2%), 473,721 captured/missing (36.6%)
 - . Western front
 - . Officers: 701 - 26 dead (3.7%), 130 wounded (18.5%), 403 sick (57.5%), 142 captured/missing (20.3%)
 - . Men: 18,594 - 753 dead (4.0%), 2009 wounded (10.8%), 10,571 sick (56.9%), 5261 captured/missing (28.3%)
 - . YEARLY TOTALS
 - . Officers: 37,753 - 1776 dead (4.7%), 4123 wounded (10.9%), 19,821 sick (52.5%), 12,063 captured/missing (31.9%)
 - . Men: 1,589,862 - 51,101 dead (3.2%), 141,358 wounded (8.9%), 897,991 sick (56.5%), 499,412 captured/missing (31.4%)
- d) TOTALS FOR THE WAR
 - . Officers: 190,228 - 15,408 dead (8.1%), 44,802 wounded (23.6%), 95,098 (50.0%), 34,920 captured/missing (18.3%)

- . Men: 8,159,003 - 524,225 dead (6.4%), 1,898,435 wounded (23.3%), 3,653,073 sick (44.8%), 2,083,270 captured/missing (25.5%)
- . THE GRAND TOTAL: 8,349,232 - 539,63 dead (6.4%), 1,943,237 wounded (23.3%), 3,748,171 sick (44.9%), 2,118,190 captured/missing (25.4%)

The unmistakable reduction in the total number of losses, which had already begun in the second year of the war, was a continuing trend. Total losses (officers and men) were reckoned as follows:

- . First year (August 1914 to end of July 1915) - 2,738,500
- . Second year (August 1915 to end of July 1916) - 1,822,200
- . Third year (August 1916 to end of July 1917) - 1,463,300
- . Fourth year (August 1917 to the war's end) - 1,457,600

The following overview demonstrates clearly that there really was a decline in the three types of combat casualties (killed, wounded and prisoners):

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Taken prisoner</u>
. First year	271,839	905,796	838,873
. Second year	106,901	458,846	474,907
. Third year	71,086	291,774	285,833
. Fourth year	69,539	259,305	128,870

The figures, surprisingly, demonstrate that the battles of materiel in the second half of the war, fought in part with troops who lacked training, were less costly than the war of movement at the beginning, carried out with soldiers who'd had excellent training. The most important reasons for this development were that both officers and men had growing experience of actual wartime lessons, that efforts were made to avoid useless bloodshed, and that in general the amount of fighting was reduced.

From the middle of 1917 the reduction in casualties was somewhat offset by increasing numbers of sick soldiers. The following are total figures for the officers and men who left the front because they were ill:

- . First year - 722,000
- . Second year - 881,600
- . Third year - 878,700
- . Fourth year (to the end of July 1918) - 1,000,000
- . The last three months of the war - 366,000

These figures are somewhat striking since life at the front in the latter part of the war was much better regulated than in the beginning, and since medical services in the Army zones had been

expanded and improved. But these favorable circumstances couldn't offset two other factors. There was an increasing number of men entering battle

- . whose physical strength had already suffered from earlier privations, and
- . who were less able to cope with heavy exertion because they were under-nourished.

The losses also illustrate clearly the increasing importance of the Southwestern front during the second half of the war:

	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>Balkans</u>	<u>West</u>
. 1 st Year	2,360,000	78,000	300,000	
. 2 nd Year	1,203,000	533,000	86,000	
. 3 rd Year	705,000	664,000	95,000	
. 4 th Year		370,000	974,000	113,000
. Last 3 months ⁴⁹	28,000	329,000	64,000	19,000

The fact that the infantry bore the heaviest burden throughout the entire war is most strikingly illustrated by showing that their percentage of losses was very much larger than their percentage of the overall strength of the Army in the field. The enormity of the sacrifice by this "Queen of Arms" appears in the following figures.

- . Infantry made up 38.7% of the Army's ration strength in 1918; during the war they accounted for 94.43% of fatal casualties, 95.95% of the wounded, and 96.65% of the men taken prisoner
- . Cavalry made up 4.6% of the ration strength in 1918; during the war they accounted for 2.19% of the fatal casualties, 1.8% of the wounded, and 1.77% of the men taken prisoner
- . Artillery made up 11.7% of the ration strength in 1918; during the war they accounted for 2.15% of the fatal casualties, 1.33% of the wounded, and 0.72 of the men taken prisoner
- . Pioneers and sappers made up 2.8% of the ration strength in 1918; during the war they accounted for 0.71% of the fatal casualties, 0.65% of the wounded, and 0.33% of the men taken prisoner
- . Non-combat services made up 42.2% of the ration strength in 1918; during the war they accounted for 0.52% of the fatal casualties, 0.27% of the wounded, and 0.53% of the men taken prisoner.

In the casualty figures of the World War the officer corps of the Aus-Hung. armed forces occupies an honorable position. During the war the corps consisted of 211,000 men - 47,000 professionals (including cadets) and 164,000 reserve officers. 28,500 of them

49 Figures for the last three months of the war don't include men taken prisoner during the collapse.

fell on the battlefield or died of other causes; this is 13.5% of their total numbers. The ratio increases to 15% if pensioned officers (who of course didn't have casualties) are excluded from the overall total. Among the men who left their lives on the field of honor were 16.0% of the professional officers (or 20.4% if the pensioners are removed from the statistical group).⁵⁰ There is hardly a more noble sign of the exalted belief in their mission of leadership that existed within this officer corps.⁵¹

The decline in unit strength

The general decline in casualties during the second half of the war wasn't sufficient, however, to prevent a slow but steady decrease in the number of men at the front.

TABLE 2 - The ration and combat strength of the field army from the start of 1916 to the end of the war. ("Officers" include ensigns and cadets. "Men" include about 7000 of the highest-ranked non-commissioned officers plus the sick (ranging from 120,000 to about 160,000) who were in medical facilities of the field forces. Female auxiliary forces were counted starting in August 1917; they reached their highest strength of 34,900 at the start of 1918. Figures marked with an asterisk (*) are estimates.)

- . 1 January 1916 - Ration strength was 2,800,000 - 70,000 officers, 2,500,000 men and 230,000 workers and POW's. The combat strength (infantry and cavalry) was 34,000 officers and 989,000 men (only 840,000* men if the March battalions are excluded)
- . 1 June 1916 - Ration strength = 3,517,000 - 80,000 officers, 3,280,000 men and 157,000 workers and POW's. Infantry & cavalry strength = 36,000 officers and 1,124,000 men (983,600 men without the March battalions)
- . 1 October 1916 - Ration strength = 3,217,000 - 80,000 officers, 2,830,000 men and 307,000 workers and POW's. Infantry & cavalry strength = 21,000 officers and 865,000 men (773,300 men without the March battalions)

50 By comparison, of all the men from the Monarchy who entered military service, 9.82% died in battle, from injury or from illness.

51 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: However, barring a major mis-translation on my part, the figures in this paragraph aren't at all consistent with Table 1. The Table shows clearly that 15,408 officers perished in the war. The figure of 28,500 in the paragraph must include additional categories (such as officers who died as prisoners of war), but nonetheless seems suspiciously high.

- . 1 January 1917 - Ration strength = 3,353,000 - 79,000 officers, 2,927,000 men and 347,000 workers and POW's. Infantry & cavalry strength = 30,000 officers and 851,000 men (682,700 men without the March battalions)
- . 1 May 1917 - Ration strength = 3,550,000 - 96,000 officers, 3,100,000 men and 354,000 workers and POW's. Infantry & cavalry strength = 36,00 officers and 1,035,000 men (850,000 men* without the March battalions)
- . 1 August 1917 - Ration strength = 3,401,000 - 103,000 officers, 2,968,000 men and 330,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength = 37,000 officers and 953,000 men (695,300 men without the March battalions)
- . 1 October 1917 - Ration strength = 3,203,000 - 98,000 officers, 2,766,000 men and 339,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength = 33,000 officers and 790,000 men (658,400 men without the March battalions)
- . 1 December 1917 - Ration strength = 3,224,000 - 100,000 officers, 2,730,000 men and 394,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength = 34,000 officers and 785,000 men (573,600 men without the March battalions)
- . 1 January 1918 - Ration strength = 3,251,000 - 103,000 officers, 2,745,000 men and 403,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength = 36,000 officers and 796,00 men (596,000 men without the March battalions)
- . 1 May 1918 - Ration strength = 3,194,000 - 100,000 officers, 2,718,000 men and 376,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength⁵² = 38,000 officers and 946,000 men (550,000* men without the March battalions)
- . 1 August 1918 - Ration strength = 2,8220,000 - 99,000 officers, 2,463,000 men and 260,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength = 34,000 officers and 813,000 men (420,000* men without the March battalions)
- . 1 October 1918 - Ration strength = 2,568,000 - 101,000 officers, 2,313,000 men and 254,000 workers, POW's and female auxiliaries. Infantry & cavalry strength = 31,000 officers and 609,000 men (409,000 men without the March battalions)

There were increasing numbers of civilian workers, prisoners of war and female auxiliaries employed in the field army zones or on the lines of communication (by the start of 1918, more than 400,000). Nevertheless the decline in ration strength and (even more) in combat strength was continuous and irreversible.

Authorized unit strength, even in the combat arms, was reduced

52 The apparent decline in ration strength and increase in infantry & cavalry combat strength in May 1918 was due only to a new definition of which men were considered combat troops.

several times by the Chief of the Replacement Bureau. Each infantry regiment was authorized 832 riflemen (out of a ration strength of 1275) per battalion, but after being fully equipped with light machine guns the figures were 628 front-line riflemen out of a strength of 1207. A cavalry regiment had 1664 riflemen out of a ration strength of 2627, reduced after the introduction of light machine gun platoons to 1256 riflemen and 2491 total. Emergency limits were also applied in the artillery, in part due to the shortage of horses. But even the reduced strengths couldn't be maintained, because the units simply didn't have the authorized troops or couldn't keep them. Many divisions which were rated as fully combat-ready had rifle strengths of 8000, 6000 or even just 5000 at a time when they were authorized 11,567.

The conditions which caused combat strength to continuously decline in relation to ration strength were already having an effect in the first years of the war, so it's hardly surprising that the trend became even more striking in the following period. Within the units, almost as many men were needed to handle the special weapons, supplies and administrative chores as there were riflemen at the front. Although in the first half of 1918 there was nevertheless a rather significant rise in combat strength, this was due entirely to the limited combat activity at that time; the rise was soon to be followed by a very precipitate decline.

The seriousness of the situation wasn't alleviated by the fact that until the end of the war there were still some apparently substantial forces in the interior (as shown by these figures).

TABLE 3 - Total ration strength in the field and in the interior, 1916-1918

(Figures for the number of men in the interior were maintained until 1 August 1917 by the War Ministry, and after that by the Chief of the Replacement Bureau. The figures marked with an asterisk [*] are estimates.)

- . 1 January 1916 - Ration strength in the interior was 1,982,000 - 60,000* officers and 1,922,000 men. There were 130,000 officers and 4,422,000 men in the field. The Army's grand total strength (including the military personnel, civilian workers and POW's) was 4,782,000.
- . 1 June 1916 - Strength in the interior = 2,080,000 - 60,000* officers and 2,025,000 men. There were 135,000 officers and 5,305,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 5,597,000.
- . 1 October 1916 - Strength in the interior = 1,844,000 - 60,000*

officers and 1,784,000 men. There were 140,00 officers and 4,614,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 5,061,000.

. 1 January 1917 - Strength in the interior = 1,705,000 - 62,000* officers and 1,643,000 men. There were 141,000 officers and 4,570,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 5,058,000.

. 1 May 1917 - Strength in the interior = 1,663,000 - 58,000 officers⁵³ and 1,550,000 men plus 55,000 female auxiliaries⁵⁴. There were 154,000 officers and 4,650,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 5,213,000.

. 1 August 1917 - Strength in the interior = 1,511,000 - 60,000* officers and 1,391,000 men plus 60,000* female auxiliaries. There were 163,000 officers and 4,359,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 4,912,000.

. 1 October 1917 - Strength in the interior = 1,489,000 - 71,000 officers and 1,345,000 men plus 73,000 female auxiliaries. There were 169,000 officers and 4,111,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 4,692,000.

. 1 December 1917 - Strength in the interior = 1,560,000 - 75,000 officers and 1,405,000 men plus 80,000 female auxiliaries. There were 175,000 officers and 4,135,000 men in the field. Total strength (military and non-military personnel) was 4,784,000.

. 1 January 1918 - Strength in the interior = 1,661,000 - 76,000 officers and 1,487,000 men plus 10,000 workers not subject to Landsturm service and 98,000 female auxiliaries. There were 179,000 officers and 4,232,000 men in the field. Total strength (military & non-military) was 4,912,000.

. 1 May 1918 - Strength in the interior = 1,934,000 - 82,00 officers and 1,750,000 men plus 12,000 workers not subject to Landsturm service and 90,000 female auxiliaries. There were 182,000 officers and 4,468,000 men in the field. Total strength (military & non-military) = 5,128,000.

. 1 August 1918 - Strength in the interior⁵⁵ = 1,785,000 - 86,000* officers and 1,591,000 men plus 16,000 workers not subject to Landsturm service and 92,000 female auxiliaries. There were 185,000 officers and 4,054,000 men in the field. Total strength (military & non-military) = 4,608,000.

53 The figure of 58,000 officers is actually from 1 March 1917, not May.

54 The figure of 55,000 auxiliaries is actually from 1 April 1917, not May.

55 Figures in the interior are actually from 1 Sept 1918, not August.

. 1 October 1918 - Strength in the interior = 1,722,000 - 87,000* officers and 1,511,000 men plus 17,000 workers not subject to Landsturm service and 107,000 female auxiliaries. There were 188,000 officers and 3,824,000 men in the field. Total strength (military & non-military) = 4,269,000.

But, for example, of the 1,487,000 soldiers apparently available in the interior on 1 January 1918, only 324,000 were actually reserves who could become replacements. The other categories were:

- . 70,000 with essential assignments at various HQ, offices and installations,
- . 157,000 who couldn't become replacements because of their age or physical condition, or because they had essential professions,
- . 485,000 who were still in hospitals recovering from illness or wounds,
- . 114,000 who'd left the hospitals but were in the convalescent centers of the Ersatz units because they were still recuperating,
- . 35,000 with essential training assignments, and
- . 90,000 who'd already been assigned to March formations and were ready to be sent to the front.

B. The last reorganization of the Army

1. General guidelines

Because of the increasing difficulty which confronted the Aus-Hung. high command in their attempts to build up and maintain the manpower reserve in the second half of the World War, it is somewhat surprising that in 1917 they decided to carry out a basic organizational reform of the Army in the middle of the fighting. There had been no lack of suggestions earlier, and in connection with preparations for de-mobilization the k.u.k. AOK and the three war ministries had together drafted new compulsory service laws and very thorough plans for the future configuration of the Aus-Hung. armed forces. For a considerable time these efforts had already been the basis of the ongoing expansion of some arms of the service, such as the reorganization of the artillery and the technical troops. But it had been felt that, for various reasons, a complete and wide-ranging new structure shouldn't be set up until a more favorable point in time after the war. Even the foundation of any such reorganization - the future configuration of the territorial and legal framework of the Monarchy - was still unknown.⁵⁶

In May 1917 the new high command nevertheless undertook the difficult task of a thorough reconstruction of the Army, despite all the drawbacks. This was primarily for financial reasons. The Chief of the General Staff was certainly correct when he foresaw that "after this war, as always, we won't be able to expect the necessary resources to create a modern army during peacetime."⁵⁷

Under FM Freih. von Conrad the high command had followed a similar line of reasoning; this was one of the reasons why they greatly accelerated the costliest part of any Army reform, the expansion of the artillery. But now there were additional considerations. By mid-1917 the provision of new and improved

56 For a description of earlier plans for reorganization, and of the development of the Army in the first half of the war (a process whose completion is described in this and the following sections), see Volumes IV and VI of this work. Also see Franek, "Die Entwicklung der öst.-ung. Wehrmacht in den ersten zwei Kriegsjahren" (in Mil. wiss. Mitt.; Vienna, 1933 edition, pages 15 to 31 and 98 to 115).

57 Arz, "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 254

weapons to the units had made significant progress. When the war started, the average strength of a division's artillery was 42 guns; now it had grown to 76 (not counting anti-aircraft and infantry guns, or the trench mortars). The reserve artillery at Army HQ level had also expanded, and further growth was envisioned. There were almost four times as many machine guns available as in the earlier days of the war, and yet it was planned to introduce a great many more.

The enormous increase in weaponry was above all supposed to compensate for the dwindling manpower but - as is a natural tendency during any technical development - the new technology increasingly influenced tactics and Army organization. As a reflection of this fact, officers became accustomed to evaluate the battle-worthiness of a division based not so much on the number of its riflemen as on the number of its heavy weapons. But the still incomplete technological developments inevitably found a limit in the existing unit organizations; if the divisions incorporated many more guns they would become hard to control and maneuver. Therefore during the war almost all armies altered the relative proportions of men and guns in favor of the latter, reducing the amount of infantry within the divisions. Although in some cases there were drawbacks to this approach, it seemed advisable that the Aus-Hung. Army should follow a similar approach.

It was easier anyway for us to follow this organizational course since in practice it was a question not of a general reduction in size as of an equalization between units. At this time there were divisions with as many as 15 to 18 battalions, but also some with just 8 or 9. Some of them were permanent formations, and others were only supposed to exist until the end of the war. The order of battle of the Aus-Hung. Army had also been affected by many instances in which units were improvised, re-organized, dissolved or re-named. Therefore it was in fact necessary to restore order to the organization, making divisions homogenous and ensuring that they should contain only components which would also remain with them in peacetime.

Therefore in May 1917 the high command decided to completely reorganize the Aus-Hung. Army. As hitherto, each infantry division would consist of two brigades of infantry and one of field artillery; however, there would be just 12 battalions (plus a Storm battalion) and 16 (later 21) batteries. Since there were 720 battalions available in spring 1917, it would be possible without creating any new formations (which anyway was impossible) to man 60 infantry divisions. The existing cavalry regiments

would be divided among 12 divisions (all dismounted). The following table illustrates how the Army looked when the process was complete in 1918.

TABLE 4 - Organization of Austria-Hungary's land forces as of 15 June 1918

- a) Permanent infantry divisions
 - . 41 k.u.k. (Common Army) units - given numbers from 1 to 60, not including the numbers assigned to the Schützen and Honved divisions
 - . 10 k.k. (Schützen, ex Landwehr) units - given numbers 13, 21, 22, 26, 43, 44, 45, 46, 54 and 56
 - . 9 k.u. (Honved) units - given numbers 23, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 51; however # 23 did not currently exist; the number was left free for the eventual re-creation of the 23rd Division which had been taken prisoner at Przemysl
- b) Infantry divisions to be dissolved after the war
 - . 2 k.u.k. units - # 62 and "I/XIX"
 - . 1 k.k. unit - # 106 (a Landsturm division)
 - . 4 k.u. units - # 64, 70, 74 and 155 (all Honved divisions)
- c) Independent brigades and groups (not affected by the new organization, and to be dissolved after the war)
 - . 3 k.u.k. units - 145th and 220th Brigades; the "Orient Corps" (latter brigade-sized)
 - . 8 k.k. units - 143rd, 159th and 187th Inf Bdes; 201st Lst Inf Bde; Ellison's and Lempruch's Brigades; Hospodarz's Group; the "Riva Sector"
 - . 1 k.u. unit - 216th Honved Inf Bde
- d) Cavalry divisions
 - . 9 k.u.k. units - given numbers 1-4 and 6-10
 - . 1 k.k. unit - # 12 ("Reitende Schützen" Div)
 - . 2 k.u. units - # 5 and 11 (Honved Cav Divs)

Thus the future peace-time army would have 11 more divisions (10 infantry and 1 cavalry) than in 1914; moreover, 9 more infantry divisions were envisioned than in earlier wartime plans. The simultaneous creation of Reserve and Landsturm units, which had been part of those plans, could no longer be considered after three years of costly fighting; this issue was put on hold for a later reorganization after peace was concluded. Meanwhile, in mid-1917 the infantry had 12 divisions more than the projected 60, and of course there was no intention of dispensing with this additional strength. The 12 divisions consisted almost entirely of units which weren't part of the planned future establishment; they were assigned numbers over 60 and it was intended to break them up after the war. In fact, some of these units were dissolved while the struggle continued.

In general, the re-organization was based on the assumption that the Aus-Hung. armed forces' basic structure would continue to contain the Common Army, the Austrian Landwehr and the Hungarian

Honved.⁵⁸ The divisions from the two halves of the Monarchy, now designated "Schützen" or "Honved" units, continued to bear their original numbers. Most of the new divisions intended to be part of the permanent forces belonged to the Common Army; many of them therefore assumed new designations.

At the same time, the brigades were to be uniformly organized and assigned numbers in an ongoing sequence based on the divisions to which they were assigned.⁵⁹ This process, under which no fewer than 53 of the 138 brigades had to change their designations, combined with many other simultaneous name changes to cause a good deal of temporary confusion.

It was very regrettable that this simplification marked an end to the distinguished career of the mountain brigades, whose special mission became superfluous. In the future every unit would be expected to be ready to fight in mountains (once pack-animals were attached), and this was consistent with lessons learned during the large-scale Alpine campaigns. Nonetheless, in many other situations - and especially in the Balkan theater of operations - there was no substitute for the small but cohesive mountain brigades, whose men had been welded together by long and arduous fighting.

2. New organization and other changes in the infantry

Regiments established with three battalions apiece

The new order of battle affected the infantry of the Common Army in a very noticeable fashion. Since the last re-organization (in 1882) the Army's infantry regiments had each contained four field battalions. Although this configuration no longer conformed to the newest theories (almost all of the large European armies had already changed their regimental organization on a "triangular" basis prior to the war), the Austro-Hungarians had grown very accustomed to the four-battalion standard and found that it did have many advantages.

58 But in fact this assumption was not a sure thing because of objections from Hungary, which were no longer being flatly resisted by the highest authorities, and because of the developing nationality problem in Austria.

59 Thus 1st ID would consist of the 1st and 2nd Inf Bdes, 22nd Sch Div of the 43rd and 44th Sch Bdes, 41st Hon ID of the 81st and 82nd Hon Inf Bdes, etc.

But now that each division was to have 12 infantry battalions, it would be necessary to either dissolve the brigade HQ - which the high command didn't want to do because of technical and personnel-political considerations - or to re-form the regiments with 3 battalions apiece. They adopted the second solution, which seemed to be practical both immediately and in the future.⁶⁰ Such a large increase in the number of regiments was best carried out while the war was still going on, so that the new units would afterwards already have a history and traditions. And the creation of new command positions would somewhat alleviate the problem of the lack of promotional prospects in the officer corps. In peacetime it would be possible to station entire regiments in the garrison of Bosnia-Herzegovina, instead of resuming the inconvenient policy, common before 1914, of periodically detaching individual battalions for this task.⁶¹ The question of whether the new structure would make it easier to mobilize in the future remained open. Also to be determined later was whether, as some hoped, smaller regiments would be able to make more rational use of the recruiting districts (especially in areas where several nationalities were intermingled). For now, however, the difficult task of re-drawing the borders of the recruiting districts was avoided; the new regiments wouldn't have their own home areas, or even their own replacement units, but would rely on the assets of the parent regiments from which they'd drawn their battalions. Naturally this decision led to many disputes and duplication of labor.

The re-organization of the k.u.k. infantry, which would have a deep impact on the structure of the Army, began in October 1917. In general, one battalion was removed from each of the old units, and then new regiments numbered 103 to 138 were created from these separate battalions.⁶² The traditional sub-categories

60 Since 1916 the k.u.k. War Ministry had proposed that the three-battalion standard should be adopted (though as part of a re-organization they intended to implement after the war ended). But until now the AOK had been completely opposed to this suggestion.

61 The intention was that Bosnia-Herzegovina's garrison would still consist of troops from outside its own borders (drawn from both Austria and Hungary). The units recruited in the Bosnian territories - eight infantry regiments and four Jaeger battalions - would in turn be stationed in either Austria (16 battalions) or Hungary (12 battalions).

62 The "New Organization and Distribution of the Aus.-Hung. Army as of 15 June 1918" (presented as an appendix at the end of this section) shows specifically which battalions of the old

within the foot soldiers weren't altered. The regiments of the Tyrol Kaiser Jaeger remained intact, as did those of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian infantry (the latter had already been partly reinforced). Also still in existence were the Feld Jaeger and Border Jaeger battalions. Thus when the re-organization was complete the Common Army infantry consisted of 150 regiments and 42 independent battalions. Without creating a single new battalion, the k.u.k. infantry achieved a lasting expansion by 35 regiments. (Compared to the peace-time order of battle before 1914, the gain was 40 regiments and 10 independent battalions.) Each of the 60 divisions would consist either of four regiments of three battalions or of three regiments plus three independent battalions.

TABLE 5 - The infantry before and after the great re-organization

Spring 1917

June 1918

a) The k.u.k. (Common) Army

(NOTE: In a number of infantry and Tyrol Kaiser Jaeger regiments, and also among the Jaeger and BH Jaeger there was a total of 31 extra battalions in existence as of spring 1917. These bns were gradually dissolved prior to the re-organization.)

. 106 inf regts (441 bns)	. 138 inf regts (414 bns)
[# 1-107 minus # 36]	[# 1-139 minus # 36]
. 4 Kaiser Jaeger regts (16 bns)	. 4 Kaiser Jaeger regts (12 bns)
. 5 B-H inf regts (20 bns)	. 8 B-H inf regts (24 bns)
. 33 Feld Jaeger bns	. 32 Feld Jaeger bns
[# 1-32 and a combined bn]	
. 8 B-H Feld Jaeger bns	. 4 B-H Feld Jaeger bns
. 6 Border Jaeger bns	. 6 Border Jaeger bns
. TOTAL BATTALIONS - 524	. TOTAL BATTALIONS - 492
	. 65 Sturm bns and 10 Sturm half bns
	Also - the following (to be dissolved after the war):
Also -	. 2 inf regts (8 bns) [# 203 & 204,

regiments were used to create the new ones. The number of IR 36, which had been dissolved as a punishment in 1915, was still kept vacant in the new system. Regiments # 103 to 107, which had already been created in the earlier years of the war [see Franek, "Entwicklung der Wehrmacht", p. 102], had consisted almost entirely of March battalions or improvised formations; they wouldn't be retained on a permanent basis. For the time being they continued to exist under new designations (as IR # 203 to 207), but received no more replacements and were gradually dissolved.

"Trachom" units)

- . 15 high mountain comps . 21 high mountain comps
 - . 13 mountain guide comps . 13 mountain guide comps
 - . 2 bicycle bns . 3 bicycle bns
 - . 8 SW ("southwestern") bns
 - . The Orient Corps (4 bns)
 - . 6 MG Sharpshooter Bns
 - . 17 independent MG comps
 - . 79 detached MG platoons
- (Thus the units to be dissolved included
20 bns)

b) The k.k. Landwehr

- . 35 Schützen regts (105 bns) . 35 Schützen regts (106 bns)
[# 1-37 minus 4 and 27] [# 1-37 minus 4 and 27]
- . 2 Mountain Schützen regts (6 bns) . 2 Mountain Schützen
regts (6 bns)
[# 1 & 2, ex Sch Regts 4 & 27] [# 1 & 2, ex Sch
Regts 4 & 27]
- . 3 Kaiser-Schützen regts (12 bns) . 3 Kaiser-Schützen regts (9
bns)
- . TOTAL BATTALIONS - 123 . TOTAL BATTALIONS - 121

c) The k.u. Honved

- . 44 Honved inf regts (127 bns) . 43 Honved inf regts (125
bns)
[# 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10-34; # 300 to [# 1, 3, 4, 6, 9,
10-33, 300-316 but minus
316 minus 303, 304 & 312; but 303, 304 & 312; # 311
and 316 had just
the Trachom regts 311 & 316 had 1 bn apiece; all
others had 3 bns]
just 1 bn apiece; # 34, 308 and
310 each had 2 bns]
- . 1 independent bn (Russ') . 1 independent bn (Russ')
- . TOTAL BATTALIONS - 164 . TOTAL BATTALIONS - 152

d) Landsturm

(Some of the Landsturm battalions were assigned to regiment HQ)

- . 97 k.k. Landsturm inf bns . 91 k.k. Landsturm inf bns
- . 51 k.u. Landsturm inf bns . 41 k.u. Landsturm inf bns
- . 7 Landsturm coast defense bns . 35 coast defense comps
[4 Austrian, 3 Hungarian] [equivalent to 9 bns]
- . 12 Dalmatian coast defense dets . - - -
[equivalent to 3 bns]
- . 4 Border Watch comps (1 bn) . 4 Border Watch comps (1 bn)
- . 1 "Streif" regt (3 bns) . "Streif" and Gendarmerie

units with

- . Gendarmerie units with various various designations
(equivalent to 10 bns)
- designations (2 bn equivalents)
- . TOTAL BATTALIONS - 164 . TOTAL BATTALIONS - 152

e) Grand total of battalions

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 939 infantry and 2 bicycle bns | 910 battalions, 65 Sturm |
| battalions, 10 Sturm | half bns, 3 bicycle bns, 6 MG |
| | Sharpshooter bns |

f) Volunteer units

- | | |
|---|--|
| . Schützen regts and bns from the Alpine | . Schützen regts and bns from the Alpine |
| Alpine lands (8 bn total) | lands (9 bn total) |
| . 50 Tyrol & Vorarlberg Stand-schützen | . 58 Tyrol & Vorarlberg Stand-schützen |
| schützen bns and comps | units of various size |
| .10 South Tyrol Stand-schützen comps | |
| . 5 Transylvania "Streif" comps | |
| . 2 Sharpshooter & Krieger "Korps" | . 3 Sharpshooter & Krieger "Korps" |
| . Ukrainian Legion (ca 1 ½ bn) | . Ukrainian Legion (ca 1 bn) |
| . Albanian Legion [14 comps, 2 and "bands", 2 | . Albanian Legion [16 comps |
| batties, 6 training bns] | batties, 8 training bns] |
| . Mitrovica Vol Bn | . Mitrovica Vol Bn |

The new organization of the infantry, which moreover took place simultaneously with the ongoing expansion of the artillery, was the cause of confusing unit re-designations and of considerable commotion within the Army. Large-scale troop movements, some of which seemed incomprehensible to the participants, were needed to complete the new organization⁶³; "for a time the area behind the front was as busy as an ant-hill."⁶⁴ And all too often the railroads had to be used for this traffic, at a time when the rail system was already over-burdened by trains carrying

63 See Krauss, "Die Ursachen unserer Niederlage" (Munich, 1921), p. 247 - "At one point two battalions from the same parent regiment were marching to join their new HQ - one from the Piave to south Tyrol and the other from south Tyrol to the Piave. They met each other at Feltre." TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: And Krauss added another significant sentence to this account - "This project didn't strengthen the troops' confidence in the top levels of the leadership."

64 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 493

"Heimkehrer" or units leaving the East. Thus the transportation crisis was exacerbated.

The k.k. Landwehr and k.u. Honved were completely untouched by the re-organization since their regiments, with the exception of the mountain units, had always been built from three battalions. By the end of 1917 the Honved had created 12 new regiments since the war started, but there was no intention to retain these units in peacetime.

Equipping the regiments with heavy weapons

Meanwhile in the winter of 1917-18 great progress was made in the ongoing effort to convert the entire infantry into units with a wide range of weaponry. In the Common Army as well as in the Landwehr and Honved the regiments consisted of a HQ staff, a telephone platoon, a technical company, one or two infantry guns, a machine gun company, and three infantry battalions (each of four companies). The placement of all means of communication under one telephone platoon was meant solely to facilitate training and the procurement of equipment; for tactical purposes each battalion had its own telephone section.⁶⁵

The technical infantry companies, which had evolved from the original "regimental pioneer section", were considerably expanded. Now each of them commanded, in addition to three technical platoons, a "close combat weapons platoon" whose various squads were split up during battle among different parts of the regiment.⁶⁶

The production of infantry guns had already increased so much in 1917 that it was planned to assign at least one platoon of these weapons to each new regiment. But further production was soon canceled, since the performance of the small guns was generally rated unfavorably (as noted in Volume VI). Two new types (37 and 47 mm caliber) were being tested; they could fire heavier projectiles and had greater muzzle velocity. However, by the end of the war they hadn't been assigned to field units.

65 An infantry telephone platoon consisted of a "regiment section", three "battalion sections" and a "mounted messenger section" (the latter had 4 men attached to each battalion).

66 A "close combat weapons platoon" consisted of one searchlight squad (with six 35 cm vacuum tube searchlights) and five trench mortar squads, each with 2 weapons. Three of the trench mortar squads were armed with 9 cm "Minen-werfer" and the other two had smaller "Granat-werfer."

Continuing expansion of machine gun units

The increase in the number of weapons in a machine gun company to eight had been initiated in October 1916. It made astonishing progress, and a year later was practically complete. Because industrial capacity devoted to infantry weapons had significantly increased since spring 1917 and was still rising, suggestions were made to the high command for the development of new, lighter machine guns.

Thus far the increasing importance of automatic weapons had benefitted primarily the defending side. Naturally as time went on there was a search for an automated weapon which could be brought forward directly with the assaulting infantry so as to reinforce their strength and deal with sudden spurts of enemy resistance. All of the major armies engaged in the World War therefore sought to supplement their original heavy machine guns with a second model that would have the same firepower but would be lighter and wouldn't require any additional supply apparatus.

When the Aus-Hung. Army considered this question, it was decided to simply modify the existing weapon; this was based on the lack of a tested alternate model and a desire to take advantage of the existing industrial facilities to produce the guns as quickly and easily as possible. Thus a standard "heavy" Schwarzlos machine gun - without its protective shield and with a lighter frame - could become a light machine gun. But this solution wasn't fully satisfactory, since the new weapons still weren't light enough to be carried without special equipment.⁶⁷ It was decided that there was no other possible way to quickly get new models in production.

By January 1918 each battalion was to have a light MG platoon with 4 weapons (2 in each of its 2 sections); by August each company was scheduled to have such a platoon. In reality the program couldn't be fully implemented on this schedule, but eventually it did ensure that the number of machine guns per

67 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: See J.S. Lucas, "Austro-Hungarian Infantry 1914-1918" (Wealdstone, 1973), pp. 83. [The new model] "could be carried by a five-man team using special packs although it was usually brought forward by one of the two carts on the platoon establishment...Everything was manhandled and not the least was the water which these weapons used up very quickly...." Because of these drawbacks, we have chosen to describe the new model as a "light" MG (as did Lucas) rather than to literally translate its title in the original, which was "hand" MG.

regiment jumped from 24 to 72.⁶⁸ In June 1918 about 15,700 machine guns (of all types) were actually deployed in the battle lines of the Aus-Hung. troops; this was twice as many as had been available a year earlier, and almost ten times as many as existed at the start of the war.

No opportunity to reinforce the machine gun troops was left unexplored. The idea of permanently strengthening certain defensive sectors with so-called "fixed MG's" was adopted for only a brief period. On the other hand, the creation of special large machine gun formations in June 1918 was believed to offer some new advantages.⁶⁹ They were used as training formations, but above all as a powerful source of reserve firepower which the higher command HQ could bring temporarily to the front as the situation warranted.

The use of special infantry units

A large role was played by some other formations which were created due to the war's special circumstances, even though it hadn't in all cases been decided to what extent they would continue to exist in the peacetime order of battle.

The most important of these units were the Storm Battalions which now were being raised, one for each division. (Each independent brigade was to have a "Storm Half Battalion" and each cavalry division a "Storm Half Regiment"). The original storm battalions which had been maintained by various army-level HQ now became training cadres. The new storm troops were selected from the bravest, best-trained and most efficient soldiers. They would serve not only as proponents of and trainers in the newest tactics⁷⁰, but also as an elite force, motivated by an attacking spirit, which could intervene at decisive points on the battlefield. First each regiment created a storm company of three platoons plus a light MG squad. These four storm companies within each division were gradually joined by a (heavy) MG company, an infantry gun platoon, a technical platoon, a close combat weapons platoon (equipped with trench mortars and

68 In June 1918 about 380 battalions had their full allotment of light MG's. By the end of the war around 2000 light MG platoons had joined the troops in the field.

69 In summer 1918 the 11th Army had 18 extra MG companies which were brought together to create six "Machine Gun Sharpshooter Bns", each with 3 companies.

70 Their first task was to train two squads in each company of the division how to use storm troop tactics.

searchlights), a flamethrower platoon and a telephone section. Thus constituted, a storm battalion was a substantial force, fully capable of undertaking both training and combat assignments.

In similar fashion the special formations for warfare in Alpine conditions - the high mountain and mountain guide companies - also gained in importance. The high mountain companies each consisted of four platoons (three infantry and one machine gun); they reached their greatest strength (32 units) in winter 1917-18, but only 21 companies still existed in June.⁷¹ The mountain guide units were considered even more important; they were a force of 13 companies, of which 4 were supposed to be maintained in the peacetime order of battle.

The Common Army also contained some miscellaneous units. "Trachom" IR # 203 and 204 consisted of recuperating wounded. The eight "Southwestern Bns" of Italian-speaking soldiers who were kept on the Eastern front for political reasons. Certain special units were raised for specific periods or missions, such as the "Orient Corps" of four battalions which was originally created to serve in the Asian theater of operations. Finally a third bicycle battalion was formed in February 1918.

Thus despite the lack of manpower the first line units were noticeably expanded. This was not true of the Landsturm combat units, which for a long time had received just a few replacements, and at irregular intervals (see Volume VI). In June 1918 only 154 Landsturm combat battalions still existed (as opposed to 173 at the start of 1917 and 216 in May 1916). Many of these had performed brilliantly on the south Tyrol front or were useful for coast defense, so every effort had been made to keep up their strength. But eventually as the units melted down they had to be dissolved, and their personnel divided among Common Army units or placed in battalions on the lines of communication. Since 1917 the number of Hungarian Landsturm battalions in particular had declined. This was due to the demand of the Hungarian government in 1917-18 that the burdens on Austria and Hungary should be equalized based approximately on the relative sizes of their populations. The Hungarians sought to reach this balance by dissolving many of their formations.

The strength of the volunteer formations was even more in decline. The volunteer rifle units from the Alpine lands - and

71 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Presumably the number of high mountain companies was reduced because the new front along the Piave ran mostly through plains rather than highlands.

in particular the Tyrol and Vorarlberg Stand-Schützen - played an important role along the high mountain front, but due to lack of replacements they couldn't avoid a process of amalgamation. Thus in May 1918 it was necessary to reorganize them by consolidating platoons and companies recruited in the same areas. Other volunteer units ceased to exist. The Polish Legion was dissolved for diplomatic reasons. The small Ukrainian Legion was maintained more on political than on military grounds. The Albanian volunteers were self-willed adventurers; they proved useful for some specific assignments, but failed completely to develop any conventional units.

In their outward appearance the soldiers of the Central Powers had become completely "field gray" warriors. From the second half of 1917, steel helmets and gas masks were almost always part of their equipment. This certainly increased the weight which the men had to carry in addition to their fully-packed rucksacks. At this time shortages of textiles began to have a negative impact on the soldiers' clothing. Uniforms were sewn from inferior cloth; they didn't last as long and were increasingly difficult to replace. The situation regarding footwear and underclothing was no better. It was only due to the conscientious and frugal habits of the troops that despite these difficulties the severe shortage of clothing, though a growing and chronic issue, was still not an overwhelming problem until deep in the summer of 1918.

Appendix - New Organization and Distribution of the Aus.-Hung. Army as of 15 June 1918

NOTES:

- . A field artillery brigade with the same number was assigned to each ID and CD. In an ID, the field artillery brigade consisted of two field artillery regiments, one bearing the same number as the division and the other adding 100, plus a Heavy FAR and a Mtn Arty Bn with the same number as the division. Thus under 12th ID the 12th FA Bde consisted of FAR 12 & 112, Heavy FAR 12 and Mtn Arty Bn 12. A Cav FA Bde was supposed to have one FAR and one Heavy FAR, but except for in the 9th Bde none of the Heavy FAR had been created by 15 June.
- . Sapper bns with the same numbers as their divisions were to be assigned to ID # 1-60. Actually, however, in most cases only each Bn's 1st Company was actually under the divisional HQ as of 15 June.

a) Units to be retained in peacetime

1) Infantry divisions

- . 1st ID - In Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group of 10th Army
 - . 1st Bde - IR # 5 (3), 61 (ex IV/43, II/61, III/61)
 - . 2nd Bde - IR # 112 (ex V/71, II/72, III/71); FJB 17, 25; BH FJB 3
 - . 1st FA Bde was detached to 55th ID, but 43rd FA Bde was attached to 1st ID
 - . 1st Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Hon HR 10, 1st Comp/SB 1
- . 2nd ID - In General Command # 4
 - . 3rd Bde - IR # 110 (ex III/40, IV/40, I/10); FJB 4, 29 (but FJB 29 was detached to the interior)
 - . 4th Bde - IR # 40 (ex I/40, II/40, I/90), 95 (ex I/95, II/95, III/55)
 - . 2nd FA Bde was detached to 6th ID
 - . 2nd Sturm Bn, 8th Sqdn/Reit SchR 3, 1st Comp/SB 2
- . Edelweiss Div (3rd ID) - In VI Corps of 11th Army
 - . 5th Bde - IR # 14 (3), 107 (ex III/59, X/59, IV/7)
 - . 6th Bde - IR # 59 (3), 114 (ex IV/14, X/14, III/49)
 - . 3rd FA Bde was detached to 60th ID, but the 15th FA Bde and the 3rd Cav FA Bde were attached to 3rd ID
 - . 3rd Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 3
- . 4th ID - In XXVI Corps of 11th Army
 - . 7th Bde - IR # 9 (3), 99 (3)
 - . 8th Bde - IR # 8 (3), 49 (3)
 - . 4th FA Bde was detached to 27th ID
 - . 4th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 4
- . 5th ID - In XIII Corps of 11th Army

- . 9th Bde - IR # 54 (3), 101 (3)
- . 10th Bde - IR # 13 (ex I/13, II/13, IV/57), 113 (ex III/13, IV/13, IV/20)
 - . 5th FA Bde was detached to 27th ID
 - . 5th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 5
- . 6th ID - In III Corps of 11th Army
 - . 11th Bde - IR # 81 (3), 127 (ex IV/47, V/47, IV/27)
 - . 12th Bde - IR # 17 (3), 27 (3)
 - . 6th FA Bde was detached to 18th ID, but the 2nd, 21st and 28th FA Bdes were all attached to 6th ID
 - . 6th Sturm Bn, March Sqdn/DR 5, 1st Comp/SB 6
- . 7th ID - In the interior
 - . 13th Bde - IR # 37 (3), 38 (3)
 - . 14th Bde - IR # 68 (ex I/68, II/68, III/38), 132 (ex III/68, IV/68, I/32)
 - . 7th FA Bde was detached to 33rd ID
 - . 7th Sturm Bn (also detached to 33rd ID), 4th Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 7
- . Kaiser Jaeger Div (8th ID) - In XIV Corps of 10th Army
 - . 1st KJ Bde - KJR # 1 (3), 2 (3)
 - . 2nd KJ Bde - KJR # 3 (3), 4 (3)
 - . 8th FA Bde
 - . 8th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Tyrol Reit Sch Bn; 1st & 2nd Comps of SB 8
- . 9th ID - In the AOK's reserve
 - . 17th Bde - IR # 91 (3), 102 (3)
 - . 18th Bde - IR # 30 (3), 80 (3)
 - . 9th FA Bde, along with its FAR, was detached to 8th CD; the Bde's Hvy FAR 9 was with 13th Sch Div, Mtn Arty Bn 9 with the 50th ID
 - . 9th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/UR 12, 1st Comp/SB 9
- . 10th ID - In XXIII Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 19th Bde - IR # 15 (3), 55 (3)
 - . 20th Bde - IR # 21 (3), 98 (3)
 - . 10th FA Bde and attached 4th Cav FA Bde
 - . 10th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/Reit SchR 3; 1st Comp/SB 10
- . 11th ID - In XVII Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 21st Bde - IR # 89 (3), 90 (3)
 - . 22nd Bde - IR # 58 (3), 115 (ex III/95, IV/95, I/15)
 - . 11th FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 11 which was with 16th ID)
 - . 11th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 11
- . 12th ID - In XXIII Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 23rd Bde - IR # 56 (3), 100 (ex V/100, I/56, III/100)
 - . 24th Bde - IR # 3 (3), 20 (3)
 - . 12th FA Bde
 - . Sturm Bn 12, 4th Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 12

- . 13th Sch Div - In XXIV Corps of 6th Army
 - . 25th Bde - SchR 1 (3), 24 (3)
 - . 26th Bde - SchR 14 (3), 25 (3)
 - . 13th FA Bde; attached 37th Hon FA Bde and Hvy FAR 9
 - . 13th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 13
- . 14th ID - In VII Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 27th Bde - IR # 71 (3), 72 (3)
 - . 28th Bde - IR # 48 (3), 76 (3)
 - . 14th FA Bde; attached 44th FA Bde
 - . 14th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 14
- . 15th ID - In XII Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 29th Bde - IR # 66 (3), 34 (ex III/65, IV/65, II/34)
 - . 30th Bde - IR # 60 (3), 65 (ex I/65, II/65, II/66)
 - . 15th FA Bde was detached to 3rd ID (and its Mtn Arty Bn 15 was with 159th Inf Bde)
 - . 15th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 15
- . 16th ID - In XIII Corps of 11th Army
 - . 31st Bde - IR # 2 (3), 138 (ex III/64, IV/64, IV/50)
 - . 32nd Bde - IR # 31 (3), 52 (3)
 - . 16th FA Bde; attached 5th FA Bde and Hvy FAR 11
 - . 16th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 16
- . 17th ID - In XXIV Corps of 6th Army
 - . 33rd Bde - IR # 39 (ex I/39, II/39, II/5), 139 (ex III/39, IV/39, IV/37)
 - . 34th Bde - IR # 43 (3), 46 (3)
 - . 17th FA Bde and attached 41st Hon FA Bde
 - . 17th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/HR 5, 1st Comp/SB 17
- . 18th ID - In VI Corps of 11th Army
 - . 35th Bde - IR # 126 (ex IV/2, IV/19, IV/26); FJB 7, 20, 22
 - . 36th Bde - IR # 104 (ex IV/4, V/4, IV/84), 117 (ex IV/17, IV/97, III/87)
 - . 18th FA Bde; attached 6th FA Bde and Hvy FAR 72
 - . 18th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/Hon HR 10, 1st Comp/SB 18
- . 19th ID - In XXI Corps of 10th Army
 - . 37th Bde - IR # 35 (3) 75 (ex I/75, IV/91, III/75)
 - . 38th Bde - IR # 50 (3), 111 (ex IV/11, III/88, III/35)
 - . 19th FA Bde
 - . 19th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 19
- . 20th Hon ID - In XV Corps of 11th Army
 - . 39th Bde [on 26 June detached to 8th CD] - Hon IR # 3 (3), 4 (3)
 - . 40th Bde - Hon IR # 1 (3), 17 (3)
 - . 20th Hon FA Bde; attached FAR 160
 - . 20th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/HR 3, 1st Comp/SB 20
- . 21st Sch Div - In the interior
 - . 41st Bde - SchR # 6 (3), 7 (3)
 - . 42nd Bde - SchR # 8 (3), 28 (3)

- . 21st FA Bde was detached to 6th ID
- . 21st Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 21
- . 22nd Sch Div - In Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group of 10th Army
 - . 43rd Bde - SchR # 3 (3), 26 (3)
 - . 44th Bde - SchR # 23 (3); K-Sch Regt # I (3)
 - . 22nd FA Bde was detached to 52nd ID, but 39th Hon FA Bde was attached to 22nd Div
 - . 22nd Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/DR 12, 1st Comp/SB 22
- . 23rd Hon ID - Formation was planned for the future
- . 24th ID - In VII Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 47th Bde - IR # 45 (3), 109 (ex IV/9, II/45, IV/77)
 - . 48th Bde - IR # 10 (3), 77 (3)
 - . 24th FA Bde; attached 48th FA Bde
 - . 24th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/Reit SchR 3, 1st Comp/SB 24
- . 25th ID - In the interior
 - . 49th Bde [detached to General Command # 4] - IR # 4 (3), 84 (3)
 - . 50th Bde - IR # 128 (ex IV/52, IV/62, I/51); FJB 5, 6, 10
 - . 25th FA Bde, along with its FAR 125, detached to 3rd CD; FAR 25 was with 56th Sch Div; Hvy FAR 25 and Mtn Arty Bn 25 were with 38th Hon ID
 - . 25th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 25
- . 26th Sch Div - In VI Corps of 11th Army
 - . 51st Bde - SchR # 11 (3), 12 (3)
 - . 52nd Bde - SchR # 9 (3), 10 (3)
 - . 26th FA Bde; attached Hvy FAR 45
 - . 26th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Reit SchR 3, 1st Comp/SB 26
- . 27th ID - In XXVI Corps of 11th Army
 - . 53rd Bde - IR # 25 (3), 34 (3)
 - . 54th Bde - IR # 67 (3), 85 (3)
 - . 27th FA Bde; attached 4th FA Bde
 - . 27th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 27
- . 28th ID - In III Corps of 1th Army
 - . 55th Bde - IR # 11 (3); BH IR # 7 (ex III/BH 3, V/BH 3; BH FJB 7; the latter Bn was detached under 47th ID)
 - . 56th Bde - IR # 28 (3), 47 (3)
 - . 28th FA Bde was detached to 6th ID
 - . 28th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/DR 3, 1st Comp/SB 28
- . 29th ID - In IV Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 57th Bde - IR # 94 (ex I/94, II/94, I/28; the latter Bn was detached under 47th ID), 121 (ex III/94, IV/94, III/74)
 - . 58th Bde - IR # 92 (ex I/92, III/73, III/92), 137 (ex II/92, IV/92, IV/42)
 - . 29th FA Bde was detached to 70th Hon ID
 - . 29th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 29
- . 30th ID - In XXV Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 59th Bde - IR # 18 (3), 97 (3)

- . 60th Bde - FJB 1, 13, 14, 16, 18, 27
- . 30th FA Bde
- . 30th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 30
- . 31st ID - In XXIV Corps of 6th Army
 - . 61st Bde - IR # 32 (3), 69 (3)
 - . 62nd Bde - IR # 44 (3); BH IR # 3 (3)
 - . 31st FA Bde; the 35th FA Bde was attached (minus its Mtn Arty Bn 35 which was with 20th Hon ID)
 - . 31st Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/HR 1, 1st Comp/SB 31
- . 32nd ID - In XXVI Corps of 6th Army
 - . 63rd Bde - IR # 70 (3), 123 (ex III/23, IV/23, III/86)
 - . 64th Bde - IR # 23 (ex I/12, II/23, I/6), 86 (3)
 - . 32nd FA Bde; attached 53rd FA Bde and Hvy FAR 54
 - . 32nd Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/HR 1; 1st & 2nd Comps/SB 32
- . 33rd ID - In XVI Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 65th Bde - IR # 63 (ex I/83, II/83, I/48), 106 (ex III/83, IV/83, III/76)
 - . 66th Bde - IR # 12 (3), 19 (3)
 - . 33rd FA Bde; attached 7th and 46th FA Bdes
 - . 33rd Sturm Bn, attached 7th Sturm Bn; 3rd Sqdn/HR 4; 1st Comp of SB 33
- . 34th ID - In XII Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 67th Bde - IR # 29 (3), 93 (3); FJB 28, 32
 - . 68th Bde - IR # 33 (3); FJB 24
 - . 34th FA Bde (minus Mtn Arty Bn 34, attached to 70th Hon ID)
 - . 34th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/HR 1, 1st Comp/SB 34
- . 35th ID - In the AOK's reserve
 - . 69th Bde - IR # 62 (3), 64 (3)
 - . 70th Bde - IR # 51 (3), 63 (3)
 - . 35th FA Bde was detached to 31st DI, except Mtn Arty Bn 35 which was detached to 20th Hon ID
 - . 35th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 35
- . 36th ID - In VI Corps of 11th Army
 - . 71st Bde - IR # 78 (ex I/78, II/78, II/70), 116 (ex III/78, IV/78, IV/16)
 - . 72nd Bde - IR # 16 (3), 53 (3)
 - . 36th FA Bde was detached to 42nd Hon ID
 - . 36th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/Hon HR 10, 1st Comp/SB 36
- . 37th Hon ID - In General Command # 1
 - . 73rd Bde - Hon IR # 13 (3), 18 (3)
 - . 74th Bde - Hon IR # 14 (3), 15 (3)
 - . 37th Hon FA Bde was detached to 13th Sch Div
 - . 37th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 37
- . 38th Hon ID - In XIII Corps of 11th Army
 - . 75th Bde - Hon IR # 21 (3), 22 (3)
 - . 76th Bde - Hon IR # 23 (3), 24 (3)
 - . 38th Hon FA Bde; attached 74th Hon FA Bde, 106th FA Bde and

- Hvy FAR 25
 - . Sturm Bn 38; attached Sturm Bn 39; 6th Comp/Hon HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 38
- . 39th Hon ID - In the interior
 - . 77th Bde - Hon IR # 9 (3), 11 (3)
 - . 78th Bde - Hon IR # 10 (3), 16 (3)
 - . 39th Hon FA Bde was detached to 22nd Sch Div
 - . 39th Sturm Bn (detached to 38th Hon ID), 1st Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 39
- . 40th Hon ID - In the interior
 - . 79th Bde - Hon IR 29 (3), 30 (3)
 - . 80th Bde [detached to Fiume Sector] - Hon IR # 6 (3), 19 (3)
 - . 40th Hon FA Bde was detached to 159th Inf Bde
 - . 40th Sturm Bn [detached to 42nd Hon ID], 5th Sqdn/HR 1 (no pioneer units currently assigned)
- . 41st Hon ID - In the AOK's reserve
 - . 81st Bde - Hon IR # 12 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 82nd Bde - Hon IR # 20 (3), 31 (3)
 - . 41st Hon FA Bde was detached to 17th ID
 - . 41st Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/Hon HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 41
- . 42nd Hon ID - In XIII Corps of 11th Army
 - . 83rd Bde - Hon IR # 25 (3), 26 (3)
 - . 84th Bde - Hon IR # 27 (3), 28 (3)
 - . 42nd Hon FA Bde; attached 36th FA Bde and Hvy FAR 59
 - . 42nd Sturm Bn; attached 40th Sturm Bn; 4th Sqdn/Hon HR 10; 1st and 4th Comps/SB 42
- . 43rd Sch Div - In General Command # 4
 - . 85th Bde - SchR # 5 (3), 16 (3)
 - . 86th Bde - SchR # 20 (3), 22 (3) (latter detached to the Montenegro garrison)
 - . 43rd FA Bde was detached to 1st ID
 - . 43rd Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 43
- . 44th Sch Div - In VII Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 87th Bde - SchR # 2 (3), 21 (3)
 - . 88th Bde - Mtn SchR # 1 (3), 2 (3)
 - . 44th FA Bde was detached to 14th ID
 - . 44th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/DR 10, 1st Comp/SB 44
- . 45th Sch Div - In Bosnia-Herzegovina-Dalmatia Command
 - . 89th Bde - SchR # 33 (3); k.k. Lst IR # 51 (3)
 - . 90th Bde - SchR # 17 (3), 18 (3)
 - . 45th FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 45, detached to 26th Sch Div)
 - . 45th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/Reit SchR 3, 1st Comp/SB 45
- . 46th Sch Div - In XVI Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 91st Bde - SchR # 31 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 92nd Bde - SchR # 13 (3), 15 (3)

- . 46th FA Bde was detached to 33rd ID
- . 46th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 46
- . 47th ID - In XIX Corps (Albania)
 - . 93rd Bde - Bn III/94 [ex I/28]; Grenz Jaeg Bn 1; k.k. Lst Bn 45; k.u. Lst Bns III/29, I/30, I/31
 - . 94th Bde - Bn III/BH 7 [ex BH FJB 7]; BH FJB 1, 2; k.u. Lst Bns IV/4, II/32
 - . 94th FA Bde was detached to 9th CD, but 47th ID did have the "Albania Arty Command"
 - . 47th Sturm Bn; one zug apiece from the Dalm. Reit Sch Bn and from 1st Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11; 1st Comp/SB 47
- . 48th ID - In XV Corps of 11th Army
 - . 95th Bde - IR # 79 (3), 120 (ex I/100, II/100, I/1)
 - . 96th Bde - IR # 73 (3), 119 (ex IV/54, IV/3, I/93)
 - . 48th FA Bde was detached to 24th ID
 - . 48th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/Tyrol Reit Sch Bn, 1st Comp/SB 48
- . 49th ID - In XX Corps of 10th Army
 - . 97th Bde - IR # 118 (ex I/21, I/98, III/18); FJB 9, 30
 - . 98th Bde - IR # 136 (ex I/102, II/75, IV/75); BH IR # 8 (ex III/BH 4, V/BH 4; BH FJB 8); FJB 8
 - . 49th FA Bde (see under "Riva Sector" for detachments)
 - . 49th Sturm Bn, ½ of 3 March Sqdn/DR 4, 1st Comp/SB 49
- . 50th ID - In XV Corps of 11th Army
 - . 99th Bde - IR # 130 (ex IV/30, IV/80, IV/89), 133 (ex IV/33, III/46, II/101)
 - . 100 Bde - IR # 129 (ex I/61, IV/61, IV/29); BH IR # 1 (3)
 - . 50th FA Bde; attached 62nd FA Bde
 - . 50th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/Tyrol Reit Sch Bn, 1st Comp/SB 50
- . 51st Hon ID - In the AOK's reserve
 - . 101st Bde - Hon IR # 301 (3), 302 (3)
 - . 102nd Bde - Hon IR # 300 (3), 305 (3)
 - . 51st Hon FA Bde was detached to 58th ID
 - . 51st Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/Hon HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 51
- . 52nd ID - In III Corps of 11th Army
 - . 103rd Bde - IR # 26 (3); BH IR # 6 (ex IV/BH 2, V/BH 2; BH FJB 6)
 - . 104th Bde - IR # 42 (3), 74 (3)
 - . 52nd FA Bde; attached 22nd FA Bde
 - . 52nd Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/Tyrol Reit Sch Bn, 1st Comp/SB 52
- . 53rd ID - Directly under 11th Army
 - . 105th Bde - IR # 82 (ex I/82, II/82, IV/2), 131 (ex III/82, IV/82, III/31)
 - . 106th Bde - IR # 124 (ex IV/24, IV/41, IV/58), 125 (ex IV/25, II/60, IV/67) (I/125, ex IV/25, was detached to Bde Lempruch)
 - . 53rd FA Bde was detached to 32nd ID
 - . 53rd Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Tyrol Reit Sch Bn, 1st Comp/SB 53

- . 54th Sch Div - In XXV Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 107th Bde - SchR # 19 (3), 35 (3)
 - . 108th Bde - SchR # 29 (3), 30 (3)
 - . 54th FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 54 and Mtn Arty Bn 54, both detached to 32nd ID)
 - . 54th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 54
- . 55th ID - In I Corps of 11th Army
 - . 109th Bde - IR # 7 (3); BH IR # 2 (3)
 - . 110th Bde - IR # 6 (3); BH IR # 4 (3)
 - . 55th FA Bde; attached 1st FA Bde and 10th Cav FA Bde
 - . 55th Sturm Bn, 1st March Sqdn/DR 4, 1st Comp/SB 55
- . 56th Sch Div - In XXI Corps of 10th Army
 - . 111th Bde - SchR # 3 (3); K-SchR # III (3)
 - . 112th Bde - SchR # 37 (3); K-SchR # II (3)
 - . 56th FA Bde; attached FAR 25
 - . 56th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/Reit SchR 3, 1st Comp/SB 56
- . 57th ID - Directly under the Isonzo Army
 - . 113th Bde - IR # 22 (ex I/22, IV/22, V/22), 87 (3)
 - . 114th Bde - IR # 57 (3), 122 (ex V/97, II/22, III/22)
 - . 57th FA Bde was detached to 64th Hon ID
 - . 57th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 57
- . 58th ID - In XVI Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 115th Bde - IR # 96 (3), 135 (ex III/96, IV/96, IV/53)
 - . 116th Bde - IR # 1 (3); FJB 2, 11, 23
 - . 58th FA Bde; attached 51st Hon FA Bde
 - . 58th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 58
- . 59th ID - In XII Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 117th Bde - IR # 24 (3); FJB 3, 15, 26 (but FJB 15 & 26 were detached in the interior)
 - . 118th Bde - IR # 41 (3), 103 (ex I/63, VII/63, III/85) (I/103, ex I/63, detached to 35th ID; III/103, ex III/85, detached to 58th ID)
 - . 59th FA Bde (minus detachments - Hvy FAR 59 with 42nd Hon ID and Mtn Arty Bn 59 with 10th Army)
 - . 59th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/Hon HR 10, 1st Comp/SB 59
- . 60th ID - In I Corps of 11th Army
 - . 119th Bde - IR # 108 (ex III/8, IV/81, I/99); FJB 12, 19; BH FJB 4
 - . 120th Bde - IR # 105 (ex I/44, II/52, III/69); BH IR 5 (ex V/BH 1, BH FJB 5, III/BH 1)
 - . 60th FA Bde (minus FAR 160, attached to 20th Hon ID); attached 3rd FA Bde
 - . 60th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn of Dalm. Reit Sch Bn; ½ of 5th Sqdn/Reit SchR 1, 1st Comp/SB 60

2) Cavalry Divisions

- . 1st CD - In XXIII Corps of the Isonzo Army

- . 6th Cav Bde [hadn't yet arrived] - HR 7, 14
- . 7th Cav Bde - HR 5, 12
- . 1st Cav FA Bde
- . 1st Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 2nd CD - Directly under the Eastern Army
 - . 3rd Cav Bde - HR 3, 6, 16; UR 5
 - . 2nd Cav FA Bde
 - . 2nd Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 3rd CD - Directly under 11th Army
 - . 17th Cav Bde - DR 3; HR 8; UR 4, 7
 - . 3rd Cav FA Bde was detached to 3rd ID; HQ of 25th FA Bde along with FAR 125 were attached to 3rd CD instead
 - . 3rd Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 4th CD - In General Command # 4
 - . 21st Cav Bde - DR 5, 9; UR 1, 13
 - . 4th Cav FA Bde was detached to 10th ID
 - . 4th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 5th Hon CD - In XII Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 25th Hon Cav Bde - Hon HR 1, 6, 7, 8
 - . 5th Hon Cav FA Bde
 - . 5th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 6th CD - In III Corps of 11th Army
 - . 5th Cav Bde - DR 6, 8, 11; HR 15
 - . 6th Cav FA Bde
 - . 6th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 7th CD - In XVII Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . Hoyos' Combined Bde - DR 10, 12; UR 2, 3; Bn V/IR 103
 - . 7th Cav FA Bde
 - . 7th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 8th CD - In II Corps of 6th Army
 - . 15th Cav Bde - DR 2, 14; UR 11, 12
 - . 8th Cav FA Bde; attached 11th Hon Cav FA Bde and 9th FA Bde (from 9th Bde the Hvy FAR 9 detached to 13th Sch Div and Mtn Arty Bn 9 detached to 50th ID)
 - . 8th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 9th CD - In VII Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 9th Cav Bde - DR 1, 4, 13; UR 6
 - . 9th Cav FA Bde; attached 47th FA Bde
 - . 9th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 10th CD - Directly under 11th Army
 - . 4th Cav Bde - HR 9, 10, 13; UR 8; k.u. Lst HR 1
 - . 10th Cav FA Bde was detached to 20th Hon ID
 - . 10th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 11th Hon CD - Directly under 6th Army
 - . 24th Hon Cav Bde - Hon HR 2, 3
 - . Heinlein's Group - Hon HR 5, 9

- . 11th Hon Cav FA Bde was detached to 8th CD
- . 11th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn
- . 12th Reitende Schützen Div - At Toblach in the AOK's reserve
 - . 25th R.S. Bde - Reit SchR 2, 4, 5, 6
 - . 12th Cav FA Bde
 - . 12th Cav Sturm Half Regt; a combined mounted sqdn

b) Units to be dissolved after the war

1) Divisions or division-level HQ

- . 62nd ID - In Mackensen's [German] Army Group
 - . 121st Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR # 9 (3), 409 (3)
 - . 124th Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR # 11 (3), 27 (3) (latter was detached in the Romanian garrison)
 - . 62nd FA Bde was detached to 50th ID; 72nd FA Bde was attached to 62nd ID, but its Hvy FAR 72 and Mtn Arty Bn 72 in turn were serving with 18th ID
 - . 62nd Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/HR 11; no sappers
- . 64th Hon ID - In IV Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 127th Hon Bde - k.u. Lst IR # 6 (3), 19 (3)
 - . 128th Hon Bde - k.u. Lst IR # 1 (3), 3 (3); k.u. Lst Bn V/4
 - . 64th Hon FA Bde; attached 57th FA Be and Hon Hvy FAR 255
 - . 64th Sturm Bn; 6th Sqdn/HR 1; 2nd Comp/SB 34
- . 70th Hon ID - In IV Corps of the Isonzo Army
 - . 207th Hon Bde - Hon IR # 313 (3), 315 (3)
 - . 208th Hon Bde - Hon IR # 33 (3), 34 (3)
 - . 70th Hon FA Bde; attached 29th FA Bde
 - . 70th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/Hon HR 4, 2nd Comp/SB 26
- . 74th Hon ID - In XIII Corps of 11th Army
 - . Papp's Bde - k.u. Lst IR # 5 (4); k.u. Lst Bn VI/3
 - . Savoly's Bde - Hon IR # 306 (3), 307 (3)
 - . 74th Hon FA Bde was detached to 38th Hon ID
 - . 74th Sturm Bn; 5th Sqdn/HR 1, 2nd Sqdn/Hon HR 4; 3rd Comp of SB 57
- . 106th ID - In the Poland "General Government"
 - . 210th Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR # 31 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 211th Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR # 6 (3), 25 (3)
 - . 106th FA Bde [FAR 206 & 306; Hvy FAR 206, Mtn Arty Bn 206] was detached to 38th Hon ID
- . 155th Hon ID - In XXV Corps of the Eastern Army
 - . 129th Hon Bde - Hon IR # 309 (3), 310 (3)
 - . 130th Hon Bde - Hon IR # 308 (3); k.u. Lst IR # 20 (3)
 - . 155th Hon FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 255 which was detached to 64th Hon ID)
 - . 155th Sturm Bn; 4th Sqdn/HR 1, 3rd Sqdn/Hon HR 4; 3rd Comp of SB 16

- . Group I/XIX - In XIX Corps (Albania)
 - . Bn II/118; Grenz Jaeg Bns 2, 3, 4, 5; Bn IV/SchR 33; k.k. Lst IR 23 (2); k.k. Lst Bns I/37, 46, 158; k.u. Lst Bn I/9
 - . "Artillery Command of the 220th Inf Bde"
 - . One zug of a sqdn from DR 5; no Sturm unit or sappers

2) Brigades or brigade-level HQ

- . 143rd Bde [in Mackensen's German Army Group] - k.u.k. SW Bns 3, 4, 7; k.k. Lst Bns 23, 44, 150; one zug of a sqdn of DR 4
- . 145th Bde [directly under the Eastern Army] - Bns VI/48, V/69, V/76, V/103 (but V/69 was serving as the Emperor's escort in Vienna and V/103 was detached to 7th CD); a Sturm half bn; 3/4 of the 3rd Sqdn/Hon HR 10
- . 159th Bde [in XIV Corps of 10th Army] - k.k. Lst Bn 150; Carinthia Vol SchR; Upper Aus., Salzburg & Styria Vol Sch Bns; attached 40th Hon FA Bde; a Sturm half bn; one zug of the March Sqdn/DR 15; 3rd Comp/SB 31
- . 187th Bde [in General Command # 4] - IR # 203 (3); k.k. Lst IR # 22 (3); k.k. Lst Bns 24, 153 (but the two latter bns were detached in the interior); a Sturm half bn
- . 201st Lst Bde [in XVI Corps of the Isonzo Army] - k.k. Lst IR # 1 (3), 2 (3); a Sturm half bn (detached to 1st CD); a zug of a sqdn of DR 4
- . 216th Hon Bde [in Mackensen's German Army Group] - k.u. Lst IR # 17 (30, 29 (3); a Sturm half bn; 2nd Sqdn/HR 1
- . 220th Bde [in XIX Corps, Albania] - IR # 88; an "Arty Command" (which was detached to Group I/XIX); a Sturm half bn
- . Ellison's Bde [in Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group of 10th Army] - k.k. Lst Bns 152, 170, 173; the Foot Half Regt of the Tyrol Reit Sch Bn; a Sturm half bn

- . Lempruch's Group [in Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group of 10th Army] - Bn IV/25; k.k. Lst Bn 157; Tyrol Lst Bns I, IV; Russ' Hon Inf Bn; Mtn AR # 12; a Sturm half bn
- . The Orient Korps [directly under Boroevic's Army Group] - Bns IV/103, VI/BH 1, VI/BH 2, VIII/BH 3; a Sturm company
- . Hospodarz's Group [in the Montenegro garrison] - Bns VII/BH 2, I & III/SchR 34; k.k. Lst Bn II/37; k.u. Lst Bn VII/19
- . Riva Sector [in XX Corps of 10th Army] - k.k. Lst Bns IV/2, 162, 163, 166, 174; Tyrol Lst Bn III; 1st Batty of FAR 49; all of FAR 149; one batty each of Hvy FAR 49 and of Mtn Arty Bn 49; a Sturm half bn; 2nd Comp/SB 60

3. The horse shortage and the cavalry⁷²

The fate of the mounted arm was decisively affected in the second half of the war by a shortage of horses and of fodder. For a long time already maize and oats had been part of the food supply for humans. Neither the use of every other conceivable source of equine nourishment, nor the temporary stationing of mounted units in Poland, Romania and Serbia (where there was a relatively larger amount of available fodder) could prevent a massive death rate.⁷³ In 1915 there were 709,000 horses with the Army in the field, and at the end of 1916 there were 969,000; but by June 1917 the number shrank to 863,000 and by June 1918 to 459,000.

Furthermore, the expansion of the artillery continued to require the use of ever more animals, since the Monarchy's limited industrial capacity precluded large-scale motorization. And many horses were needed to keep the economy running in the interior, as well as in the army zones, on the lines of communication, and in the occupied territories. The response was a radical cut-back in other uses of horses. If there was no pressing military need for the animals, their employment was curtailed. From the officers the Army bought the horses that had been their personal property, and put them work. In May 1918 the company commanders lost their mounts. Courses for dispatch riders were abolished, dogs replaced horses where possible, and the supply trains were

72 See also Czegka, "Die Wandlungen in der Verwendung und Organisation der Kavallerie Divisionen während des Weltkrieges" in Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1928 edition), pp. 1 ff.

73 Under 11th Army, 40 to 45 horses perished every day in April 1917. The 5 Hon CD, while transporting 781 horses by rail in June 1918, lost 488 of them.

centralized and made smaller.

But all these measures, as well as attempts to bring up replacement horses from the interior despite the difficulties, failed to make up for the enormous losses. For a long time the wagons of the replacement units which arrived in the field had come up without draft animals. Some smaller breeds⁷⁴, which before the war hadn't been utilized because their strength was under-estimated, now proved useful because of their moderate eating habits, efficiency and adaptability. But in the end the urgently-needed expansion of the artillery was achieved at the cost of the ancient and glorious mounted arm, whose chances for mounted action seemed anyway to have disappeared in the trench warfare.

Thus by an Imperial order seven cavalry divisions were dismounted in March 1917; they were followed later by the other five units and by the majority of the cavalry attached to infantry divisions. This was truly a difficult decision for the Emperor, who himself had spent a good part of his military service with the mounted troops. The cavalry were hurt badly by this order, and weren't comforted by the hope it expressed that "in peacetime the cavalry will resume their unique role, consistent with their traditions and the experiences of the war; the noble spirit of the mounted troops will live on."

In the event, the disadvantage of lacking a large body of mounted troops was to become evident even during the war, as for example in the fall offensive of 1917 against Italy when it was impossible to fully exploit the great victory. Horsemen were also needed during the advance into Ukraine and the subsequent fighting with partisan bands in the occupied territories. There were constant appeals from the battle fronts for mounted troops. Finally - after some dismounted Honved Hussars of 5 Hon CD were treacherously massacred in a Ukrainian village in June 1918 - the army stationed in south Russia restored horses to one (and later to two) squadrons in each of their cavalry regiments.

With this partial exception, all of the distinguished dragoon, hussar and uhlan regiments of the cavalry divisions were dismounted. The new organization consisted of a regiment HQ (which had a cavalry telephone platoon, a technical squadron and an infantry gun platoon) with two "Half-Regiments"; each of the latter had two to four squadrons plus a machine gun squadron

74 These breeds included the "Konik" from Galicia, the "Huzule horse" from the Carpathians, the small Transylvanian animals, the "Haflinger" and the Bosnian pack-horse.

(with 8 weapons).⁷⁵ In each cavalry regiment only a platoon of 25 men were still mounted; within a division, the four mounted platoons made up the divisional cavalry squadron.

TABLE 6 - The Aus-Hung. cavalry as of June 1918 (after their conversion to foot troops)...

- . 15 k.u.k. dragoon regiments - with 26 foot half-regiments, 16 squadrons and 4 platoons of divisional cavalry, 2 independent MG squadrons
- . 16 k.u.k. hussar regiments - with 26 foot half-regiments, 20 squadrons of divisional cavalry, 3 independent MG squadrons
- . 11 k.u.k. uhlan regiments - with 22 foot half-regiments, 2 squadrons of divisional cavalry
- . 6 k.k. mounted rifle regiments - with 8 foot half-regiments, 14 squadrons and 1 platoon of divisional cavalry
- . The Tyrol k.k. Mounted Rifles - with 1 foot half-regiment, 6 squadrons of divisional cavalry
- . The Dalmatia k.k. Mounted Rifles - with 2 squadrons and 2 platoons of divisional cavalry, 1 independent MG squadron
- . 10 k.u. Honved hussar regiments - with 16 foot half-regiments, 12 squadrons of divisional cavalry, 1 independent MG squadron
- . The k.u. Landsturm hussars - with 2 foot half-regiments, 4 squadrons and 1 platoon of divisional cavalry
- . Also - 12 Sturm half-regiments (one per cavalry division)
- . TOTALS: 101 foot half-regiments, 12 foot Sturm half-regiments, 76 squadrons and 8 platoons of divisional cavalry, 7 independent MG squadrons
- . NOTE on nomenclature: Until June 1917 a squadron was called an "Eskadron", and thereafter a "Schwadron" [this is irrelevant in the English translation, since both terms are translated as "squadron"]. At the same time the HQ under the regiment which commanded two or more squadrons, hitherto called a "Division" was re-designated a "Half-regiment." [In the English translation we have referred to these "divisions" as "battalions" to avoid confusion with the more common meaning of the word division.]

According to the prescribed tables of organization, a cavalry division of four or five regiments had a strength of just 7100 (8700) men; the actual strength was often barely half of these totals. A cavalry division was relatively even weaker than its infantry counterpart in artillery firepower, so that at best its battle strength was equivalent to that of an infantry brigade.

75 The organization of the telephone platoons, technical squadrons and infantry gun platoons was identical to that of their counterparts in the infantry. A dismounted squadron was equivalent to an infantry company, organized as three platoons plus a light MG platoon.

In the future only one squadron would be available as divisional cavalry to an infantry division. At first it was planned that each cavalry regiment would provide a detached mounted squadron for this purpose. But this idea was soon abandoned, and the divisional cavalry continued to be provided, as hitherto, by dividing up a few regiments in their entirety. Despite the increase in the number of infantry divisions, the reduction of the divisional cavalry to just a squadron made it possible to free Reitende Schützen Regiments # 2, 4, 5 and 6 from this service so they could create the k.k. 12th Reitende Schützen Division.

With this last re-organization, undertaken due to bitter necessity, the tragic fate of the Aus-Hung. horsemen was sealed. A proud combat arm, which had once ruled the battlefields of Europe and had continued to do their best in this final war, disappeared from the scene (at least for the duration of the conflict). Cavalry units still existed, but they marched and fought on foot according to the finally fixed training and tactical regulations of the infantry.

4. Completion of the artillery expansion

Efforts were begun already in the first years of the war to greatly expand the Aus-Hung. artillery and to modernize its guns. At the start of 1915 the AOK initiated a large-scale and comprehensive expansion plan; it was persistently carried out as planned despite numerous obstacles. In spring 1917 the program was nearing completion, having to a great extent redeemed this arm of service, which at the beginning had lagged so far behind its opponents. And during implementation the original plans had even been considerably widened to take account of the challenges and lessons of the war.

The divisional-level artillery

In spring 1917 each infantry division had one field cannon regiment (with four field batteries, one anti-aircraft cannon battery and one trench mortar battery) and a field howitzer regiment (with six field batteries). Most divisions also already had a heavy field artillery regiment (of three 15 cm howitzer and one 10.4 cm cannon batteries). Thus the divisions had enough guns to normally carry out all assignments using their own resources. This concentration of all types of field artillery within divisions proved to have more advantages than the

retention of some guns in the corps-level artillery, which theorists at the start of the war had believed to be necessary.

Also by the spring of 1917 the mountain artillery was almost completely equipped with modern guns. And by this time its strength had doubled to 28 regiments, while the first steps had been taken to create mountain artillery units within the Landwehr and Honved.

Therefore as the great Army reforms of 1917 began the artillery had already substantially met or even exceeded its targeted strength, and therefore it seemed that little more needed to be accomplished. Nevertheless, during the winter of 1917-18 there were some further substantial changes in the organization; this was due primarily to the need to address two problems that became evident during evaluations of wartime experience.

Hitherto the light artillery units had been organized based on types of guns (field cannon or field howitzers), but this system had tactical disadvantages. In actual combat situations it was always found better to employ mixed groups of cannon and howitzers so that the full range of possible tasks could be addressed. Therefore, when the expansion of the field artillery was practically completed (at the start of 1918) it was decided that the existing units would be completely overhauled. The old series of cannon and howitzer units were merged into one series of mixed "field artillery regiments", each with two field cannon and three field howitzer batteries. One of the regiments within each division bore the same number as the division, and the other added 100. (Thus 1st ID had FAR # 1 and 101, etc.) As a sixth battery, one of the division's regiments also had an anti-aircraft cannon battery and the other a trench mortar battery.

This re-organization did nothing to add to the total strength of the light artillery. But the heavy field artillery, on the other hand, continued to expand in the last year of the war. In spring 1917 there had been just 46 heavy FAR, and some of them were quite incomplete. By temporarily utilizing batteries with various types of guns, in spring 1918 the available heavy field artillery had not only been expanded to 66 regiments, but regimental strength had been increased by two 15 cm howitzer batteries (to a total of five such batteries plus a 10.4 cm cannon battery).

TABLE 7 - Expansion of the Aus-Hung. artillery in the second half of the war

A. Field and Mountain Artillery

In the final organization, each of the field cannon and howitzer batteries (including those in the horse artillery battalions and later the "K" [cavalry] FAR) had 6 guns; batteries of the heavy field and of the mountain artillery had 4 guns each. Trench mortar batteries in 1917-18 were supposed to have 16 pieces, but in fact the number per battery varied greatly; therefore the total number of trench mortars can't be given in the figures which follow.

1) The field artillery

In spring 1917 the organization was as follows -

- . 65 field cannon regiments (42 k.u.k., 12 k.k. Landwehr, 11 k.u. Honved); they commanded a total of 258 field cannon batteries (including 9 batteries which had just 4 guns), or 1530 cannon, plus 57 anti-aircraft cannon batteries (including 13 batteries with just 2 guns), or 202 flak guns, plus 26 trench mortar batteries
- . 64 field howitzer regiments (41 k.u.k., 12 k.k. Landwehr, 11 k.u. Honved) with 330 howitzer batteries (59 of which had just 4 guns), with a total of 1862 guns
- . 46 heavy field artillery regiments (32 k.u.k., 11 k.k. Landwehr, 10 k.u. Honved); 17 of them had just three batteries; there were 7 more regiments (numbered above 46) which still just had 1 or 2 batteries. The two battery types were - 10.4 cm cannon (48 batteries, of which 23 had 2 guns; total = 146 guns), and 15 cm howitzer (126 batteries, of which 7 had 2 guns; total = 420 guns)
- . 11 horse artillery battalions (9 k.u.k., 2 k.u. Honved) with 31 horse cannon batteries (186 guns) and 6 horse howitzer batteries (36 guns)
- . Mountain artillery
 - . 32 regiments (with 2 to 5 batties each) (28 k.u.k., 4 k.k. Landwehr)
 - . 10 battalions (1 or 2 batties each) (all were k.u. Honved) (Total strength was 137 cannon batties [692 guns] and 57 howitzer batties [228 guns])
- . Summary....

Battery types	# of guns	# of new guns
289 field cannon	1716	0
336 field howitzer	1898	1882
137 mountain cannon	692	692
57 mountain howitzer	288	144
48 x 10.4cm cannon	146	146
126 x 15 cm howitzer	420	288
57 flak cannon	202	0
26 trench mortar	?	?

TOTAL of 1050 batties 5362 3152
 (not counting the 26 trench mortar batties)

In 1918 the organization was as follows:

SPRING 1918	GOAL WHEN EXPANSION WAS COMPLETE
. 132 field artillery regiments artillery regiments	. 132 field
. 264 cannon batties (1584 guns) (1584 guns)	. 264 cannon batties
. 396 howitzer batties (2376 guns) batties (2376 guns)	. 396 howitzer
. 53 flak cannon batties (214 guns) batties (396 guns)	. 66 flak cannon
(7 of which had just 2 guns) have 6 guns)	(each batty was to
. 66 trench mortar batties batties	. 66 trench mortar
. 66 heavy field artillery regiments artillery regiments	. 66 heavy field
. 76 x 10.4 cm cannon batties (272) cannon batties (304 guns)	. 76 x 10.4 cm
(16 batties had just 2 guns)	
. 158 x 15 cm howitzer batties (610) howitzer batties (1520 guns)	. 380 x 15 cm
(11 batties had just 2 guns)	
. 45 batties of miscellaneous guns (270) (old models of various calibers)	
. 12 "Cav" field artillery regiments artillery regiments	. 12 "Cav" field
. 24 cannon batties (144 guns) (144 guns)	. 24 cannon batties
. 33 howitzer batties (198 guns) batties (288 guns)	. 48 howitzer
	. 12 "Cav" heavy field artillery regiments
	. 12 x 10.4 cm cannon batties (48 guns)
	. 14 x 15 cm howitzer batties (196 guns)
. 14 mountain artillery regiments regiments	. 14 mountain artillery
. 86 cannon batties (344 guns) (336 guns)	. 84 cannon batties
. 37 howitzer batties (148 guns) batties (16 guns)	. 42 howitzer
. 66 mountain artillery battalions	. 66 mountain artillery

battalions

- . 134 cannon batties (536 guns) . 132 cannon batties (528 guns)
- . 55 howitzer batties (220 guns) . 66 howitzer batties (264 guns)

TOTALS

- . 288 field cannon batties - 1728 guns (18 new) (same as projected goal)
- . 429 field howitzer batties - 2574 guns (all new) (goal = 44 batties, 2664 guns)
- . 220 mountain cannon batties - 880 guns (all new) (goal = 216 batties, 864 guns)
- . 92 mountain howitzer batties - 368 guns (all new) (goal = 108 batties, 432 guns)
- . 76 x 10.4 cm cannon batties - 272 guns (all new) (goal = 76 batties, 304 guns)
- . 158 x 15 cm howitzer batties - 610 guns (588 new) (goal = 380 batties, 1520 guns)
- . 45 miscellaneous batties - 270 guns (not part of projected goals)
- . 53 flak cannon batties - 214 guns (0 new) (goal = 66 batties, 306 guns)
- . 66 trench mortar batties (same as projected goal)
- . Grand total (minus trench mortars) = 1351 batties (6916 guns, 4700 new) (projected total = 1578 batties with 7908 guns)

B. The heavy artillery

- . In spring 1917 the organization was as follows. The fortress artillery consisted of 7 regiments and 10 battalions with a total strength of 231 batteries (735 guns) plus 16 trench mortar batties.

TYPE	# OF BATTERIES	# OF GUNS
42 cm howitzer	6	6
38 cm howitzer	2	2
35 cm cannon	1	1
24 cm cannon	1	1
30.5 cm mortar	29	58
24 cm mortar	8	30
21 cm mortar	11	11
15 cm mortar	26	100
12 to 15 cm cannon	24	78
34 cm cannon	17	34
15 cm howitzer	36	158
fixed guns	62	248
flak cannon	8	8

- . In spring 1918 there were 11 (mobile) heavy artillery regiments

with a total strength of 303 batteries, plus 50 trench mortar batteries.

TYPE	# of BATTERIES	# of GUNS
42 cm howitzer	8	8
38 cm howitzer	7	7
35 cm cannon	1	1
24 cm cannon	2	1
30.5 cm mortars	36	72
24 cm mortars	2	2
21 cm mortars	2	2
12 to 15 cm cannon	20	80
10.4 cm cannon	5	20
15 cm howitzer	17	68
fixed guns	48	192
flak cannon	154	299

, After the war there would still be 14 regiments of heavy artillery regiments (11 mobile and 3 coastal). The mobile units would have 176 batteries (576 guns); the exact make-up of the 3 coastal units was yet to be determined.

TYPE	# of BATTERIES	# of GUNS
Motorized...		
38 cm howitzer	8	16
30.5 cm mortar	48	96
24 cm cannon	8	16
15 cm cannon	24	96
15 cm howitzer	24	96
Horse-drawn...		
15 cm howitzer	48	192
10.4 cm cannon	16	64

C. Total number of guns

The preceding sections dealt only with authorized units and their armament. During the war there were temporary artillery formations, as well as un-assigned reserve guns, whose strength varied from time to time. At the end of the war the total number of guns was counted as follows:

- . Guns in authorized units of the field and mountain artillery
(not counting
flak)6,610
- . Guns in authorized units of the heavy artillery (including some in
temporary fixed batteries, but not counting
flak)579
- . Flak guns of the field and heavy artillery (including 59 naval and
54 captured pieces used for this

purpose)	562
.Guns in improvised or special formations.....	
.1,717	
(1109 from the former fortress artillery; 433 naval and coastal guns; 175 captured guns)	
. Reserve guns of all types.....	2,506
. GRAND	
TOTAL.....	11,974

(Figures do not include 829 captured guns whose usefulness for operations had yet to be determined.)

There was yet another way in which the divisional artillery expanded in the last year of the war to meet the demands of modern warfare. Massive bombardments at the start of an attack, in particular the "preliminary artillery fire", were proven to be very effective. But the gunners had found it difficult to support the infantry as soon as the latter had penetrated deep into the enemy positions, or in situations where the enemy had broken into our own lines. In neither case was it possible for the artillery to immediately regroup and to initiate the necessary coordination with the infantry. The infantry guns hadn't solved the problem as had been hoped, so it was still necessary to devise an artillery force that could accompany the foot soldiers and support them directly. It was also necessary to prepare to defend against tanks, which had already been unleashed against the Germans on the Western front, and which might also be employed against the Aus-Hung. Army; a weapon would have to be found for this purpose.

Although the authorities clearly recognized the characteristics which "infantry support guns" should have, they were pressed for time and couldn't carry out extended tests of new models. Therefore they decided to rely on the 7.5 cm mountain cannon; although it wasn't an ideal weapon for this purpose (in fact, none of the warring armies were able to find one), it came closest to meeting the requirements. Furthermore, the re-organization of all infantry divisions on the same pattern and the break-up of the mountain brigades had made a large part of the mountain artillery superfluous, so the 7.5 cm cannon were immediately available. Thus each infantry division was assigned a "Mountain Artillery Battalion" with three batteries (2 cannon, 1 howitzer). Although the mountain howitzers didn't come as

close to meeting the requirements of support guns as did the cannon, they were still quite effective, and it seemed they were also suited for defense against tanks.

After the latest changes were complete, each field artillery brigade was to consist of two field artillery regiments, one heavy field artillery regiment and one mountain artillery battalion. The total strength would be 100 guns - 24 field cannon, 36 field howitzers, 20 heavy field howitzers, four 10.4 cm field cannon, 8 mountain cannon, 4 mountain howitzers, and 4 flak cannon. The brigade also was to have 8 trench mortars (4 medium and 4 heavy). However, this full strength was achieved in only a few divisions by the end of the war.

At the end of 1917 the mountain artillery consisted of 32 regiments and 10 independent battalions - 28 regiments in the Common Army, 4 regiments in the Austrian Landwehr, and the 10 battalions in the Hungarian Honved. After the final re-organization only 14 regiments remained (in peacetime they would serve in the Bosnia-Herzegovina garrison). The difference from the pre-war situation was that each regiment now commanded nine batteries (six with mountain cannon and three with mountain howitzers).

In the first three years of the war there had been virtually no changes in the artillery assigned to the cavalry divisions, each of which had one horse artillery battalion of three cannon batteries. At most, some of the battalions had been assigned a fourth cannon battery. But now that the cavalry divisions were dismounted, it seemed necessary to equip them with stronger artillery. Therefore it was decided that the horse artillery battalions would be expand to form "K" (for cavalry) field artillery regiments, each with six batteries. Later, with the addition of small "K" heavy field artillery regiments (each of three batteries), each cavalry division would have a "K Field Artillery Brigade." By fall 1918 this goal was met by nine of the twelve divisions.

The heavier artillery

For a long time the Aus-Hung. fortress artillery had provided heavy guns to the field Army in addition to carrying out their original assignment of serving the guns in fortresses. During the war, the latter role had gradually receded farther into the background because the employment of heavy and very heavy guns - originally envisioned only against fortifications - had quickly become essential in assaults against the enemy's entrenched lines

and defensive zones. In fact the troops didn't want to do without heavy guns while themselves on the defensive, so that the enemy's artillery could be suppressed and their infantry storm tactics checked.

Simultaneous with the increasing use of heavy artillery in trench warfare, there was a marked decline in the importance of fortresses. By the third year of the war, almost all of the pre-war fortifications had either been abandoned and disarmed, or had been completely re-configured to resemble field fortifications.⁷⁶ And by this time most of their guns had already long been removed to support the battles in the open field. Guns that had found employment as mobile artillery at the fronts included not only 15 cm coastal cannon plus 21 and 24 cm mortars, but also 42 cm coastal howitzers. Some 35 cm coastal cannon were deployed on makeshift platforms along the Comen plateau. Even though permanent fortifications might again be utilized after the war (which in 1918 seemed rather unlikely), it was certain that in the future the majority of the heavy artillery wouldn't be tied down to fixed points, but would have to be mobile enough to participate in open field battles.

The large-scale re-organization of the fortress artillery which started in 1916 had been based on full recognition of these developments, even though the old "fortress" designation and units had been retained. But when this re-organization was nearing completion at the end of 1917, it was finally decided that the arm's mission had been changed so radically that the title fortress artillery should be changed to "heavy artillery."

Under the new plans, the heavy artillery were organized as 14 regiments, each of four battalions with four batteries per battalion. (In peacetime there would be just two battalions per regiment.) Weapons and equipment varied between the 14 regiments because they had distinct missions and because of geographical differences between parts of the Monarchy.

In general, it was intended that seven of the fourteen regiments (those in Inner Austria, Galicia and Hungary) would be "attack" and "very heavy" artillery units, fully motorized. Four

76 Thus in August 1917 the Cracow and Peterwardein fortresses were abandoned, followed in September by the Przemysl and Deblin [Ivangelod] bridgeheads, and in March 1918 by the Komorn fortress. The only fortified places still maintained as of June 1918 were Trent, Mostar, Sarajevo, Bileca, Kalinovik and Trebinje plus the two military harbors (Pola and Cattaro).

regiments (three in Tyrol and one in Bosnia-Herzegovina) would have horse-drawn "defensive" artillery. The three remaining units (two at Pola, one at Cattaro) would serve the coastal artillery. Thus there were would be 11 mobile heavy artillery regiments, with 44 battalions (176 batteries).⁷⁷ In addition, and for at least the duration of the war, a large number of flak and trench mortar batteries were placed under the heavy artillery. The three coastal regiments [# 4, 5 and 8] controlled the fixed, fortified coastal guns.

By comparison with the establishment of spring 1917, this new organization had diminished the heavy artillery by 50 batteries; their personnel, and temporarily also their quite diverse weaponry, were used to reinforce the heavy field artillery regiments from four to six batteries apiece. But the future total strength of the new heavy artillery would actually be substantially more (by 56 batteries) than had been envisioned in 1916, when a target of just 120 mobile heavy batteries had been set. In the meantime industrial efforts had made the further expansion feasible.

It's true that equipping the regiments with the new guns proceeded only step-by-step, at a tempo determined by industrial production. All eleven of the mobile regiments existed already in spring 1918, but only half the batteries possessed the new weaponry. The other half were armed with a motley mixture of guns; some of them were quite good, although they weren't included in the modernization plans, and others were older models or immobile positional or naval pieces.⁷⁸ Planning for the final change-over at the end of the war was still in progress, and yet the expansion of the heavy artillery was very near completion.

Ongoing changes continue

This many-faceted expansion and overhaul of the artillery inevitably caused some confusion, similar to that which attended the infantry re-organization and even somewhat longer-lasting. As the process of re-designating and transferring units unfolded

77 The planned armament of the 176 batteries is shown above in Table 7, Section B. It was intended to assign the 42 cm howitzers and 35 cm cannon to the coastal defense artillery rather than to the batteries of the mobile regiments.

78 In total, no fewer than 1800 such guns - of various models and with calibers ranging from 6 to 42 cm - had been brought from the fortresses and the earlier fortress artillery. They weren't to be included in the future establishment of the new heavy artillery.

over time, many batteries repeatedly changed their titles, their parent units (regiments and/or divisions), and their armament. But some disputes and disagreeable incidents were inevitable in such a large-scale project and didn't diminish the success of the well-organized effort, which continued despite very serious obstacles.

Starting with the third year of the war, the most important of these obstacles - other than the industrial crisis - was the dwindling supply of horses. At first this problem only limited the tempo of forming new units, but soon it was no longer possible to keep all of the artillery mobile, despite various efforts and expedients. Already during the fall offensive against Italy only a small portion of the horse-drawn batteries were able to keep up with the infantry advance. The problem was intensified by the critical lack of fodder. But the shortage of manpower also affected the artillery expansion all too often. Even though the size of the gun crews was reduced, beginning in spring 1918 it was proving ever more difficult to bring them to a level where the batteries were combat-effective, and to keep them there.

The Monarchy's technical military achievement was no less praiseworthy than its organizational accomplishment. During the first three years of the war, all gun models in the field, mountain and heavy artillery - except for the 8 cm field cannon and 30.5 cm mortar - were replaced by better and more efficient models. Even before the war it had been recognized that the Mark 5/8 field cannon was also no longer entirely able to meet the demands of modern battle, due to its limited range. But other types of artillery were in greater need of renovation; the consumption of cannon was small, and anyway their flat trajectory fire was less in demand. Therefore the decision to replace the Mark 5/8 wasn't taken until deep in the fourth year of the war. At the end of 1917 the reorganization of all the other types of guns was already far advanced, so when the Skoda Works developed a useful new model - the M.17 field cannon - it was time to renovate this last artillery component. The first three batteries armed with the new weapons appeared in spring 1918.

For a long time the numerical superiority of the enemy's trench mortars, especially on the Southwestern front, had been a source of bitterness; in 1917 it was possible to at least make some relative progress in redressing the balance of strength. These weapons, which had suddenly become of such great importance, were not only effective in the hands of the infantry; cheap and easy to produce, they could also enhance the effectiveness of

artillery. Therefore the heavy caliber trench mortars were correctly placed in artillery rather than infantry units, even though the former arm at first didn't recognize their full value.⁷⁹ The number of units grew by leaps and bounds, utilizing a wide variety of equipment. Besides the 9 cm Minenwerfer assigned to the infantry, there was a number of older models with different calibers (12, 20 and 22 cm); some were fired with gunpowder, others with pneumatic pressure. Since their ranges were just 1100, 1400 and 800 meters respectively, they didn't satisfy the infantry's justified demand for weapons that could counteract the enemy's trench mortars, which were effective at much greater distances. Finally toward the end of 1917 two new types were developed (14 cm and 26 cm Minenwerfer) which achieved ranges of 2600 and 2400 meters.

The artillery surveying service had soon become an indispensable aid to the gunners. Due to the increasing difficulties which faced observers, plotting and sound-ranging often provided the only opportunity to determine the location of enemy batteries. Sound-ranging was still carried out with relatively primitive equipment - reading the instruments required some subjective judgment on the part of the crew - but nevertheless achieved a very satisfactory level of success. Therefore beginning in summer 1917 the small permanent artillery survey platoons were expanded to companies. And their number increased so much that in spring 1918 each field artillery brigade had its own survey company.

79 In spring 1917 there were 26 trench mortar batteries with the field- and 16 with the fortress-artillery; this total rose by spring 1918 to 66 with the field- and 50 with the heavy-artillery. There was also a much larger number of medium and heavy trench mortar platoons (around 250 in spring 1917) which were part of the AOK's reserve, to be assigned to individual divisions as needed. The reserve also included about 190 platoons armed with the lighter "Granatwerfer."

5. Achievements of and limitations on the armaments industry⁸⁰

As has already been noted in this work, the industry of Austria and Hungary played an important part in the significant expansion in the Army. Their efforts would have been praiseworthy even in a country with greater natural resources than the Monarchy possessed; considering the state's economic limitations, the achievement is all the more remarkable.

In winter of 1916-17 the enormous surge in industrial production reached its peak in almost every area; afterwards a slow but noticeable decline set in.

TABLE 8 - Production of the Aus-Hung. war industry during the World War

<u>Year</u> <u>month</u>	<u>Rifles</u>	<u>MG</u>	<u>Guns</u>	<u>Artillery rounds per</u>
1914	149,000	1200	219	375,000
First half of 1915	384,000	1500	601	950,000 (1915-16 are year averages only)
Second half of 1915	521,000	2200	862	950,000
First half of 1916	567,000	2400	1318	1,400,000
Second half of 1916	630,000	3000	2332	1,400,000
First half of 1917	617,000	7000	2285	1,476,000
Second half of 1917	475,000	8500	1906	1,290,000
First half of 1918	130,000	6000	1296	750,000
Aug to Oct 1918	107,000	6200	742	400,000
Total	3,580,000	38,900	11,561	

⁸⁰ See also Riedl, "Die Industrie Österreichs während des Krieges" (Carnegie Foundation, Aus-Hung. series; Vienna, 1932). Homann, "Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich während des Krieges" (Vienna, 1925). Gratz and Schüler, "Der wirtschaftliche Zusammenbruch Österreich-Ungarns" (Vienna, 1930). Pflug, "Bewaffnung und Munition" (an unpublished manuscript in the Military Archives at Vienna).

Production didn't decline because industrial capability was faltering; in fact there were more armament factories than ever before. War contracts and the continuing demands of the high command had expanded and improved the production process several times. Even in the last year of the war, when the "Hindenburg Program" demanded another large-scale economic effort, the Vienna Arsenal immediately made available very large and modern facilities for production.⁸¹ But shortages of raw materials and manpower - which were the most severe problems of the last two years of the war - limited the production of the arms industry to an increasing extent. Yet as output declined, the most urgent needs of the armed forces were still being quickly met, and the governments didn't hesitate to make money available for armament commissions despite the burden on their states.

The fact that industry, when necessary, could still make enormous efforts was illustrated best by the production of machine guns. Since there was a great need for more weapons due to the creation of light machine gun platoons, the Steyr Works continued to maintain a high level of productivity (with a few brief exceptions); they reached their greatest monthly output (2380 MG) in September 1918.⁸² Similarly the artillery factories were still very successful in 1918. Of the 11,561 guns of all types which our industries produced in the World War, almost 4000 left the factories in the last year. Nevertheless, the economic decline of the Monarchy was casting long shadows on the arms industry beginning in the winter of 1917-18. The production of rifles, which had reached its monthly peak (113,000) in March 1917, had fallen to 9000 by February 1918; output improved in the summer, but still to just 30,000 per month. Even the production of machine guns, to which the greatest priority was attached, fell off temporarily between December 1917 and February 1918 to only 350 per month.

Shortages of coal, iron and manpower were the causes of this striking decline. The Monarchy's demand for coal had been increasing since the war started, but in 1917 it was able to

81 At the end, machine guns were being turned out by the Steyr Works, rifles by the Steyr Works and the Hungarian Arms Factory. Both installations also produced artillery, as did the Skoda Works at Pilsen, the Böhler Works at Kupfenberg, Bleckmann's factory in Ternitz, the Witkowitz and Resicza Works, and finally a cannon factory in Hungary.

82 Previously, for example, the Steyr Works had turned out 230 machine guns per month at the end of 1914, 400 at the end of 1915, and 850 at the end of 1916. Later 1540 were produced in June 1917, 1900 in October 1917, and 1600 in June 1918.

produce only 84% of the pre-war level, and in the first half of 1918 just 78%. The coal that could be extracted from the mines of occupied Poland (at Dabrowa) sufficed only to offset the amount that had formerly been imported from England and America. Until the end of 1916 some peacetime reserves had still been available to meet the increasing demands of the war, but once they were exhausted the need became ever greater. Consumption of coal was reduced where possible; private households suffered the most, and their fuel supplies had already been rationed for a long time. But despite these restrictive measures, coal available for industry met only 70% of the demand, and this figure dropped even further during the critical winter months of 1917-18. The bitter decision was taken to reduce supplies essential for economic life to a minimum; thus at the end of 1917 the coal allotted to railroads, mines and food industries, and to the gas, water and electric works - as well as to the armament factories - were restricted to 40% of their demand. The decline in military production noted above was the inevitable result.

But the reduction in coal usage also impacted upon the production of iron. Of the 45 blast furnaces working in 1916, just 24 were still producing in 1918. Therefore the railroads, the airplane factories, the mines and the crude oil industry had to curtail their use of iron. And this metal had become all the more important since for a long time (especially in the munitions industry) it had been used as a replacement for other metals that were in scant supply - copper, lead and tin. Thus the shell cartridges for guns of many calibers, as well as the bullets in shrapnel shells, were made of iron.

In general, the munitions industry was hurt hardest by the shortage of metals, which from now on was more urgent than the earlier problem of a lack of explosives. The result was a shocking downturn in production of ammunition, especially starting in August 1918. In fall 1916 it had still been possible to turn out 410,000 artillery rounds in a week; this figure fell to just 350,000 at the start of 1917, and to 130,000 in the summer. During 1918 the weekly output of rounds never exceeded 180,000.

There was also a significant decline in production of ammunition for the infantry. At a time when demand was rising tremendously due to the large increase in the number of machine guns, production sank to 1,500,000 rounds per day (compared to 6,000,000 or more in earlier years).

It's remarkable that this slide in ammunition production didn't

led to a crisis, and that it was even possible to assemble substantial supplies in reserve so that large quantities could still be expended in major operations. Thus, for example, in the tenth battle of the Isonzo about 332,000 artillery shells were fired in a three day period while 431,000 new ones were brought forward simultaneously. A total of 1,608,000 artillery rounds were expended in this battle. The expenditure in the eleventh Isonzo battle was about one-third larger. Nevertheless, during preparations for the fall offensive against Italy it was still possible to send 1,500,000 rounds to the units that would be engaged. It seems that improved regulation of the flow of ammunition in the spring had led to more economical usage and the accumulation of reserve supplies.⁸³ The situation was also alleviated by long periods in which there was little fighting. However, it's still amazing that until the end of the war there was no shortage of ammunition during periods when usage was very high.

6. Development of the air force

The rapid development of military aviation in the first two years of the war had been far beyond any expectation. But it was merely a limited start in comparison to the advances during the war's second half. All of the warring states labored feverishly to expand their air forces and to improve their equipment. Starting in 1917 the air forces developed into powerful and effective arms, which directed their activities not only against the opposing ground forces, but also against enemy air units.

The time was now past when aerial reconnaissance was a relatively easy mission; scouting pilots trying to cross enemy lines were usually confronted by opposing planes that were smaller but also faster and more maneuverable, and which forced them to abort their mission. In response, reconnaissance flights were

83 According to the regulation, at the front some of the shells were at the disposition of the various army HQ, and some held in reserve by the AOK. The important innovation was that provision of shells was to be based on the significance of each battle front. Thus the allotment per gun varied; the following are some examples:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| . 1000 to 1400 rounds per field cannon | . 600 to 1000 |
| rounds per mountain gun | |
| . 600 to 1100 rounds per field howitzer | . 150 to 200 |
| rounds per 30.5 cm mortar | |
| . 500 to 800 rounds per 15 cm howitzer | |

accompanied by their own fighters, whose mission was to keep the annoying enemy off their backs. And soon the fighter units on both sides of the battle lines grew larger and larger, ready to pounce on any aerial scouts who lacked strong protection.

Anxiously the ground troops in their positions watched the exciting spectacle of a whole new type of warfare in the air. Thus began the struggle for air superiority, in which courage and cool nerves were of the utmost importance. But equally important to the personal achievements of the fighter pilots and their flight commanders were the technical capabilities of the planes. Machines with great speed and more maneuverability provided an advantage that was difficult for opponents to overcome. If the technical edge of one side could be supplemented by numerical superiority, eventually they would clear the air of their opponents despite the heroic deeds of the weaker side's individual pilots who continued to shoot down their foes.

Thus the struggle for air superiority was largely decided already on the drawing boards and in the workshops of the aerial industry. The side with the greater industrial capacity, which could turn out more and better machines in the shortest time, would have already laid the foundation for victory. But at the front the fighting was not merely plane against plane. Bombers assaulted their opponents' air bases to either wear down the foe or to compel them to withdraw to bases deeper in the interior.

It was recognized at a relatively late point - even by the Entente with their much larger air forces - that bombing attacks against the enemy's homeland could greatly damage morale. At first the bombers only attacked targets that had a direct connection with the operations on land (such as railroad stations, ammunition and equipment dumps, and - less frequently - locations serving as higher-level HQ or troop encampments). This was the main reason why large bombers didn't appear in great numbers until relatively late in the war. For a long time bombing missions were carried out by reconnaissance planes which could carry about 20 kg of heavy bombs.

Finally, in the second half of 1917 ground support units appeared; armed with machine guns, bombs and grenades, they flew low over the battlefield to intervene in the infantry fighting. In especially critical situations planes were used to maintain contact between commanders and the foremost battle lines. Already for a long time fire from the artillery batteries could be directed from the air. The reconnaissance planes were equipped with better optical and photographic gear.

Thus a rather large number of specialized tasks were already being carried out by air units. This was reflected in their order of battle⁸⁴, and also in variations in airplane design (which complicated the issue of production).

In previous volumes we have already shown that early in the war it was already difficult for the Aus-Hung. high command to keep step with developments in other countries. But in 1916 they hadn't hesitated to expand the scope of their plans. The expansion program was able to proceed because of a noticeable increase in the capacity of the airplane industry.

The air force relied on seven airplane and six motor factories in Austria-Hungary. In 1917 they produced 1740 planes and 1230 motors; the figures for 1918 were 2378 and 1750. Thus the industry had in general met the goals which had been considered essential in 1916. But their efforts weren't sufficient to arm the 68 air companies and 3 bomber squadrons which were supposed to be in service by the end of 1917.⁸⁵ The consumption of planes had been very great, and their anticipated life expectancy was just four months. Therefore new machines being produced around the start of 1918 were being used only to maintain the current strength of 450 to 500 planes.⁸⁶ Since it was no longer possible to increase production, it was for a while questionable whether the air force could even maintain its current level of strength and effectiveness. Any attempt to expand the Aus-Hung. force to a size even approaching that of the enemy was completely

84 The types of air company were - divisional, long-range reconnaissance, fighter, ground support, bomber and photographic. Each type had its own organization. Thus, for example, the authorized (though seldom met) strength of a long-range reconnaissance company was 6 reconnaissance planes and 2 fighters; a fighter company was supposed to have 18 planes (all fighters).

85 At the end of 1917 there were 66 air companies plus one bomber squadron; however, no company had more than 60% of their authorized number of planes and personnel.

86 For comparison purposes, here are the production figures for the Entente states:

ITALY -	In 1917 = 4000 planes,	6300 motors	In
	1918 = 6500 planes,	15,000 motors	

ENGLAND - 1917 = 14,421 planes,	11,536 motors	1918 =
22,160 planes,	22,102 motors	

FRANCE - 1917 = 14,915 planes,	23,092 motors	1918 =
23,669 planes,	44,563 motors	

impossible.

TABLE 9 - Development of the air force in the last half of the war

<u>Strength in April 1917</u>	<u>Strength in June 1918</u>
46 air companies	77 air companies ⁸⁷
1 flight squadron	
25 balloon companies	27 balloon companies
8 air "parks" (depots)	10 air parks
1 repair workshop	7 airplane motor repair shops
A number of weather stations	1 artillery director training company
	1 artillery balloon training company
	1 pilot station
	1 kite balloon station
	A number of weather stations

Meanwhile the AOK had decided to further expand the air force to 100 air companies with 1000 pilots; this program never came anywhere near realization. In fall 1918 there were 72 air companies, but this figure didn't represent even a slightly larger establishment because none of the units were at full strength. By procurement in Germany it was at least possible to build the bomber force up to five full squadrons [companies], each with 10 bombers and 4 fighter planes.⁸⁸

Thus the Aus-Hung. airmen on the Southwestern front were confronted by an enemy force of ever more overwhelming numerical superiority, which moreover possessed better planes. That they nevertheless entered unequal combat thousands of times and achieved remarkable results is to their eternal credit.⁸⁹

87 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This figure is apparently in error. In the original it is accompanied by an alleged summary of company specialties which contains an error in basic arithmetic and therefore is not repeated here. Also the author forgot to mention bomber units entirely. Another problem in analyzing the data is that the specialties of the units were changed quite frequently, and during June 1918 in particular. See the unit list in Peter Grosz, "Austro-Hungarian Army Aircraft of World War One" (Mountain View, California; 1993), pp. 541-555.

88 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually there weren't five full-strength units. The 104th Company existed but "because of personnel and equipment shortages, [had] no operational flights." (Grosz, p. 552)

89 In the tenth Isonzo battle our 64 planes flew 711 missions,

Replacement of personnel was also a significant and constant problem. Just to maintain a pool of 500 to 600 pilots it was necessary to finish training 50 men each month. The Pilot Training Battalion, which provided basic training, had just a few machines available, and some of them were of low quality.⁹⁰ It would have been very difficult to find enough flight leaders for the planned expansion to 100 companies.

The anti-aircraft artillery had been greatly expanded (see the figures in Table 7, above), and machine guns were modified to fire tracer and explosive cartridges at enemy planes. Nevertheless, little progress was made in the quest for an effective system to down attacking planes from the ground.

A home air defense system had been initiated already in 1916, but was strengthened only slightly. Its effectiveness was never really put to the test, since enemy air units concentrated their operations almost entirely against targets close to the front.

In summer 1918 ongoing planning continued for the future air force expansion. The goal was to create 10 fighter, 3 bomber and 20 other air battalions; the total strength was to be 1080 planes and 9000 men. Five "air-ship" battalions would control the fixed balloons. Each corps recruitment district would have its own air base, while 3 additional air bases for the large bombers would be constructed in various parts of the Monarchy.

Translator's Appendix - Summary of air units in October 1918

As indicated in the footnotes above, the original text contains discrepancies regarding the number and use of the units. Therefore a summary is provided here to show how the air force was organized at the end of the war. Data are from Grosz's "Austro-Hungarian Army Aircraft" (cited previously). (Starting

including 210 aerial combats; they shot down 22 enemy machines, and dropped ten tons of bombs. Even in June 1918, when the Italians had already established a crushing supremacy in the air, the Aus-Hung. air units shot down 43 enemy planes plus 4 fixed balloons; their own losses were 31 planes and 1 fixed balloon.

90 The Pilot Training Battalion at Wiener Neustadt, like both of the air replacement battalions, belonged to the troops in the interior. It consisted of two school companies, a flight officer school for observers and a training company for artillery directors. Several schools at Wiener Neustadt, Neumarkt and Udine existed to train fighter and bomber pilots.

in September 1918 the "Corps" companies took the place of the earlier divisional companies, and the long-range reconnaissance units became "Photographic" companies).

- . Bomber Companies ("G" or Gross-Flugzeug-Flik; also called squadrons in some sources) - # 101, 102, 103, 104, 105
- . Fighter Companies ("J" or Jagd-Flik) - # 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, 14, 20, 30, 41, 42, 43, 51, 55, 56, 60, 61, 63, 68, 72, 74
- . Corps Companies ("K" or Korps-Flik) - # 2, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 35, 36, 44, 52, 54, 62, 66, 73
- . Photographic Companies ("P"-Flik) - # 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 25, 27, 31, 34, 37, 39, 40, 46, 47, 57, 58, 64, 70
- . Ground-Support Companies ("S" or Schlacht-Flik) - # 5, 8, 26, 32, 38, 45, 48, 49, 50, 53, 59, 65, 67, 69, 71
- . Non-operational companies (cadres without planes) - # 75, 76, 77, 78 [# 79-80 had been formed in early 1918 but soon dissolved; # 83-100 were part of the post-war plans, but never activated] (A "Flik" - abbreviation for "Flieger Kompagnie" was the title commonly applied to an air company)

MISCELLANEOUS UNITS

- . "Lublin" or 1st Air Platoon
- . Air Replacement Companies # 1-22

7. New organization of the technical troops

TABLE 10 - Strength of miscellaneous supporting units as of June 1918

(To be used with this section and the two which follow)⁹¹

1. Searchlight formations

Besides the searchlight sections serving with the infantry (but which organizationally belonged to the artillery) there were 89 searchlight companies. Under them was a large number of detachments, etc....

- . 62 detachments with 25 cm gear
- . 190 detachments with 35 cm gear
- . 15 detachments with 40 to 50 cm gear
- . 176 detachments with 60 cm gear (1 of which was motorized)
- . 4 detachments with 70 or 75 cm gear
- . 72 detachments with 90 cm gear (15 of which were motorized)
- . 58 detachments with 110 cm gear (1 of which was motorized)
- . 34 detachments with 120 cm gear (28 of which were motorized)
- . 12 detachments with 150 cm gear (9 of which were motorized)
- . 25 searchlight workshops
- . A number of equipment depots

2. Artillery and trench mortar ordnance and auxiliary formations, and repair centers

- . 23 artillery and fortress ordnance companies (with repair "parks" and labor companies)
- . 27 Landsturm artillery companies
- . 166 ammunition loading companies
- . 12 ammunition sections (directly under the AOK)
- . 11 centers for the production of liquid air and compressed air
- . A number of artillery repair and re-armament stations
- . A number of arms and ammunition depots

⁹¹ TRANSLATOR's apology - Due to the very technical nature of the terms in this chart, I was unable to find many of them in standard German dictionaries (including military dictionaries); therefore the descriptions of some of the "offices" or "installations" may be in error, traceable to me. In a few instances I left them out of the chart altogether.

3. Technical troops

a. The sappers

- . 60 Sapper Battalions (# 1-60) with 182 companies
- . Special Sapper Bn # 61 (flame-throwers) with 4 companies
- . Special Sapper Bn # 62 (chemical warfare) with 6 companies
- . 2 bridging battalions
- . 8 bridging parties
- . 4 river-mining platoons
- . 135 military bridging sets
- . 5 cavalry bridging trains
- . 4 quick footbridge sections
- . 510 stone-boring platoons
- . 24 pumping platoons
- . 21 ventilator platoons
- . 12 electric battalions
- . 1 independent electric company
- . A number of electric platoons
- . Depots for sapper equipment and explosives
- . Depots for bridging equipment and chemical warfare defensive equipment
- . Workshops, electricity works
- . Administrative offices for technical troops and fortified groups

b. The telegraph troops

- . 82 telegraph companies...
 - . Comps numbered from 100 to 160 - with brigade and division HQ
 - . " 161 to 200 - in fortified places or defensive sectors
 - . Comps numbered from 201 to 300 - with corps HQ
 - . " 301 and up - with army HQ
- . 12 radio-telegraph companies
- . 13 radio groups
- . 33 independent radio stations
- . 29 telegraph construction companies
- . A number of telegraph equipment companies
- . A number of depots and workshops for telegraph construction and maintenance
- . Administrative offices for telegraphs on lines of communication

c. The railroad troops

- . 39 railroad companies
- . 28 field railroad companies
- . 9 operational companies

- . 1 locomotive field railroad (3 operational sections)
- . 7 motor field railroads [for trucks] (15 operational sections)
- . 1 horse-drawn field railroad (1 operational section)
- . 1 fortress field railroad (5 operational sections)
- . 2 gasoline-electric railroads
- . 5 armored trains
- . 9 cable [funicular] railway commands
- . 6 cable railway construction companies
- . 37 cable railway operational companies
- . 3 army railroad commands
- . 8 operational battalions
- . 12 operational companies of the army railroads
- . 1 construction- and operational-company for electric railroads
- . 7 military railroad commands
- . 7 operational detachments
- . 3 field railroad commands
- . 3 rail bed commands
- . 3 rail bed operational offices
- . 2 military railroad construction directorates
- . 10 railroad construction offices
- . 10 railroad equipment and material depots
- . 5 cable railway equipment depots
- . 3 mobile railroad workshops
- . A number of special railroad formations - bridging detachments, bridge construction detachments, railroad maintenance detachments, a railroad auxiliary company, a railroad telephone construction company, railroad workshops and worker companies
- . Installations for inland navigation - shipping offices, shipping companies; the supporting commands of the Danube, Lake Constance, Vistula, Bug and Dniester Flotillas

4. Auto troops

- . 32 auto group commands
- . 209 auto columns
- . 1 armored car platoon
- . 1 tank column
- . 37 ambulance columns
- . 11 postal auto columns
- . 9 auto columns for Turkey
- . 1 auto experimental column
- . Also a number of auto replacement and material depots; benzine depots; auto field parks and workshops

5. Supply Train troops

- . 14 line of communication train HQ
- . 24 corps train HQ
- . 104 train group HQ
- . 65 divisional train HQ
- . 12 cavalry train HQ
- . 9 brigade train HQ
- . 15 Mountain train HQ
- . 755 sections (of which 147 were for pack-animals)
- . 40 oxen sections
- . 70 dog groups (each of 2 to 6 platoons)
- . Also a number of train replacement, material and field depots; line of communication and mountain train workshops
 - . Various installations for the care of the animals, including horse hospitals

6. Field logistical offices

- . 64 divisional offices
- . 12 cavalry offices
- . 8 brigade offices
- . 18 mountain offices
- . 24 corps bakeries
- . 67 divisional bakeries
- . 12 cavalry bakeries
- . 3 brigade bakeries
- . 64 mountain bakeries
- . Reserve and replacement bakeries; food storage magazines; mills; slaughter houses and meat depots; dairies
- . Facilities for the storage and preservation of ice, conserves, pastries, soda water, fodder, and various vegetables
- . Depots for straw and hay
- . Feeding stations
- . Magazines, depots and repair facilities for clothing and equipment
- . Field laundries
- . Various installations for the procurement and storage of raw materials
- . Numerous industrial and economic operational offices

7. Army medical services

- . 61 divisional medical columns
- . 12 cavalry medical columns
- . 18 brigade medical columns
- . 40 mountain medical columns
- . 11 divisional ambulance wagon sections
- . 4 "Krankenkarr" [?] sections

- . 261 field hospitals
- . Some reserve, fortress and "special" hospitals at the front or on lines of communication
- . Epidemic hospitals, including some also open to the general public
- . Medical equipment depots and installations
- . Surgical groups; dental field stations; also special stations to treat various ailments
- . Epidemic laboratories; bacteriological and chemical field laboratories
- . Water stations, quarantine stations; food research offices
- . Bath and disinfection [de-lousing] installations; disinfection and sterilization columns
- . Laundry installations
- . Various other offices for sick or convalescent men; also a school for war invalids

8. Special offices and formations on the lines of communication

- . 8 inspectorate HQ for March formations
- . 21 corps training groups
- . 75 divisional training groups
- . 5 brigade training groups
- . 10 training groups in the Balkan theater of operations
- . Some personnel assembly centers
- . A number of district and line of communication commands
- . 133 k.k and k.u. Landsturm line of communication battalions
- . 45 Landsturm railroad security detachments
- . A number of construction and bearer companies
- . A number of military artisan, miner, Landsturm construction and civilian construction companies
- . Prisoner of war labor companies

The sappers

Early in the fighting the enormous changes in the technological aspects of warfare had obliged the technical troops to master a large variety of new tasks. Alongside the 121 sapper and pioneer companies which existed in spring 1917 there was a host of specialized units for particular assignments; these units continued to proliferate through spring 1918 (as illustrated in Table 10, above). But a further expansion of the technical troops themselves didn't seem possible because of the ever more burdensome shortage of personnel.

On the other hand, as the major reorganization of the Army started in 1917 there was a basic question to resolve - should

the division of the technical troops into sappers and pioneers, which had just been implemented two years prior to the war, be continued? During the long periods of trench warfare, the sappers were clearly busier than the pioneers. And when more men from the latter group were needed in special situations, the sapper companies (many of whose personnel stemmed from the "era of water service" before the division into two groups) proved capable of serving in the river-crossing operations. This was proven during the autumn offensive against Italy in 1917.

Therefore the high command decided that in the interest of simplifying the order of battle the pioneer branch should be entirely broken up. Their personnel joined the 60 new sapper battalions (each of three companies). Eventually each battalion would be assigned to an infantry division, but at first two companies from each battalion would still be employed at the corps or army level.

But the quest to simplify the organization was somewhat in conflict with the rapidly developing technology of the era, which in general required more - not less - specialization. A solution to this dilemma was difficult to find. Perhaps a better idea would have been to maintain a separate pioneer arm for the immediate future (though on a diminished scale), and gradually train all the technical units so they were equally at home working on land or in the water. Construction efforts in rivers required long training and practice, to which the sappers couldn't currently devote the necessary time. In fact, the lack of troops who were used to working in the water was a noticeable problem in the June 1918 battle.

Meanwhile the creation of 60 sapper battalions didn't cause any difficulties, since all their component parts existed already; formation of battalion HQ was all that was needed. There was no change to the organization of the two bridging battalions already in existence; toward the end of the war they were joined by a third unit. The soldiers of the three battalions received the name "pioneers."

Sapper Battalions # 61 and 62 were special administrative HQ in charge of flame-throwers and chemical weapons, respectively.⁹²

92 Sapper Battalion # 61 consisted of four companies, each with four flame-thrower platoons, plus a number of replacement cadres and workshops. A platoon had four assault detachments, each armed with three small flame-throwers. The equipment available to each company was 48 flame-throwers of 15 liter fuel capacity and 20 of 50 liter fuel capacity.

Also part of the specialized technical troops were the twelve electric battalions, whose mission was to provide power for construction projects and for certain installations. A large amount of equipment for boring into stony soil was now available, much to the delight of the troops engaged on the Karst or in the high mountains since this eased the difficult chore of building positions.

The signals and communications troops

During the war there had also been an unsystematic but wide-reaching expansion of the communication services. For a long time just the immediate needs at the front could be addressed, but by the middle of 1917 it seemed that a more centralized and comprehensive organization of these services was not only desirable, but also practicable.

Based on the re-organization which was initiated around this time, gradually a telegraph company was formed for each army, each corps and each division.⁹³ There was also a number of companies to serve in fortified installations, as well as telegraph construction and storage units and a number of radio units. A series of numerous special units - with an assortment of titles - were either absorbed into this new organization or broken up. The re-organization proceeded quite slowly.

By now there was a great variety of methods available for communication between HQ. For messages between the higher-level HQ the teleprinter had almost entirely replaced the Morse telegram apparatus, while wireless (radio) telegraphy was also becoming popular. The mid-level commanders couldn't have done without their teleprinters. But despite all the innovations, it was still important to be able to send messengers when necessary on horseback or bicycles, or in automobiles.

Among the actual combat troops, some of the difficulties in communicating still hadn't been completely overcome.⁹⁴ Radio

As chemical warfare developed during the second half of the war, the use of cylinders or special projectors to deliver gas against targets declined so much that during 1918 the gas battalion was dissolved.

93 New guidelines were issued in July 1918 for the future organization of the telegraph groups after the war. The Telegraph Regiment HQ would be dissolved, and replaced by 20 battalions; each battalion would have two telegraph and two radio-telegraph companies.

94 See Franek, "Die Verbindung im Nahkampfe" (in Mil. wiss.

equipment wasn't yet technically advanced enough, or available in large enough amounts, to maintain constant contact with the foremost troops. There was also a lack of ground-return telegraph circuit apparatus. In the front lines it was ever more necessary to use telephones sparingly because of the danger of being overheard, and enemy bombardments almost always made knocked out the phone lines at decisive moments anyway. This problem was hardly alleviated at all by the tiresome project of constructing networks of armored cables, or by the self-sacrifice of the gallant soldiers who had to brave enemy fire to restore the cut phone lines. There weren't enough messenger dogs or carrier pigeons to overcome the problem of communicating with the foremost troops; airplanes could be used for this purpose only in special circumstances. Many methods were tried to send messages acoustically, but the only ones that had any lasting value were the bell and gong signals that warned of gas attacks.

Finally, optical signal gear and flags also proved to be of little value in the foremost lines. Flares fired from pistols, as well as rockets, provided a makeshift, though often sufficient, means of communication between the infantry and artillery. Otherwise only the gallant and dedicated runners could be relied on to deliver messages during the moments of hottest combat. To them no fire was too heavy, no mission too dangerous. But often they had to take an hour or longer to make their way under enemy fire from their companies to battalion HQ. For a while an attempt was made to speed up communication by using relays of several runners, but this method didn't prove to be any faster.

8. Development of the transportation services

a. Railroads and railroad troops⁹⁵

Continuing pressure on the railroad network

Mitt.; Vienna, 1927 edition, pp. 37 ff.)

95 See also Enderes and Ratzenhofer, "Verkehrswesen im Kriege" (in the Carnegie Institute publication, Aus-Hung. series; Vienna, 1931), from which many of the following figures have been taken. Ratzenhofer also published articles on the subject in the following issues of the Mil. wiss. Mitt. - 1927 edition, pp. 301 ff., 433 ff. and 692 ff.; 1928 edition - pp. 56 ff. and 149 ff.; 1930 edition - pp. 231 ff. and 594 ff.; 1931 edition, pp. 1031 ff.

Very great demands continued to be placed on the Monarchy's transportation system in the second half of the war. Since military and civilian traffic both had to use the same rail lines in the interior, problems had already often arisen during times of large scale military movement. But now the delays had mounted into a full-time difficulty. There were no longer enough boxcars, locomotives and railway personnel to simultaneously meet military and civilian needs. The k.u.k. central transportation command had to intervene more and more forcefully to hold back less important shipments along the railroad net - or to halt service to certain areas - so that the most urgent traffic would have priority. Earlier the immediate needs of the Army had always been treated with the greatest urgency; now, however, this was no longer the case because of the increasing shortages in the interior and the need to provide raw materials for the war industries. The military leadership themselves were more and more often obliged to intervene to ensure that the delivery of fuel and food, as well as movement of goods between factories, were carried out as quickly as possible.

The regular requirements of the battle fronts alone consumed an enormous, and yet still growing, share of the transportation resources. On each front, to bring up the necessary food and military gear required roughly as many trains per day as the number of divisions. In summer 1917 a monthly average of about 230,000 men, 21,000 horses and 7000 vehicles were sent from the homeland to the front. This movement of fresh resources finally fell off markedly when Russia left the ranks of the enemy. But still there was lively movement caused by the creation of the new infantry and artillery regiments, by the "exchange actions" (to bring younger and fitter men to the front), by the flow of sick and wounded men to the interior, and by the men on furlough. Traffic developed to bring goods from the occupied territories, the exploitation of which however was often limited by the capabilities of the transportation network.

Also there were still large-scale operational troop transfers, such as during the preparations for the Flitsch-Tolmein offensive and the break-up of the Eastern front. And in especially critical times there were additional developments, such as the return of the ex-prisoners of war from Russia, the shipment of the booty taken in Venetia, and the extraction of the Romanian harvest of 1917. Finally, the Monarchy's critical economic situation made it more urgent than ever to attend to shipment of goods within the interior - above all to bring food to the population, but also to move coal and other raw materials, and to ship half-finished products between the factories involved in the

war industries.

Such a plenitude of assignments would have greatly strained a rail network that was still running at full capacity. But by this time the lack of equipment was reducing the usefulness of the Monarchy's railroads to an increasing degree. There were shortages of fuel (coal), lubricants, bearing metal, rolling stock and personnel. Another problem at this time was that all the fronts had been pushed deep into enemy territory, lengthening train routes and making it necessary to also find transportation to keep the economy going in the occupied areas. It is true that by hiring more workers, and by producing new cars and machines (as well as by repairing older ones) the industry had more stock available than had been the case in peacetime.⁹⁶ But despite these efforts the number of trains that could actually run was in decline because so much of the equipment was always under repair (in winter 1917-18 this came to 28% of the locomotives and 7½% of the cars). Germany normally lent us 125 locomotives (and as many as 250 for special purposes), but this help didn't provide major relief. Under these circumstances, the operational shipment of troops in normal circumstances became slower, involving fewer trains per day. As a result the movement of a division, which could take place in four days earlier in the war, used up 14 days by the start of 1918.

Traffic jams occurred along major stretches of the tracks due to many causes (lack of locomotives and personnel, problems in the marshaling yards, delays in entraining, etc.); they caused station facilities to overflow, aggravated the shortage of cars, and made it harder to plan train movement. Thus for example, on one day in September 1917 there were 55 trains stuck along the Südbahn.⁹⁷ In February 1918, 4000 cars were stranded on the Nordbahn; at times in the last months of the war this figure would rise to between 5000 and 8000 cars. The number of railroad accidents was also climbing; there were 1883 accidents (including 350 collisions) in 1914-15 and 4065 (761 collisions) in 1917-18.

To combat these serious problems the railroad personnel worked harder than ever. Due to poor nourishment and clothing they were no longer at the peak of their bodily strength, but almost all of

96 In 1914 the total resources of the Austrian and Hungarian full-gauge railroads included 11,967 locomotives, 32,642 passenger cars and 265,864 boxcars. During the war 2400 locomotives and 74,800 cars (of both types) were produced.

97 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The Südbahn and Nordbahn were two of the Monarchy's oldest and most important rail lines, running respectively south and north from Vienna.

them were true to their duty and threw themselves totally into their tasks. Despite all the signs of an impending, unavoidable collapse in the second half of the war, in general the railroads were still able to surmount the increasing delays and friction.

Condition of the military rail lines

The railroads run directly by the Army were relatively less affected by the problems described above. Until fall of 1917 there were three principal lines - "North" in Poland (1810 km of standard gauge track plus 266 km of smaller gauge), "South" in Serbia⁹⁸ (140 km standard and 430 km smaller) and "Southeast" in Romania⁹⁹ (540 km, all standard gauge). After the offensive into upper Italy in November 1917 the "Southwest" military line (620 standard gauge km) was established in Venetia. The importance of the railroads during the allied advance into Ukraine will be discussed below as part of the description of this unique campaign.

Work to expand militarily or economically important networks continued with undiminished energy. Thus in Serbia a line was constructed from Lajkovac to Cacak to connect the northwestern small gauge network with the railroad that had been built in the valley of the Western Morava. Work started on a line in the mountains between Vardiste and Uzice that would unite the Bosnian and Serbian networks. Track laid between Cardak and Jaice linked the Bosnian railroads with the Adriatic, although the route through Knin and Gospic (to connect with the Croatian lines) was still not finished. A new spur between Ralja and Babe facilitated the exploitation of the Serbian harvest. A satisfactory connection linking southern Bukovina to Transsylvania was finally achieved when standard gauge track reached from Kisilva to Dorna Kandreni. The following construction took place in the southwestern theater of operations -

- . a short stretch between Sacile and Costa near Vittorio,
- . an (incomplete) line from Unter-Loitsch to Haidenschaft,
- . a line in the Fleims valley between Auer and Predazzo,
- . a narrow gauge line (never completed) from Toblach through Cortina d'Ampezzo to Calalzo in the Piave valley.

In western Tyrol work started on a railroad leading from Landeck,

98 In December 1917 traffic control on the standard gauge stretches of the "South" railroad was placed under the German Military Railroad Command # VII at Nish; this HQ had already controlled a large part of the Serbian railroad network.

99 In December 1917 traffic control along the "Southeast" railroad was placed under the German Military Railroad Command # X at Craiova.

but didn't progress very far from the starting point.

Field railroads continued to be of great importance to the supply lines as a whole. They assumed a more permanent character, and their capacity was greatly enhanced by new technical improvements and with trains powered by gasoline motors or electricity. In Albania, two motorized field lines were built inland from Durazzo; they formed the backbone of the network bringing supplies to this isolated front.

As previously, the cable railways were a priceless asset, particularly in the high mountains. However, after the advance in upper Italy the total length of the systems in use declined from 2000 to 1200 km. For safety reasons, the cables had to be replaced yearly; starting in 1917 it was proving difficult to produce sufficient replacement equipment.

In the last two years of the war the armored trains played a relatively small part in the operations.

This summary can only hint at the multi-faceted tasks of the railroad service in the field, which included the restoration or construction of numerous bridges and special projects. The organization of the Railroad Regiment had therefore blossomed considerably. The Regiment had mobilized in 1914 with 750 officers and 43,800 men, and received a total of 1059 officers and 46,350 men in addition during the war. (It was the largest single "regiment" in the Army.) The basic structure consisted of a number of railroad companies (many newly-raised in the war) plus numerous special formations, as illustrated above in Table 10, section 3.c. Toward the end of the war there was a total of 1820 officers and about 60,000 men with the armies in the field. It was planned that after the war a second railroad regiment HQ would be created at Waitzen [Vac], along with a number of replacement, operational and experimental formations plus field railroad depots.

b. Motorization and the supply trains

For the Army itself, supplying the troops in the immediate battle zones was a much more difficult problem than the railroad situation. On the one hand there was a shortage of horses and fodder, on the other there was an increasing demand for horses due to the artillery expansion and the need to transport large quantities of goods during trench warfare. The two factors made a basic change in the supply service corps inevitable.

Already before the war the Army hadn't hesitated to employ larger numbers of trucks. By mid-1917 the total tonnage of the auto troops had increased 14 times; in spring 1918 there were about 12,000 tons.

Because of the current state of technology and because of wide variety in the types and quality of the transportation routes in the different theaters of operations, serious consideration was never given to the ultimate solution - to completely motorize the supply services. Anyway, this would have only freed up 100,000 horses, not enough to seriously respond to the shortage of fodder. At any rate, Aus-Hung. industry wouldn't have been able to suddenly produce trucks in the quantity needed. It was considered a major achievement in mid-1917 when the high command could expect to receive each month six auto columns (each of 20 trucks) in addition to the vehicles needed by the heavy artillery and to support the air units.

As a result of the increased production, it was planned that one third of the supply "sections" would utilize rail transport (motorized field lines, cable railways or lines that could accommodate trucks); another third would utilize the auto columns. Further expansion of motorization was impossible at this time because of the shortage of gasoline. It was also difficult to find enough tires, even after the use of private automobiles was curtailed and replacement substances used in place of rubber.

By June 1918 there were 266 auto columns (including 9 in Turkey). With the exception of the columns which transported sick and wounded troops, or the mail, there were two types - "light" (with 40 ton capacity) and "heavy" (with capacity greater than 40 tons). Both types were designed to carry every kind of military supply, and were used in the battle zones. The Aus-Hung. Army was never able to provide auto columns for the transportation of large numbers of troops.

For a long time the original specialization of the sections based on type of cargo (with separate food and ammunition sections) had proven to be impractical. But there were special supply trains to carry some types of ammunition, as well as entrenching tools, which were allowed to exist alongside the standard sections whose cargo varied from mission to mission. Furthermore, the sections were no longer divided equally among the combat units. Just one or two were assigned to each division for their internal use; the rest were placed directly under the various army HQ. Thus at times of crisis a large amount of transport could be sent quickly

to the scenes of action rather than having it sit idle in sectors where it was wasn't needed.

This was undoubtedly a rational system which performed admirably under the conditions of trench warfare. But it was at least questionable whether such a centralization of the supply trains would have been advantageous in a mobile campaign. Certainly the divisions would have needed more sections. Therefore a number of officers proposed that the service corps should be radically re-organized, and de-centralized, after the war. Perhaps the corps should even be abolished as a separate branch. In fact, in the plans for a peacetime army envisioned greater specialization among the supply trains; the specialized sections would be administered and controlled by the branches which they served. Thus, for example, technical trains would be under the sappers, hospital vehicles would be under the medical corps, etc. Having been thus diminished, the service corps - along with the auto troops - would be responsible for bringing up non-specialized supplies. It is noteworthy that under this re-organization the railroad, auto and train troops would be combined to form the "Transportation Services."

9. The medical services

The arrangements of the medical services were thoroughly perfected during the war, so that by the end the help extended to the sick and wounded seldom left anything to be desired. There were so many hospitals, both in the zone of the armies and in the interior, that they could meet the demands of even the largest operations. Medical installations in the interior had a total of 570,000 beds, of which about 150,000 were usually unoccupied. Also the resources available to transport the wounded and sick had been significantly increased and were sufficient for any situation except for occasional brief shortages in certain localities. In the first year of the war there had been 52 medical platoons; now there were more than 171 platoons, which could accommodate a total of roughly 13,000 bed-ridden patients and 40,000 others. There were also already 36 ambulance columns.¹⁰⁰

The success rate in healing, due to organizational preparations and above all to the self-sacrificing work and skill of the physicians, was generally satisfactory. Thus from the start of

100 TRANSLATOR: The total for the ambulance columns is shown as 37 in Table 10.

the war through January 1918, of the 118,000 officers and 4,600,000 men who left the field due to wounds or illness, 106,000 officers and 2,858,000 men were able to later return to the front.

The medical services also waged successful campaigns against diseases. Thanks to rigorous vaccination measures, cholera mostly disappeared during the second half of the war while outbreaks of smallpox, dysentery and scurvy were contained. Construction of numerous showers and de-lousing stations contributed to these results, as well as to the general health of the personnel.

Considerably more difficult was the fight against malaria, which afflicted the troops in Albania and also (in 1918) those stationed along the coast of Venetia. The dangers from this disease were already evident in 1916, when it quickly struck 10,000 men of the 47 ID in Albania; a fourth of the victims perished. Preventive measures were in vain, especially since it was difficult to procure quinine. Recourse was had to organizational measures, such as the creation of special replacement detachments from men who'd already survived malaria, to at least limit the danger; similar measures involving men who'd already contracted other illnesses had proved effective.

Maintaining the numerous medical facilities naturally required a large number of doctors, who couldn't be found in sufficient numbers during the second half of the war. There were 7400 physicians in the field (about 2 for every 1000 men), but of course they were split up among many HQ. In general, an infantry regiment of three battalions had at most three of its five authorized doctors; an artillery regiment was supposed to have two or three, but normally had just one doctor. Some relief was provided by appointing one-year volunteers - who had studied medicine for at least four semesters - as medical ensigns and lieutenants.

C. New tactics

For the year 1918 the Central Powers, especially Germany, intended to attack in order to decide the war. The high commands believed that to win it would not only be necessary to mass weapons and equipment at the front with the full output of industry, but also to introduce new and more effective tactics based on the lessons of the war to date. In the second half of

1917 the allies had opened their significant victories with completely successful breakthrough assaults. These actions were selected as examples worthy of emulation. But it was also recognized that victory in the battles in question (Zalosce, Riga and Flitsch-Tolmein) was also due to the sunken morale of the Russian and Italian Armies. And furthermore the Italians on the Isonzo had been the attackers for 2 ½ long years without ever having to seriously study the problems of defense, so they were inexperienced in their new role.

But in the impending 1918 offensives, the Germans had to reckon that the lavishly equipped enemy forces in the West would offer very stubborn resistance in strong positions, some of which had been under improvement for years. Similarly the AOK at Baden believed that the Italians, in their new positions behind the Piave and on Mt Grappa, had taken advantage of the lessons learned on the Western front, especially since French and English divisions were also stationed in Venetia. If the offensives were to reach their goals, the first thrusts into the enemy's deep and well-organized positions would have to succeed in breaking through completely. All of the Central Powers' earlier breakthroughs (including the counter-stroke at Cambrai) had succeeded only when surprise was a factor. The days of preparatory artillery fire which preceded the major attacks of the French and English served only to give the defenders time to bring reserves to the threatened sectors, resulting in prolonged and wasteful battles of attrition. Because the Central Powers' supply of military equipment was limited, they could never win such a battle while on the offensive.

New regulations were now promulgated in Germany to address both offensive and defensive tactics.¹⁰¹ Relying heavily on these regulations, the k.u.k. AOK prepared a combat training course whose Part XII (issued in April 1918) concerned the offensive. The basic concepts of defensive tactics were also altered. In the future the defenders wouldn't rely on long, rigid lines of trenches but would conduct mobile operations to hold onto deep fortified zones. Most of the new front which the Aus-Hung. units had reached after the fall offensive against Italy had already been turned into a permanent position based on this concept, although there had been some differences of opinion between the high-level HQ regarding the details. The final regulation governing defensive tactics didn't appear until June 1918, at which time most of the Army was on the eve of the year's major offensive. Therefore defensive planning wasn't of great

101Balck, "Entwicklung der Taktik im Weltkriege" (2nd edition; Berlin, 1922), p. 346

importance until a later date, and hence it will be described below (in Part VII).

On the Eastern front the new combat training wasn't employed because of the unique conditions in this theater. Also in Albania, where very small forces faced each other along a long front which at many points wasn't continuous, the troops continued to use the older tactics.

Now (in spring 1918) the Aus-Hung. troops stationed in the Southwest were instructed under the new guidelines for an offensive. Schools for troop leaders at Brixen and at Passariano (4 km southeast of Codroipo) explained the regulations to commanders of regiments and larger units, emphasizing that "the offensive battle should lead to a war of movement." An entire division (44th Sch Div) was available to demonstrate the tactics at the Passariano course.

The instructions for the breakthrough naturally had been based on all the lessons learned in the war to date, including the importance of careful planning and preparation, secrecy, timely deployment of the artillery, an exactly orchestrated preliminary bombardment followed by a sudden infantry assault, etc.

In outlining a breakthrough assault, the regulations stated that the target area should be at least 35 to 40 km wide, while the sector allotted to each front-line division was 2 to 4 km broad. Together, these two sets of figures also defined the minimum force necessary for this type of operation. But the regulations went on to say that the chances of success would be enhanced "if the breakthrough took place on a broader front or at several points." This statement could be construed as a recommendation to break up the attacking forces. Furthermore it was asserted that when penetrating deep into the enemy position it was inadvisable to have each division keep attacking until it used up its strength, since time would be lost by bringing up fresh units to finish the job. Instead, each attacking group should be deployed in depth and strong enough to thrust through the entire zone of enemy trenches on its own. The initial goal of the advance, which should continue without pause through the day and night, was to at least envelop the area where the enemy artillery were deployed; this would make it impossible for the other side to hold out in a second battle zone if one had been constructed. One of the lessons drawn from earlier breakthrough operations, that advantages could be gained by thrusting ahead from a forward angle of one's own line, was omitted from the new training

course.¹⁰²

New was the provision that in the interest of secrecy there should be just a short artillery bombardment before the storm troops attacked. Consistent with German practice, the artillery should only fire a few probing rounds prior to the bombardment. But the crews of each gun should be certain of their targets based on mapping the enemy positions, and ready to factor in the latest meteorological conditions.

Also changed were the instructions for bringing forward the infantry and unleashing their first attack; now the methods that had been introduced in the storm-troop courses were to be adopted universally.

The most powerful weapons of the assault infantry were now the light machine guns, which were to be brought forward as far as possible; meanwhile the standard (heavy) machine guns, deployed in depth, would support the advancing waves of storm troops and help to fend off enemy planes. To facilitate the infantry's advance, in addition to their own assigned weapons (the light trench mortars and flame-throwers), they were to be accompanied by batteries of mountain cannon (or possibly of field cannon). These guns would act under the orders of the infantry commanders to break up pockets of enemy resistance or to fend off tanks. Also, as soon as the infantry attacked the artillery would lay before them a protective wall of fire, which would continue moving forward as a "rolling barrage." Finally, our ground support planes would play a larger role than hitherto in the infantry combat.

Thus all efforts would be made to provide as much power as possible to the infantry assault with a wide variety of weaponry. The basic concept, as expressed in the regulations, was "to take maximum advantage of the artillery preparation and fire support. As soon as the last rounds struck the enemy positions, the infantry must surge forward; in the advance which follows, they must directly follow our rolling barrage, not giving the enemy time to recover from its effects or to make themselves ready for action. The maxim of the storm battalions - which has led to great success - is that attacking infantry should surge through their own artillery and trench mortar fire; this maxim must become the property of the entire infantry."

The new tactics, as described above and as actually practiced by

102Kiszling, "Der strategische Durchbruch" (in Mil. wiss. Mitt.; 1936 edition, p. 96)

the troops, were based on the supposition that the enemy in fact would be taken by surprise, and that they would remain within the area being pounded by our artillery rather than systematically withdraw. Furthermore, it was hoped that the attacks of the Aus-Hung troops on the Southwestern front would also be able to overcome the particular difficulties presented by the mountain terrain and by the Piave River that lay in front of the Italian front.

In seeking to draw an overall picture of the Army of the Aus-Hung Monarchy on the eve of its destruction (around June 1918), we can't overlook the striking difference between the condition of the armed forces themselves and that of the state which supported them. The Army had been substantially enlarged, reorganized and modernized; it was better equipped with artillery and technical resources than ever before. From a purely organizational and tactical standpoint, it was a respectable instrument of force. Overall it was a worthy representative of a large and important state, and it seemed determined to fight for an honorable peace and, afterwards, to protect the rebirth of the fatherland. But this would be possible only if the Monarchy's material and moral vigor didn't disappear first.

D. Spirit and inner cohesion of our Army

The brilliant fall offensive of 1917 against Italy had greatly increased the confidence of the troops and commanders involved, as well as their feeling of superiority over the enemy. The field armies also gained considerable material advantages. But this campaign lasted hardly more than two months, after which the Army's spirit was soon threatened by old and new dangers. Before we briefly describe these problems, we should note that similar difficulties - in varying degrees - were affecting other armies, even the enemy forces which had an incomparably stronger economic base. But our task here is only to describe developments within the Aus-Hung. Army.

It must constantly be repeated that the greatest enemy of the Army's spirit was the progressive deterioration of the soldiers' physical well-being. In February the specter of hunger once more appeared in the camps at the front and in the barracks in the interior. Just after the soldiers on Italian soil had gotten their own glimpse of the abundance of the enemy armies' food, clothing and special equipment of all sorts, they were again restricted to a diet of a few bits of lean meat plus a mixture of lumps of cornmeal and baked greens, which was lacking in both

quantity and quality. The latter had little taste and was detested by the men, who referred to it with many bitter jokes; nevertheless, it provided the majority of the Army's nutrition. A significant sign of the prevailing need was the fact that the supply service had to admit that these rations left much to be desired, but still insisted that the components were not unhealthy. Horsemeat also began to appear in the officers' kitchens.¹⁰³ Hunger, the lack of necessities of all kinds, and various illnesses made the soldiers' morale susceptible to negative influences.

These influences came above all from the interior, with which the men were closely linked by exchanging letters, taking leave, or moving between fronts. The nationalities' revolution was gnawing with ever more force into the units of the Army. Soldiers stationed in the interior were drawn increasingly into the nationalistic movements. It became common at anti-government gatherings to see some men in tattered field-grey uniforms, sporting national or revolutionary insignia on the field caps which they still reluctantly wore. Many troops who now felt the fighting was senseless lent their ears to agitators who promised to free them from the poverty and danger caused by the war through revolution and the overthrow of the Monarchy.¹⁰⁴

Social developments in the interior also had a major impact on the troops from the front who came home on leave. On the one hand, they saw their wives and mothers - with thin faces - standing in lines for hours both day and night to get a morsel of bread or a drop of milk (although despite censorship of letters and newspapers the men had already learned much of this while still at the front). On the other hand they gazed upon the persons who were taking advantage of the war - the anti-social profiteers and the men who'd avoided military service, riding around well-clad in automobiles. The soldiers also resented their more fortunate counterparts who were exempt from military service so they could keep the factories running; the latter, while not living in luxury, were better paid and free from personal danger. And when the front-line troops passed along the lines of communication they saw that conditions in the rear-area formations, while not ideal, were still substantially better than in the combat units and included many perquisites. This further increased the deep bitterness of the combat soldiers. It's true

¹⁰³Glaise-Horstenau, "Das Heer im Frühjahr 1918" (in Schwartze, Vol. V, pp. 492 ff.)

¹⁰⁴TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A very detailed description of disturbances among the replacement and other units in the interior is provided in Plaschka, "Innere Front" (particularly Volume I).

that there were still enough fighters who shrugged off their bad memories once they reached the purer air of the front; nevertheless, more and more of them nourished in their hearts a hope for peace and deliverance.

Proponents of various national and social goals jostled with each other among the Slavs, Romanians and Magyars. Among the Germans the principal menace to the will to fight, although in a more restricted measure, was social-revolutionary agitation. The amnesty of June 1917 and, even more, the "Sixtus Affair" of Easter 1918 awoke anti-dynastic sentiment among some Germans; however, among most of them loyalty to the state and consciousness of their national duty held fast almost to the end.

The problem of the returning prisoners ("Heimkehrer")

An important role in the decline of morale was played by the men returning home from captivity in Russian prisoner of war camps. In the first three years of the war, almost 2,000,000 Aus-Hung. prisoners (some of them wounded) had fallen into Russian hands. As time went on they were shipped into Siberia (as far away as the Manchurian border), into Turkestan and to the cold sea-coast by Murmansk. 500,000 of them had died of hunger, illness and deprivation; 150,000 more died of their wounds. 30,000 were murdered by out-of-control Russian soldiers, and 11,000 fell in the Russian civil war.¹⁰⁵ The frightful fate of the prisoners of war has been described in gripping fashion in numerous books and narratives. They had suffered no less than their comrades still at the battle front, and often had suffered more.

It now seemed to these enormous groups of prisoners, scattered over one-sixth of the surface of the earth, that thanks to the developments in the East they would soon be liberated and at home. But for the majority their hopes weren't fulfilled for a long time; tens of thousands of them, or even more, didn't return to their homelands until 1920 or later. Nevertheless, in the late winter of 1917-18 there were already so many returnees along the Eastern front that the authorities - who hadn't made any preparations for this first movement - stood almost helpless. No food, shelter, clothing or medical supplies were available. In great haste, barracks were erected in large camps in east Galicia, Bukovina, Transylvania, Romania and Turkey; here the Heimkehrer would undergo weeks of medical and psychological quarantine, while they were fed and brought back to health. The Emperor entrusted overall control of the Heimkehrer services to GO Ritter von Roth; he reported at first to the high command, and in the last months of the Monarchy to the War Ministry.

Although the return of the prisoners was potentially a boon to relieve the critical shortage of replacement troops, from the first day forward it also represented a difficult social and moral problem. The Heimkehrer had already lived through the Russian Revolution. Although most were disgusted to the depths of their souls by the chaos they had witnessed, not a few of them subscribed completely to the new doctrines coming from the East; also some very skilled Bolshevik propagandists had infiltrated their ranks. Similar Communist influence was also directed against our troops when they entered Ukraine. When the Heimkehrer saw the deprivation and anxiety in the homeland, many of them were further strengthened in their belief in the

¹⁰⁵Krist, "Pascholl Plenny" (Vienna, 1936), p. 6

Bolshevik gospel, and forcefully propagated their ideas. The authorities sought to separate the men with social-revolutionary leanings and to place them in camps at Wieselburg and Kenyermezö, but this did little to address the problem. Many Heimkehrer found it hard to accept when they were called upon again to fight after fearfully difficult months and years of captivity and an often adventurous flight home. The high command at first intended to give them just eight weeks' leave. Although this period was then extended to twelve weeks, the men still felt that their leave was niggardly. And so a substantial contingent of Heimkehrer soon joined the already numerous draft-dodgers and deserters. As was true in Germany and other countries, many thousands of men who were eligible to bear arms were hiding in the cities and countryside. In the south of the Monarchy they formed armed bands of robbers based in the forests; the local population - out of sympathy or fear - provided them with food. Thus the authority of the state, already faltering, was further weakened. By the summer of 1918 these "green cadres" made up a rather substantial army, which had machine guns and even a few artillery pieces. When the Emperor made a ceremonial visit to Sofia and Constantinople in May 1918, his route led through the territories of the green cadres, so special precautions had to be taken against surprise attack.

Another category of deserters (one which also existed in Germany) were the numerous men on leave who used passes to spend weeks or months "looking for" their units - always on the wrong front - while also carrying on lucrative scams.

The first mutinies and the Army's reaction

At the start of February 1918 a warning flash blazed up to alert everyone who bore authority in these difficult times. Mutiny broke out on the naval vessels at Cattaro; it was finally suppressed by the intervention of batteries on land and the appearance of a loyal squadron of ships from Pola.¹⁰⁶ The strings of the conspiracy were traced back to the Austrian Social Democrats, to Bolshevik Russia, and also to certain revolutionary leaders of the nationalities. Some mutineers were sentenced to death, and the Emperor placed the energetic Admiral von Horthy at the head of his Navy.

Three months later there were mutinies among the replacement troops in all corners of the Monarchy; they followed one another

¹⁰⁶TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: There is a long description and analysis of the Cattaro mutiny in Sokol, "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918" (Vienna, 1933), pp. 654-692.

in rapid succession and involved all the nationalities (except for the Germans) - Slovenes and Italians in Styria, Czechs at Rumburg in northern Bohemia, Magyars at Budapest¹⁰⁷, Hungarian Serbs at Pecs, Dalmatians at Mostar, Slovaks in the Ersatz battalion at Kragujevac, Galicians in upper Hungary and at Przemysl and Lublin.¹⁰⁸ These uprisings, which varied considerably in size, were all put down by armed force and punished with great strictness.

Also at this time there were soldiers who resisted going to the front and were antipathetic to fulfilling their military duty; desertion rates increased as units came closer to the battle-fields. As noted earlier, groups had been formed behind the field armies to provide practical combat training to the troops who had been called or re-called to front-line duty. Their mission was also to restore the military discipline which was lacking in so many cases. The training groups were successful, inasmuch as no disturbances like the ones that had disrupted the Ersatz units occurred in the zones controlled by the armies. But even here some compromises had to be made; standards were loosened in cases where it was felt that the soldiers' sense of duty wouldn't be weakened.

A number of measures were implemented to maintain discipline. Back in March 1917 Emperor Charles had abolished the dishonorable punishment of binding, and in June of the same year had done away with clapping miscreants in irons. At the urging of the Army, in February 1918 he felt obliged to authorize the AOK to re-instate both punishments. In many cases imprisonment had been found to be an inadequate penalty; in fact, for some soldiers the chance to escape the danger and rigors of the front by a spell under arrest were an incentive to break the law. Significantly, the use of imprisonment as the only punishment for breaches of discipline was suspended until after the war. Especially amoral individuals were brought together in punishment companies, which were used as workers both in and outside the firing zone.

While the morale of the field armies was seriously threatened from behind as described here, since spring 1918 it was also increasingly targeted from the enemy side by destructive

107The Magyar ex-prisoners of war were particularly susceptible to reports from Russia about the Bolsheviks' ideology.

108TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The rear-area units involved in the most serious disturbances were the Ersatz Battalions of IR 17 (at Judenburg in Styria), IR 87 (at Radkersburg in Styria), SchR 7 (at Rumburg), IR 6 (at Pecs), and IR 71 (at Kragujevac). (Data from Plaschka, "Innere Front", Vol. I).

propaganda, initiated with great vigor by the British Information Ministry and directed by the Italian high command. Following the example of the "patriotic training" carried out by the German Army, the k.u.k. AOK now created their own "Office to Counter Enemy Propaganda", with its HQ in the Stifts Kaserne at Vienna. Here information officers were to take courses for several weeks prior to spreading their message throughout the whole Army. But the office was established too late, and was hampered by the confusing political picture.

Hunger proved to be an effective ally of the enemy propaganda. Only a few dozen North and South Slavs, Italians and Romanians (including some reserve officers) went over to the enemy for political reasons. Hundreds more followed them because they succumbed to the temptation to once again eat their fill after long months of privation. It is amazing that there were just hundreds of such cases rather than thousands.

To combat hunger as the destroyer of spirit at the front, recourse was had to the usual methods of recognition and promotion. Hitherto the combat troops had been offended by the fact that in these areas they were treated the same as their comrades on the lines of communication and in the interior. The Emperor sought to redress their grievance by various innovations: adding an additional element ("swords") to their war-time decorations, creation of a new "Charles Troop-Cross" (modeled on the Army Cross of 1813) and a wound medal, and finally making it possible for the bravery medals (Gold, Silver and Bronze), hitherto reserved for the enlisted men, to be awarded to officers. On 17 August 1917, the first festive appointment of commanders and knights of the Military Maria Theresia Order took place at the Imperial summer palace at Wartholz. Finally, distinguished commissioned and non-commissioned officers were temporarily detailed from the front to give training.

As previously, the bearing of the officer corps was of the greatest importance for keeping up good spirits in the trenches. One of the greatest problems toward the end of the war was that the old professional officers who'd been systematically trained in peacetime had almost completely disappeared from the ranks of platoon and company commanders. Their important duties had been taken by reserve officers, by boyishly young lieutenants and ensigns or even by persons who'd earlier been judged unfit by the military academies. It's true that many of the reserve officers performed splendidly in their strenuous tasks at the front. But they lacked the experience and knowledge (obtained through time in the field) to command larger units; furthermore, the younger

men among them - like their professional comrades of the same age - found it difficult to adopt the proper tone in dealing with much older NCO's and private soldiers under their control. It can't be denied that there were occasional cases where officers abused their authority over the rank and file. But it also should be remembered that after the collapse an ongoing investigation - conducted by circles that weren't friendly to the Army - stated that mistreatment of soldiers in the Aus-Hung. forces was "not a common occurrence."¹⁰⁹ And it is appropriate to also remember that the age-old soldierly comradeship still persisted in this late hour; as previously, it was the strongest bond still holding together men from eleven nationalities, at a time when many of their national leaders had already renounced the connection with the ancient fatherland.

Overall, it's amazing that this starving, freezing and debilitated Army, threatened physically and morally from both the front and the rear, not only held together but remained an instrument of war in the hands of the leadership that the enemy rightly regarded with respect and fear! There is no comparison in history for this achievement, whereby Old Austria's armed forces retained until their bitter end the strength to withstand powerful storms and tests, remaining vigorous and motivated by their traditions. Otherwise it would have been impossible for the Army in summer 1918 to again seek a reckoning with the enemy with undiminished willingness to attack; they entered the battle with the same acceptance of sacrifice that they had displayed in the great decisive battles of former times.

III. The Occupation of Ukraine

A. Winter on the Eastern front

1. Situation between the Black Sea and the Pripyat, 1 January to 18 February 1918

¹⁰⁹Reference to this 1922 investigation has already been made in Volume 1. The results were summarized in Ratzenhofer, "Der Wahrheit eine Gasse" (in the Vienna "Reichspost" of 11 and 12 August 1926) and "Wandel der Zeiten" (in the Öst. Wehrzeitung of 31 Dec 1926 and 6 Jan 1927).

a. Developments on the Russo-Romanian front

On 1 January 1918 the Aus-Hung. Chief of the General Staff, GdI Arz, issued an order concerning troop training during the winter. He stated "We are entering the final phase of the war, which perhaps will also be the most difficult time. Although peace negotiations proceed at Brest with one of our opponents, it doesn't seem yet that other states will also declare they are willing to seek a peaceful solution.....The armistice on the Eastern front will enable our divisions to pull the majority of their troops back to perfect their skills."

But the intention that the truce would permit the commanders and troops leisure time for training didn't lead to any results for many of the units stationed in the East. In the prior year a wide-ranging reorganization of the front had been initiated, designed to make primarily German, but also some Aus-Hung., divisions available for use elsewhere; this process continued throughout winter 1917-18 and kept a number of units in motion. As GdI Arz informed GO Archduke Joseph in December 1917, the two high commands had agreed that the final goal of these troop movements was to separate the spheres of authority of the Aus-Hung. and German commanders, as well as their troops, along all of the front held by the Archduke and part of that held by Prince Leopold of Bavaria (from Transylvania to Volhynia). Archduke Joseph would lead the Aus-Hung. front, consisting of the Army Groups of Kövess (1st and 7th Armies) and of Böhm-Ermolli (3rd, 2nd and 4th Armies). But it should be noted right away that this plan could never be carried out, since meanwhile both high commands were confronted with new developments and new tasks in the East.

The reorganization of the Aus-Hung. Army, described in the preceding section, changed the composition of almost every division, requiring each one to give up or receive units, or to form new ones. Furthermore, since January 1918 the AOK at Baden needed field battalions and squadrons to maintain order and security in the Monarchy's interior and in the occupied territories. All these factors prevented the front-line units from instituting a quiet routine; the only units that could afford this luxury were those which had been pulled back from the front and were supposed to entrain, because they often had to wait for weeks before the trains arrived. In most cases divisions which stayed at the front had to extend their lines due to the departure of their neighbors; the same was true of the corps and army HQ controlling the various sectors.

Changes in the order of battle

The chain of command was considerably simplified in Archduke Joseph's Army Group. At the start of January all of 3rd Army's short sector was placed under Kosak's newly-formed Group HQ, and XIII Corps HQ left the line. Thus GO Kritek's 3rd Army HQ was redundant. But since Emperor Charles called GO Archduke Joseph along with his staff to the Italian theater, on 13 January both 3rd and 7th Armies were placed under Kritek's command and his HQ (at Sniatyn) was re-designated the HQ of 7th Army. The former commander of the latter Army, FM Freiherr von Kövess, moved with his staff to Klausenburg where on 15 January they took the place of Archduke Joseph's HQ in charge of the entire Army Group [7th and 1st Armies].

Under GO Freih. von Rohr's 1st Army, in the second half of the month the HQ of VI Corps were sent to 11th Army to create Kletter's Group Command; a new HQ (the "Uz Sector") took over 3 CD and 28 Lst Mtn Bde. 70 Hon ID left by train for the Isonzo Army, followed in the next month by 1 CD (from XXI Corps). In January the 7th Army pulled 11 Hon CD from XI Corps and shifted them farther north; the neighboring 40 Hon ID were pulled from the front. At the same time the HQ of XXVI Corps moved to 11th Army, and their sector was taken over by GdI von Fabini's XVII Corps. 6 CD were re-assigned to Kosak's Group, so that 5 ID could be placed in reserve at Czernowitz. 9 CD left for the Southwestern front; in February they were followed by 31 ID and 42 Hon ID.

Chaos in Romania

While terms of peace were being haggled with Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk, the Central Powers' commanders in Wallachia and Transylvania remained totally in ignorance of the eventual decisions of Romania and of the Russian General Shcherbachov. (The latter, at least nominally, had become commander of the "Ukrainian Front.") The armistice signed at Focsani was only "provisional"; conclusion of peace had been made dependent on concurrence of the Russian constituent assembly which was about to convene. To be prepared for any eventuality, Mackensen's Army Group was still holding in reserve four German divisions which had left the front and had been scheduled to start leaving Wallachia in mid-January.

At the suggestion of GFM Mackensen, the negotiators who'd met at Focsani came together again for further discussions at Braila. The Central Powers' delegation was led by German Vice-Admiral

Hopmann; the Danube Monarchy was represented by GM von Hranilovic and Lschkapt. von Millenovich. The delegation sent by Shcherbachev and by Romanian General Presan was led by Romanian Admiral Balescu. Here (rather than in Odessa as originally scheduled) the Central Powers wanted to build on the Focsani agreement by regulating ship traffic on the Danube River and Black Sea; however, their hopes were disappointed. The Romanians proved very reluctant to commit themselves, and were obviously under the influence of the Entente. The new agreement signed on 14 January advanced the December armistice only by extending its provisions to the Black Sea, where a line of demarcation was established. But the enemy negotiators from Jassy weren't empowered to discuss the questions of free ship passage and the resumption of trade. Thus the representatives of the Quadruple Alliance had to restrict themselves to wishing, in a final sentence, that discussions would soon resume so that cultural and economic relations could be normalized and trade could begin again.

Conditions behind the enemy's old front were totally chaotic. General Shcherbachev, who maintained himself in Jassy only with Romanian bayonets, had little influence over the Russian troops. The relationship of Romania to the Russians was very strained, almost hostile; the latter had originally come into the Kingdom as allies, but since the Revolution they had been infected by the poison of Bolshevism and were now a plague upon the land. The Romanian government and the Ukrainian Rada both opposed the government of peoples' commissars at Petrograd; they exerted power over the Great Russian (mostly Bolshevik) troops on their territory by cutting the lines of communication back to Russia. Thus the Great Russians in Moldavia and in the areas formerly commanded by the Southwestern Front were isolated from their homeland. This led to some very strange occurrences and situations.

For example, in the first week of January the commander of 49 Russian ID (in 4th Army) asked the HQ of the 1st k.u.k. Army to relay his complaints about the Romanians to his own commander-in-chief Krylenko. With the knowledge of the high command at Baden this message was conveyed through the Russian representatives at Brest-Litovsk. A week later the HQ of 8th Russian Army (stationed opposite the k.u.k. 7th Army) used the same route to request orders on how they should deal with the Romanians and Ukrainians. Meanwhile the Russian armies still stationed on the Moldavian border were making urgent efforts to withdraw their restless and dissolving divisions. The Romanians would permit this only if the Russians first gave up their weapons and

supplies and then allowed Romanian troops to escort them out of the country. For this purpose, and to cover the border sectors held by his erstwhile allies, General Presan shifted the main body of his units (which now included 18 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions) from the Danube to the northern corner of Moldavia; thus behind the Russians there were Romanian troops stationed at the most important transportation centers.¹¹⁰

Since mid-January, large parts of the old Russian positions opposite Rohr's and Kritek's Aus-Hung. armies had been abandoned; they had been hastily manned only by some weak Romanian outposts. Soon the sounds of lively fighting were heard from deep in enemy territory, particularly from the areas around Ocna and in northern Moldavia. Russian units which didn't want to lay down their arms sought to conduct a fighting retreat through the opposing Romanians. The government of the peoples' commissars issued an ultimatum to their counterpart in Jassy, and temporarily arrested the Romanian representative at Petrograd. The 8th Russian Army was ordered to oppose with force the demands of the Rada, of the Romanians, and of the counter-revolutionary General Kaledin. On 22 January several thousand men of the IV Siberian Corps, after bitter fighting against the Romanians, crossed over the German lines from Galatz bringing their guns and wagons. The Russians preferred to surrender their military equipment to their opponents rather than to their former friends.

In one of their customary broadcasts "To the World" the Soviet leaders broke off relations with Romania, took over the Romanian gold reserve stored in Moscow, and declared General Shcherbachov an enemy of the Russian people. So ended the Russo-Romanian alliance; the former comrades became open enemies.

The remnants of the Russians' II Corps (4th Army) and XVIII Corps (9th Army) now asked permission from the k.u.k. 7th Army to march through Austrian territory on the northern bank of the Pruth. But the high command had to refuse based on the armistice agreements. After a clash with the Romanians, the Russians therefore had no other recourse than to lay down their arms. Only small groups of the surrounded units - several thousand men from II, XVIII and XL Corps - were able to fight their way through so they could surrender by 1 February to Kritek's army. All of the new and conflicting authorities (the Rada, the government of Bessarabia, the Bolsheviks and the Poles) strove to advance their cause by streaming into the area which formerly had made up the Russian lines of communication, by finding reliable

¹¹⁰Kiritzesco, "La Roumanie dans la guerre mondiale 1916-1919"
(Paris, 1934), pp. 380 ff.

soldiers among the dissolving units, or by seizing military equipment and rations from supply depots.

In the first week of February, along the entire border with Moldavia Mackensen and Kövess had in front of them only Romanians, except for a few small posts held by the former 4th Russian Army and a few Ukrainian troops. And the Ukrainian units had already been called back to their homeland. The weak government of the Rada was severely endangered by a Bolshevik counter-regime which the Soviets had established in Kharkov; although they had raised new troops, the latter weren't reliable. Kiev itself had been lost to the Bolsheviks. Around this time the role of General Shcherbachev as "Ukrainian" commander-in-chief had also come to an end, since he disagreed with the Rada's intention of concluding peace with the Central Powers.¹¹¹ His attempt to restore order in Bessarabia was another failure. The leaders of the Bessarabian state had proclaimed a "democratic Moldavian Republic" in December 1917, but were opposed by the Bolsheviks.¹¹² Russian deserters and disarmed soldiers, some of whom had been expelled over the border by the Romanians, made the land unsafe. Bessarabia could expect no help from its Ukrainian neighbors, who suffered under similar conditions. Therefore at the start of January the government had already turned to Jassy for assistance. The Romanians didn't hesitate to respond to the appeal from this area, part of whose population were Romanian-speakers. Two infantry divisions and both of the cavalry divisions crossed the Pruth. The Bolshevik leader, who had posed as commander of the Russian units in the area in opposition to Shcherbachev, was driven out of Kishinev at the end of January. By the start of March Bessarabia was pacified, with the railroads and the major localities under Romanian protection.

The Central Powers plan a new advance into Romania

In Russia the Constituent Assembly met on 18 January, but was dissolved after a few days. Thus they never discussed the issue of peace in the south as had been envisioned by the Focsani treaty. After the Russians had left Moldavia, GFM Mackensen

111Wahl, "Zur Geschichte der weissen Bewegung (Die Tätigkeit des General-Adjutanten Schtscherbatschew)" (Reval, 1935), pp. 23 ff. Shcherbachev left Jassy in April.

112Kiritzesco, pp. 392 ff. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: To complicate geographical references, at that time (and still today) there were two entities called "Moldavia." One was the old Romanian province. The other was an alternate name given Bessarabia; when the area became an independent state in the 1990's it was officially baptized "Moldova."

suggested to the German OHL that the Romanians should be forced to make peace by means of an ultimatum and, if necessary, by terminating the armistice. The German commander believed that with his available forces he could carry out a successful offensive over the lower Sereth against the thin Romanian lines if Kövess' Army Group simultaneously attacked from Transylvania toward Ocna. Meanwhile the break between the governments at Jassy and Petrograd destroyed all the conditions upon which the Focsani treaty had been built in December. The high commands of the two Empires therefore agreed that both Mackensen and Kövess should approach the Romanian supreme HQ to clarify the situation and to conclude new agreements based on the totally altered situation. Negotiations with the Romanian General Lupescu opened at Focsani on 4 February.¹¹³ But if the Kingdom didn't soon indicate it was inclined to peace, the allied Central Powers were also prepared to gain their objectives by recourse to arms. In this case, as the Chief of the General Staff GdI Arz informed FM Kövess on 6 February, an offensive would open three days after the armistice was terminated. A plan of attack was being prepared for the Army Group. The basic concept was that the strong southern wing of 1st Army should strike through the mountain passes toward Ocna and Onesci, while the main body of 7th Army drove from southeastern Bukovina to Roman. Mackensen would advance over the lower course of the Sereth.

Kövess' Army Group received this order at a point when their striking power was minimal. Due to continuing problems in bringing up supplies, the troops were under-nourished. Based on earlier orders, they were deployed in depth so they could find quarters over as wide an area as possible while withstanding the winter. Most of the horses had been sent far to the rear, and there weren't enough of them to move all the batteries. Nevertheless, FM Kövess' staff didn't think these disadvantages would seriously hamper the offensive. The Romanians were outnumbered and there were large gaps in their lines. The Aus-Hung. armies, on the other hand, had assembled a large supply of ammunition. The goals for the operation were set. Rohr's Army (whose commander was named a Field Marshal on 30 January) deployed 15 ID of XXI Corps as a reserve around Gyergyo Szt. Miklos; 5 ID would serve the same purpose for Kritek's Army. Upon a request to the AOK, 16 ID was provided as a reserve for the Army Group. But on 8 February GdI Arz emphatically turned down a plan to have Kosak's group send troops between the Pruth and the Dniester toward Nowosielica as part of 7th Army's advance; the AOK wanted to just guard against the area between

¹¹³Morgen, "Meine Truppen Heldenkämpfe" (Berlin, 1920), pp. 132 ff.

the two rivers, while avoiding any operation on "Russian" (now Ukrainian) territory as part of the offensive against Romania. Peace with Ukraine was about to be achieved at Brest-Litovsk. The planned campaign was given the code name Operation Halali.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile negotiations with the Romanians continued, despite numerous interruptions.

Because of the dissatisfaction of the Poles at the consequences which peace with Ukraine might have on their national aspirations, the AOK once more warned GO Kritek on 9 February to beware of the attitude of the Polish Auxiliary Corps and to keep the unit out of the foremost line. But this warning didn't prevent the trouble which broke out on 15 February; the Poles cut the local railroad and telephone connections and left their quarters west of Czernowitz, marching toward the Russian border. They were apparently trying to link up with the Polish units - created from officers and men of that nationality from the former Russian Army - which existed in Ukraine and Bessarabia. About three companies under Colonel-Brigadier Haller did fight their way over the demarcation line; the main body of the Auxiliary Corps were surrounded by Aus-Hung. troops¹¹⁵ and disarmed after a brief action. The captured Poles, treated as mutineers, were shipped as prisoners to Huszt (in Hungary), and legal proceedings were initiated against their leaders. The Emperor later suspended the prosecution. The Polish Auxiliary Corps was dissolved.

b. The Army Groups of Böhm-Ermolli and Linsingen

There had been a certain amount of tension in Kövess' Army Group because of the question of Romania's attitude, and due to events in Moldavia and Bessarabia. The winter passed much more quietly along the neighboring southern portion of Prince Leopold's Eastern Command, where Aus-Hung. and German units were intermingled as far as the Stokhod. In the northern half of South Army, in mid-January three German divisions of XXVII Res Corps were relieved by FZM Braun's XII k.u.k. Corps (with 30 and 59 ID). GdI Graf von Bothmer, along with his Army HQ, left Galicia. The Aus-Hung. XII and XXV Corps were assigned on 24 January to 2nd Army, whose authority thus covered the entire area hitherto

114 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: "Halali" refers to the final phase of a hunt.

115 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Per May ("Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy", p.620) the Poles were disarmed by "Croatian" troops, who presumably were from the 36th ID.

subject to Böhm-Ermolli's Army Group. The distinguished commander of 2nd Army since the start of the war was promoted by the Emperor to the rank of Field Marshal on 31 January. When it was certain that peace would be concluded with Ukraine, the high command ordered the divisions of 2nd and 4th Armies to send their heavy field artillery regiments to quarters in the rear, where they would rest and rebuild while waiting to be sent to other fronts.

Peace with Ukraine brought new tasks to the k.u.k. 2nd Army. The first priority, according to an order from Baden on 9 February, was to establish posts on the Ukrainian border to regulate traffic. 27 ID and 155 Hon ID were placed in reserve, while 38 Hon ID was to be ready to entrain. Six Landsturm battalions were brought from the Southwestern front so that it would be easier to relieve these units. The battered 21 Sch Div (just 6 ½ battalions without artillery) was also brought to the Army's sector (from Tyrol). Five German divisions left Galicia by train between the start of January and the end of February.

Already before the final settlement at Brest-Litovsk the Russians in front of 2nd Army were pulling back from their side of the demarcation line running through the easternmost part of Galicia. The inhabitants of this area, particularly in the cities of Zbaraz and Brody, complained about the growing lawlessness. 2nd Army HQ proposed some measures to protect the population, but the AOK at Baden advised that nothing should be done that might interrupt the ongoing negotiations at Brest. On 11 February the German Eastern Command told the Army commander that the Ukrainian delegation had agreed to the occupation of the border area. Army HQ in turn discussed the status of the Brody and Zbaraz districts with the local Russian commands. The enemy XXXII Corps HQ (now under Ukrainian control) were stationed at Brody but at this point were about to depart with their remaining troops; they wanted Aus-Hung. troops to occupy the town to prevent possible disturbances. On 13 February the k.u.k. FJB # 6 (of XVIII Corps) entered this Galician border city; they received a ceremonial greeting from the local officials and citizens as well as from a Ukrainian military delegation. On 18 February FM Freih. von Böhm-Ermolli could report to Baden that his troops were stationed everywhere along the Monarchy's pre-war eastern border.

From the center of GO Graf Kirchbach's 4th Aus-Hung. Army the German 86 ID left for the West at the end of January. Thereafter the 45 Sch Div were shifted from GdK von Bernhardi's adjacent Kovel Sector; they went to the k.u.k. X Corps to replace 224 German ID, which GO von Linsingen was sending north to Gronau's

Army Detachment. The HQ of XII Res Corps and the 2 German CD left the Turya Sector in mid-February. Since the last Aus-Hung. troops had left Bernhardi's command when 26 Sch Div moved to the Southwestern front, FML Rudolf Krauss' XXII Corps HQ was now superfluous here. On 18 February Krauss took over the Lipa Sector, which was placed under 4th Army, while the HQ of XXII Reserve Corps (GdK Eugen von Falkenhayn) took the place of the departing GdK Bernhardi's LV Corps HQ in the Kovel Sector; the latter now consisted solely of German units. With the consent of the two high commands, units were recruited for the friendly Ukrainian government among the local population by the Germans in the Kovel area and by the Austro-Hungarians around Vladimir-Volynsky; a rifle brigade was the first formation to appear in the latter district. 106 Lst ID had come from Tyrol and originally was supposed to take the place of 26 Sch Div, but since no more troops were needed in Volhynia the Division stayed back under the Military Government in Poland to maintain order.

After Trotsky declared that for Russia the war was at an end, the Bolshevik commander-in-chief Krylenko announced a general demobilization on 11 February. However, he had already begun to create a new "Red Army."

Two days later (on 13 February) Emperor Wilhelm decided that after the seven-day grace period required by the armistice, he would resume hostilities in the East against the Great Russians.¹¹⁶ The commissions which had been sent to Petrograd in accordance with the December treaty were recalled. The commissions of the Danube Monarchy also returned home without accomplishing anything; no accommodation was possible because of the delaying tactics of the Bolshevik negotiators. Meanwhile a large part of Ukraine, including the capital at Kiev, had fallen into the Communists' hands; the Rada had to flee from their opponents to the western part of the country. The Ukrainian delegation at Brest, now representing a government without authority on its own soil, requested military support from the two Empires. Ukrainian representatives also traveled to Vienna for the same purpose. On 16 February GFM Prince Leopold of Bavaria was already calling upon the German Eastern armies to once more take up arms. He intended to bring the requested help to Ukraine, as well as to the inhabitants of Estonia and Livonia. The impending operation would be directed not against the Russian people, but only their leaders who were blocking the peace process and who had unleashed civil war among the peace-seeking Ukrainians. The goal would be to overthrow the Bolshevik government and thus compel Russia to come to terms. On the 18th

¹¹⁶Ludendorff, "Meine Kriegserinnerungen", pp. 446 ff.

the Germans would start to advance toward Livonia, Dvinsk and Minsk plus the most important rail centers; the principal objectives of Linsingen's Army Group were Luck and Rovno.

Austria-Hungary's political-military dilemma

Before taking military measures, the Aus-Hung. Chief of the General Staff Arz wanted to reach an agreement with the leader of the Foreign Ministry. He immediately informed Count Czernin of the Germans' intentions, and added his own opinion that it would be a mistake if our troops didn't join the German advance toward Luck. The Foreign Minister, who wanted to bring help to the Ukrainians, answered already on the 16th that it was very important that the majority of the assistance was provided by Aus-Hung. forces. As compensation, Czernin hoped to obtain from the Rada some concessions in the border dispute between them and the Poles, which had been exacerbated by the peace treaty. He wanted Arz to ask the German OHL to postpone a joint military operations until the Ukrainians gave in to the political desires of the Ballhausplatz (which he didn't think would take much time).

Emperor Charles, on the other hand, was totally opposed to an advance into Ukraine, which he feared would disrupt the progress toward a general peace that had already been made.¹¹⁷ At his instructions, on 17 February a wire was sent to the OHL suggesting that the allies should let the upheaval in the country take its course. It seemed out of the question to help the Rada regain power, and a military operation from the front south of the Pripyat would be pointless. The Austrians suggested that any advance in Ukraine should be postponed until peace was concluded with Romania. Then the situation would be different, and perhaps would allow Austria-Hungary to take part in a military campaign. Meanwhile the desperate Rada, through the intermediaries they'd sent to the Ballhausplatz under young Alexander Sevryuk, promised Czernin that they would in fact re-open the treaty provisions which applied to the western border of the new state, as well as the secret declaration regarding autonomy for eastern Galicia. And so the Danube Monarchy made a general promise of assistance, while a technical expert explained the difficulties of the upcoming operation to Sevryuk's delegation, which didn't have any military experience. In return, on 17 February the Ukrainians agreed to cancel the secret declaration and to agree that the future borders of their state would be decided by a commission which contained equal representation from all the signatories of the treaty, plus the Poles, and which would be agreeable to the

¹¹⁷Arz, "Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 234

wishes of the population.

But Emperor Charles still couldn't decide whether to start a new military campaign in the East. Domestic political factors also had to be taken into consideration. The Austrian Minister President Ritter von Seidler had to bring a preliminary cost estimate before the Reichsrat, keeping in mind the yearning for peace among many of the governing parties, who objected to anything that would re-kindle the war in the East. Since time was pressing, on the eve of the German advance (17 February) the high command ordered 4th Army HQ to have two half regiments and one battery of the 12 Reit Sch Div ready "in any event" to advance toward Luck. But the Supreme War Lord once more decided that his forces wouldn't work with the Germans in Ukraine. Therefore GO Kirchbach was instructed on the 18th to hold back his troops. The Foreign Minister had now also come around to the Emperor's point of view.

2. The advance of the Germans and the threat to attack Romania (18 February to the start of March)

The time limit required to end the Brest-Litovsk armistice expired at noon on 18 February, and the German eastern armies under Prince Leopold of Bavaria began to advance out of their permanent positions. Except for one cavalry division, the units were composed of third-line troops (Landwehr and Landsturm). That same evening Trotsky inquired, in a radio message to the Aus-Hung. Foreign Minister, whether the Danube Monarchy considered themselves to once more be at war. The reply was that a common border no longer separated Aus-Hung. and Great Russian forces. The pitiful remnants of the Russian Army weren't capable of offering serious resistance. The new "Red" units had just been formed and weren't ready for action except as partisans. Already on 19 February the Peoples' Commissars announced in a broadcast that they were ready to conclude peace based on the demands of the Central Powers. Negotiations resumed at Brest-Litovsk, but meanwhile the Germans advanced irresistibly on a broad front between the Baltic Sea and the Pripyat, taking advantage of the rail lines. They captured many HQ, which commanded hardly any troops, as well as a rich booty of military gear. By the start of March the troops north of the Pripyat reached the line Narva - Lake Peipus - Polotsk - Gomel.¹¹⁸ The signing of a peace treaty on 3 March brought the operation to an

118Nowak, "General Hoffmann", Vol. I, pp. 186 ff. Schwarte, "Der grosse Krieg 1914-1918", Vol. III, pp. 382 ff.

end.

Under the command of GO Linsingen the following units advanced into Ukraine - the German 7 LW ID and 215 ID from the front of the k.u.k. 4th Army, and the 15 LW ID and 92 ID from the Zloczow Sector (I Corps HQ) on the northern wing of the k.u.k. 2nd Army. The other German units still assigned to these two Aus-Hung. armies (10 LW ID, 2 Gd Cav Bde, 232 ID, 6 Res ID and Bav Ers ID) left their trenches at the end of the month for the rear, where they waited for rail transport. Linsingen's new, mobile southern wing thrust primarily along the railroads; they reached Rovno on February 21st and Zhitomir on the 25th; by the end of the month they were in front of Kiev.

In the same days in which the Petrograd government was forced to make peace by the harsh argument of the guns, it seemed that the Central Powers would have to exert similar pressure upon Romania as a last resort. Before Count Czernin traveled to Bucharest for negotiations, the Aus-Hung. Chief of Staff had explained to him the position from the military point of view. Whether the relationship to Romania was determined "through the conclusion of peace or, if this isn't feasible, through military action" was "all the same; the main thing is that a conclusion is reached as soon as possible." The high command "urgently" needed the units now deployed against the Kingdom so they could be shifted to the Italian theater as well as to Montenegro, Herzegovina, Poland and Galicia.¹¹⁹

Czernin informed King Ferdinand that he had until 7:00 PM on 1 March to declare whether he was ready to negotiate on the allies' terms; meanwhile the Central Powers were already sharpening their swords. Vienna suggested that the combined operation should be placed under the direction of FM Archduke Eugene or FM Archduke Frederick, but the OHL refused; they wanted this campaign, like the preceding ones, to be directed jointly by both high commands. Kövess' Army Group on 28 February received instructions from Baden to have everything in place so that Operation Halali could start 72 hours after the ultimatum terminated. The response of Romanian Premier Averescu, received on 1 March, was considered unsatisfactory; thereafter the course of events reached dramatic heights. The Quadruple Alliance demanded an unconditional declaration by noon of the next day, or they would terminate the armistice. And in fact they did take this step, since the new Romanian response, although a full compliance, didn't arrive until the afternoon. Now the Romanians were informed that if they didn't want to face the consequences of the end of the

119Arz, "Geschichte des grossen Krieges", pp. 235 ff.

armistice they would have to sign a provisional treaty, incorporating their opponents' demands, by noon on 5 March. No further reply was received from Jassy as of noon on the 4th; FM Kövess was instructed to conspicuously continue preparations for the offensive. Finally that evening the Romanians announced that they were sending their plenipotentiaries, who on the next day (5 March) signed the preliminary peace at Buftea. At the same time the armistice was extended and Operation Halali was canceled for good.

3. Austria-Hungary decides to enter Ukraine, 19-27 February

On 19 February the Austrian Minister President Seidler made a major political address to the Reichsrat regarding the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk; the text had been drafted by Czernin and approved by the Emperor. From the speaker's assertions it was rather easy to deduce that the government had no further interest in military operations in the East. Possible intervention in Ukraine wasn't mentioned; Seidler emphasized the hopeful prospect that in future Austria's need for food would be alleviated by the excess agricultural products which the newly-created friendly neighbor-state had promised. The Petrograd government had declared that Russia was no longer at war with Austria-Hungary; "as far as anyone can see, this war won't be renewed." With the total agreement of their ally, the Monarchy wouldn't participate in Germany's campaign to respond with aid to the cry for help from the Baltic Germans.

Both the Foreign Minister and the Chief of the General Staff had previously been in favor of a united approach by the two Empires under certain circumstances, although because of the geographical situation the Austro-Hungarians could operate only in Ukraine. But then both men learned the will of their Imperial master. Arz continued to maintain that the failure to coordinate action with Germany would put the alliance in a questionable light to both friends and foes, and that in the long run the Danube Monarchy couldn't remain on the sidelines.¹²⁰ On the same day he sent a wire to Hindenburg indicating that the parts of 12 Reit Sch Div which 4th Army had earmarked for the advance would stay in place per the Emperor's orders; however, once the situation in the south was clarified by the conclusion of peace with Romania he [Arz] would again raise the question of an advance against the Bolsheviks with the Supreme Warlord.

Cries for help from Ukraine intensified. Sevryuk made a direct appeal to Arz. A new delegation from the Rada crossed through the lines of 46 Sch Div, on their way to Brest-Litovsk to plead for backing against the Red soldiers. Because of the rapidity of the German advance, the military leaders of the Danube Monarchy felt that a long delay was completely inappropriate. Recognition that if we didn't intervene we would be in no position to obtain and import Ukrainian grain tipped the scales. On 24 February FM Böhm-Ermolli received an order to convert the rail line Tarnopol-Zbaraz-Szepietowka from Russian to central European gauge and to

¹²⁰Arz, "Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 238

protect this project by sending detachments to Lachowcy in Ukraine; this signaled that policy was changing at Baden. The troops to guard the railroad were selected from 11 ID; they were ordered by 2nd Army to oppose any hostile interruption of the work with force, and to remind the Ukrainian authorities or soldiers of the agreement which their representatives had concluded at Vienna. The HQ in Baden still had apprehensions that new fighting could break out while this project was implemented; GM Freih. von Waldstätten reported to 2nd Army's Chief of Staff (Col. Hummel) that combat would be very unwelcome to the "governing circles", since they wouldn't permit occupation of the land. But when Col. Hummel declared that the German Eastern Command had agreed with the instructions the Army had issued, GM Waldstätten also concurred. The high command gave up further ground in the evening, and instructed 2nd Army to secure ("if possible without fighting") the railroads leading east from Podwoloczyska and Husiatyn, which would be important for transporting grain. The main thing would be to secure a large quantity of rolling stock.

Since the Russians opposite 7th Army had meanwhile pulled out of the last villages east of Czernowitz, Kövess' Army Group HQ suggested to the AOK that the remaining Austrian territory as far as the border should be occupied, and that detachments should also advance to the line Nowosielica-Chotin. A future shift of the eastern border of Bukovina would better protect Czernowitz, the province's capital. The AOK at Baden agreed with this proposal, so they could stake a claim to this strip of Bessarabia prior to the conclusion of peace with Romania. Therefore on 24 February they ordered 7th Army to first secure the rail line through Nowosielica, and then in conjunction with the advance of 2nd Army to push troops forward between the Dniester and the Pruth. This would also make it impossible for the Romanians to establish themselves on the northern bank of the Pruth between Nowosielica and Lipkany.

The Chief of the General Staff found support for his decision in a message from Bucharest sent by Foreign Minister Czernin; he advised Arz to inform the Emperor that the Monarchy had to take part in the Ukrainian venture in order to secure the fruits of the peace treaty which had been concluded with so much political sacrifice. Participation was also necessary so we could maintain, along with our allies, claims to the natural resources of the area; for the foreseeable future grain could be obtained only from sectors under military occupation. Now Emperor Charles was also convinced that the advance was necessary. On 26 February Arz informed GFM Hindenburg of his intention to have

Aus-Hung. troops occupy the railroad to Odessa. Before preparing instructions for the Eastern Command, the OHL enquired whether the Ukrainians had agreed to the advance. GO Arz replied that they had done so. In addition to the earlier calls for assistance, XXV Corps had received an urgent request, and on the 27th the representatives of the Rada at Brest-Litovsk renewed their call for Aus-Hung. units to advance from east Galicia. Hindenburg congratulated GO Arz on his decision, and expressed his hope that the operation in Ukraine to support the Rada wouldn't lead to new battles. The German units had received orders in this sense, and the Aus-Hung. soldiers should be given similar guidance. The Ukrainian delegation at Brest-Litovsk now informed Arz that the Aus-Hung. troops could advance along the railroad without anticipating opposition, so they could restore peacetime conditions. Böhm-Ermolli impressed upon his commanders as well as the troops the fact that they were entering the neighboring country to assist a friendly government that hadn't yet established itself firmly in control.

After receiving the orders of 24 February, 2nd Army HQ had at first deployed a mixed brigade from XII Corps at Husiatyn and another one from 11 ID at Podwoloczyska. The other brigade of 11 ID assembled at Zbaraz. At the same time 11 ID was placed under XII Corps, which would lead the march into Ukraine. The troops were to set off on 28 February. But the Corps' commander FZM Braun believed a larger force would be necessary, and therefore by the 28th he massed all three of his divisions (11, 30 and 59) along the border. GdI Freih. von Hofmann's XXV Corps, adjacent to the south, would have 155 Hon ID provide flank protection, while 54 Sch Div concentrated at the confluence of the Zbrucz and Dniester.

Under Kritek's 7th Army, Kosak's group was instructed to send parts of 2 CD, 36 ID and 187 Lst Inf Bde into Bessarabia. The railroad station at Russisch-Nowosielica was occupied on 27 February, and the Landsturm troops advanced to the outskirts of Chotin. But this occupation of foreign soil did meet opposition. The government of the "Independent Moldavian Republic" at Kishinev sent a radio message to protest the violation of Bessarabian territory and demanded the withdrawal of the Aus-Hung. troops. After consulting with the Foreign Minister, GO Arz left this protest unanswered because it came from an "un-recognized" state.

Thus five divisions of 2nd Army, supported by parts of 7th Army, stood ready for a hopefully peaceful advance. The result was a very unusual campaign which at some points did lead to very

bloody fighting.

Units which entered Ukraine

NOTE: The number in parentheses after each cavalry regiment shows the number of half-regiments under its command. The figures showing the number of batteries do not include anti-aircraft batteries.

1. The initial order of battle, 28 February

a) 2nd Army

Commander = FM Freih. von Böhm-Ermolli

(C/Staff was Col. Hummel; artillery commander was GM Werz)

(The Army also included V and XVIII Corps, which didn't cross the border)

XII Corps

Strength = 38 bns, 3 sqdns, 30 batties, 3 TM batties, 3 tech comps, 3 air comps, 1 balloon comp; 23,700 foot, 30 horse, 180 guns, 410 MG, 37 inf guns

Commander = FZM Braun

C/Staff = Col. Edler von Dragoni

. 11th ID (FML Ritter von Metz) = 9700 foot, 70 horse, 60 guns, 159 MG, 14 inf guns

. 4 Bde (Col. Ritter von Stampfer) - IR 89 (3), 90 (3)

. 22 Bde (GM Hauser) - IR 58 (2), 115 (3) (The other bn of the IR 58, I Bn, was in the interior)

. Under Div HQ - IR 95 (3); Sturm Bn 11; 2 Sqdn/RS Regt 1; 1 Comp/SB 11; attached Air Comp 25

. 11 FA Bde (Col. Christ) - FAR 11 (6), FAR 111 (5)

. 30th ID (FML Jesser) = 8600 foot, 60 horse, 6 guns, 140 MG, 14 inf guns

. 16 Bde (GM von Zeidler) - FJB 13, 14, 16, 18, 27 (the Bde's FJB 1 was in the interior)

. 215 Bde (Col. Edler von Fritsch) - IR 18 (3), 97 (3)

. Sturm Bn 30, 3 Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1 Comp/SB 30

. 30 FA Bde (Col. von Stepanescu) - FAR 30 (6), FAR 130 (5) (the Heavy FAR 30 (4) joined in April)

. 59th ID (FML Pichler) = 5400 foot, 100 horse, 60 guns, 111 MG, 9 inf guns

. 117 Bde (Col. Nagy von Peremarton) - IR 24 (3); FJB 3, 15; the Bde's FJB 26 was in the interior; Bn IV/42 was with the Bde, but awaiting re-assignment

. 118 Bde (Col. von Kemmel-Schuster) - IR 103 (3); Bn VII/63

. Sturm Bn 59; 6 Sqdn/Hon HR 10; 1 Comp/SB 59

. 59 FA Bde (GM Edler von Scholz) - FAR 59 (6), 159 (5)

. Corps troops - Air Comps 9, 18; Balloon Comp 24

XXV Corps

Strength = 27 bns, 2 sqdns, 21 batties, 2 TM batties, 4 tech comps, 1 air comp, 1 balloon comp; 15,060 foot, 240 horse, 122 guns, 153 MG, 18 inf guns

Commander = GdI Freiherr von Hofmann

C/Staff = Col. Ferjentsik

. 155th Hon ID (FML Ritter von Unschuld) = 7600 foot, 110 horse, 60 guns, 124 MG, 8 inf guns

- . 129 Hon Bde (GM Baukovac) - Hon IR 309 (3), 310 (3)
- . 130 Hon Bde (GM von Stanoioovic) - Hon IR 308 (3); k.u.

Lst IR 20 (3)

- . Sturm Bn 155; 4 Sqdn/HR 1; 3 Comp/SB 16
- . 72 FA Bde (Col Edler von Seidl) - FAR 72 (6), 172 (5)

. 54th Sch Div (FML Edler von Severus) = 7000 foot, 130 horse, 60 guns, 124 MG, 10 inf guns

- . 131 Sch Bde (Col. Graf Lasocki) - SchR 29 (3), 30 (3)
- . 132 Sch Bde (GM Edler von Köckh) - SchR 19 (3), 35 (3)
- . Sturm Bn 54; 3 Sqdn/DR 7; 1 Comp/SB 54
- . 54 FA Bde (Col. von Faber) - FAR 54 (6), 154 (5)

. Corps troops (460 foot, 2 guns, 5 MG) - Ukrainian Legion (one bn); 6 Batty/Hvy FAR 12; Comps 3/SB 2, 2/SB 59; Air Comp 13; Balloon Comp 16

b) Group Kosak

(This was the northern wing of 7th Army; the rest of the Army were under XVII and XI Corps, which didn't cross the border)

. 2nd Cav Div (FML Freih. von Abele) = 4800 foot, 100 horse, 24 guns, 80 MG, 6 inf guns

- . 3 Cav Bde (GM Matz Graf von Spiegelfeld) - HR 3 (2), 6 (2), 16 (1), UR 5 (2) (Three sqdns of HR 16 were in the interior)

. Sturm Half Regt 2; combined mounted sqdn

. 2 "K" FA Bde (Col. Ritter von Otto) - FAR 2 K (4)

. 36th ID (FML von Nöhring) = 6200 foot, 100 horse, 78 guns, 116 MG, 6 inf guns. On 15 April the Div was re-assigned from 7th Army to 7th General Command, and in May it went by train to the Southwestern front.

. 13 Bde (GM Edler von Löw) - IR 78 (3), 116 (3)

. 72 Bde (Col. von Vucinic) - IR 16 (1), 53 (3) (The I and II Bns of IR 16 were in the interior)

. Sturm Bn 36; 1 Sqdn/Hon HR 10; no sappers

. 36 FA Bde (GM Freih. von Bibra) - FAR 36 (6), 136 (5); Hvy FAR 36 (4); 2 TM Batty/Fort AR 6

. k.k. 187 Lst Inf Bde (GM Edler von Mihanovic; 2900 foot, 70 MG, 6 inf guns) (The Bde was re-assigned on 15 April from 7th Army to 7th General Command, and on 15 June to 4th General Command) - k.k. Lst IR 22 (3), 51 (2)

c) One unit under Mackensen's Army Group
 145 Inf Bde (GM von Hranilovic; however, the troops in Ukraine were led by Col. Freih. von Jordis since Hranilovic was still representing the high command at the peace negotiations with Romania) (5000 foot, 24 guns, 66 MG, 2 inf guns)

- . Bns VI/48, V/69, V/71, V/76, V/103
- . A Sturm Half-Bn; a platoon from 3 Sqdn/Hon HR 10
- . 4 & 5 Batties/FAR 60; 4 & 5 Batties/FAR 160
- . 2 Comp/SB 2

2. Subsequent reinforcements

- . XVII Corps HQ - As of 1 May led by GdI von Fabini, with Col. Ritter Fischer von Ledeneice as C/Staff; Corps troops were 2 Comp/SB 31 and Air Comp 7
- . XI Corps HQ - This was the former 7th General Command; as of 1 August led by FZM von Habermann with Col. Buley as C/Staff
- . 5th Hon Cav Div (GM von Mouillard) - Came from 7th Army; as of 1 May had 4400 foot, 80 horse, 30 guns, 84 MG, 12 inf guns
 - . 23 Hon Cav Bde (Col. von Vetsey) - Hon HR 1 (2), 6 (2) 7 (2), 8 (1) (Three sqdns of 8th Regt were in the interior)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 5, combined mounted sqdn, 2 Comp/SB 12
 - . 5 "K" FA Bde (Col. Oskar Schwarz) - FAR 5 K (5)
- . 7th CD (FML Graf Marenzi) - Came from Mackensen's Army Group; as of 1 June had 5700 foot, 100 horse, 36 guns, 78 MG, 6 inf guns
 - . 11 Cav Bde (GM Graf von Hoyos) - DR 10 (20, 12 (2); UR 2 (2), 3 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt; combined mounted sqdn; 3 Comp/SB 42
 - . 7 "K" Fa Bde (Col. von Kokovszky) - FAR 7 K (6)
- . 34th ID (GM Edler von Luxardo) - Came from 7th General Command; as of 1 June had 9000 foot, 100 horse, 75 guns, 140 MG, 12 inf guns
 - . 67 Bde (Col. Babic) - IR 29 (3), 93 (3); FJB 28, 32
 - . 68 Bde (Col. Bertsch) - IR 33 (3); FJB 24
 - . Sturm Bn 34; 6 Sqdn/HR 1; 1 Comp/SB 34
 - . 34 FA Bde (Col. Reuter) - FAR 34 (6), 134 (5); Hvy FAR 34 (4)
- . 15th ID (FML von Aust) - Came from 1st General Command; as of 1 June had 8400 foot, 100 horse, 108 MG, 6 inf guns
 - . 29 Bde (GM Gombos) - IR 134 (3) (Bde's IR 66 was in the Lublin Military Government with all 3 bns)
 - . 30 Bde (Col. Markovits) - IR 60 (3), 65 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 15, 5 Sqdn/HR 11, 1 Comp/SB 15
- . 4th CD (GM Graf Lubienski) - Came from 4th General Command; as of 1 August had 5700 foot, 130 horse, 88 MG, 10 inf guns
 - . 21 Cav Bde (Col. Ritter von Strzelecki) - DR 5 (2), 9 (2); UR 1 (2), 13 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 4; a combined mounted sqdn

B. The advance into Ukraine

1. From Zbrucz to the Black Sea (28 February to mid-March)

As a first objective, FM Böhm-Ermolli wanted the main body of XII Corps, using the railroads, to reach the area Vinnitsa-Zmerinka-Bar as quickly as possible. 54 Sch Div of XXV Corps would advance either to Mogilev (on the Dniester) or to Bar; the latter town would be the target only if the northern wing of 7th Army was already in motion and in a position to reach Mogilev before their neighbors. GO Kritek announced that on 28 February his 2 Cav Div would drive forward between the Dniester and the Pruth toward Lipkany and Larga. From Zmerinka Böhm-Ermolli intended to use the railroad running to Odessa as well as its branches toward the east.¹²¹

The nature of the operation

The military campaign to occupy Ukraine and the adjacent territories along the northern shore of the Black Sea was a unique but noteworthy episode, in which the rail lines determined the direction of the advance, and the rail junctions were the objectives. In mobile warfare as well as in breakthrough battles launched from permanent positions, the importance of railroads as the arteries of the enemy forces and as strategic objectives had of course long been recognized. But now the capture and retention of the rail network was the point of the entire operation. It wasn't anticipated that any coherent and firmly-held enemy front would be encountered in Ukraine; in fact it was difficult to estimate how large any opposing force might be or where it would be met. The best method to deal with any resistance was quick intervention to prevent potential foes from having the time to concentrate strong forces or prepare defenses. Furthermore, great distances would have to be surmounted to occupy and pacify an extensive territory before evaluating its natural resources. For all these reasons, quick mastery of the railroads was essential. Thus the decisions of the commanders were greatly influenced by technical considerations and by the available transportation assets.

121 Dragoni, "Die öst.-ung. Operationen zur Besetzung der Ukraine 1918" (in Mil. wiss. Mitt; Vienna, 1928 edition), pp. 267 f. Kispling, "Der öst.-ung. Vormarsch in die Ukraine 1918" (an un-published study in the Military Archives)

The methods of moving and supplying the units had to depart from the norm. Instead of sending long columns of men, horses and wagons along the highways, the generals loaded both the advanced guard and main body onto trains and shipped them down the railroad toward their goals. It was soon determined that some guns should always accompany the infantry. Because of the larger gauge of the Russian railroads the Aus-Hung. armored trains, which would have been a great help, couldn't be employed. But makeshift trains provided good service; their locomotives weren't protected, but the cars which carried artillery and machine guns received armored plating or sandbags. The assignment of the advanced guard was to repair breaks in the tracks, overcome any armed resistance, and leave guards to ensure that the troops who followed would have free passage. Often a small group of bold and energetic troops won success by quick intervention. While the columns were spread out over many kilometers of track, the leading elements often were in situations where they might be cut off by larger forces. The main body, if far to the rear, would find it difficult to provide timely help (even if informed promptly through telegraph connections which could be easily cut) if the tracks or bridges between them and the forward troops had been damaged. Thus the vigor, spirit and decisiveness of the leaders of small detachments were often put to a difficult test while they were on their own. The higher command HQ often received news from the foremost positions very late, when the information was already out of date. Telegraph connections, including those permanently installed along the railroads, could be used only if the recipients of the messages weren't entrained. Thus the "railroad campaign" presented new challenges to all the commanders and troops; although they were spared the tiresome marches to the battlefield, they encountered problems of a different kind.

28 February to 3 March

In the morning of 28 February the divisions of 2nd Army crossed the Monarchy's border, initially in marches on foot. FZM Braun's XII Corps sent half of 11 ID (FML Ritter von Metz) from Podwoloczyska to Proskurow; a side column under the HQ of 4 Inf Bde marched from Zbaraz to Szepietowka. Held back in reserve were IR 58 (at Zbaraz) and IR 90 (at Podwoloczyska). Six Landsturm battalions which Army HQ had received from Tyrol took over the task of guarding the border. Likewise FML Jesser's 30 ID advanced from Satanow to Proskurow, and the main body of FML Pichler's 59 ID moved from Husiatyn to Jarmolincy. Each division left one regiment (respectively, IR 18 and 24) in their old

positions. Under GdI Hofmann's XXV Corps, the 155 Hon ID sent a mixed detachment of all arms to Balin; the first goal of FML Edler von Severus' 54 Sch Div was Kamenets Podolsk. The main body of FML Ritter von Unschuld's 155 Hon ID were still guarding the Corps' original lines.

At first the Aus-Hung. troops moved forward without any interruption. After a brief skirmish the 54 Sch Div reached Kamenets Podolsk on the 28th; on the next day they pushed their leading troops forward to Novaya Uszyca, while the detachment from 155 Hon ID entered Balin. 59 ID came up to Gorodok on 1 March, while their leading unit (FJB 15) reached Jarmolincy. Sturm Battalion 30 undertook a forced march of 65 km, driving the Bolsheviks before them; in the evening of 28 February they took Proskurow just before the first German troops arrived by rail from Starokonstantinow. On the next day the storm troops boarded a train and rode forward to Zmerinka. Meanwhile other advanced guards from Jesser's Division reached Proskurow, with the main body following in marching columns. The main body of 11 ID were also approaching the city on 1 March. Under the latter Division's left-side column, two companies had already hastened forward by rail to Szepietowka on 28 February; the rest of the column was at Jampol on 2 March. Under 7th Army, FML Kosak had instructed a group under Nöhring (36 ID, 187 Lst Inf Bde and 2 CD) to advance between the Dniester and the Pruth. GM Edler von Mihanovic's k.k. 187 Lst Inf Bde entered Chotin; on 1 March squadrons from 2 CD reached Lipkany and Larga. The Army Group commander FM Kövess now ordered an advance to Mogilev, for which purpose HR 6 took to the trains.

On 2 March Böhm-Ermolli's units had reached their objective areas. In the next two days the XII Corps closed up their three divisions on the main rail line at Proskurow as well as on the branch lines that came together in that city. FZM Braun intended to resume his advance on 4 March to the next objective, the line Mogilev-Zmerinka-Vinnitsa. For this purpose 30 ID would follow the railroad to Zmerinka, while 59 ID on the right and 11 ID on the left marched overland. XXV Corps were to move 54 Sch Div ahead to Mogilev.

The booty taken so far was unexpectedly large. This was because at the time the k.u.k. 2nd Army started its campaign the revolutionary Russian government still hadn't signed a peace treaty with the Central Powers, and wouldn't do so until 3 March. The high command therefore issued the same guidelines to the Aus-Hung. troops that were being followed by their German allies: whether or not Great Russians offered armed resistance they were

to be treated as enemies. Actually the only resistance came from some small Bolshevik bands; from the old army, on the other hand, several higher HQ and thousands of men gave up their weapons and were taken prisoner. Everywhere, even in the villages on the flat plains, there was insecurity caused by the presence of discharged soldiers. They thronged in droves around the train stations, waiting for transportation to their homes. Our troops secured many hundreds of guns, more than 2000 machine guns, numerous wagon trains, two airfields along with their planes, and magazines full of food, ammunition and special military gear. The population were either neutral or rather hostile; the few officials from the Rada were cooperative, but had hardly any authority over their own people. Travel by rail was rather difficult. Although the Ukrainian personnel were helpful, the amount of available rolling stock was limited, the locomotives and other machinery were in bad shape, and fuel was in short supply.

On 2 March half of Sturm Battalion 30, hurried forward to storm the rail junction and station at Zmerinka, suffering a few casualties, and laid hands on several trains. Soon afterwards German infantry arrived here from Kazatin. Since the inhabitants were hostile, during this and the following days reinforcements were brought up (FJB 14, 16 and 18, parts of IR 95, and guns). GM von Zeidler, commanding 16 Inf Bde and the advance guard of 30 ID, also arrived in Zmerinka on the 3rd and took control over all units in the area, including two German battalions (II/LW IR 133 and II/Res Ers IR 2). However, it was soon evident that the German commanders preferred to get orders from their own superiors.

On the same day FM Böhm-Ermolli personally informed FZM Braun that the whole point of the operation in Podolia was to establish firm control of the railroad from the border station at Podwoloczyska to Odessa along with its branches; only then could the process of gathering agricultural produce begin. Therefore marches on foot should be discontinued as soon as all the major railroad stations were occupied. The AOK at Baden were urging in particular that Odessa should be reached quickly, prior to the Germans. Now (on 4 March) the HQ of XII Corps altered their dispositions. 30 ID would strive to reach Odessa by rail, with 11 ID behind them. 59 ID, which had been dispersed most widely, would concentrate around Proskurow. Meanwhile under XXV Corps the 54 Sch Div had marched from Kamenets-Podolsk farther to the east, and a second regiment of 155 Hon ID advanced over the border. Since meanwhile squadrons of 2 CD stood south of the Dniester in front of Mogilev and could easily send a flying

detachment south on the branch line from Zmerinka, 2nd Army HQ diverted 54 Sch Div down the road to Bar so they could close up to XII Corps.

Austria-Hungary had delayed its decision to help Ukraine. Therefore when the advance did begin there had been no preliminary agreement with the German Empire regarding the respective zones of economic interest, the routes to be used by the armies, or control of the railroads. On 28 February the OHL had proposed that 2nd Army, hitherto still under Prince Leopold, should be placed directly under the AOK, and that the border between the forces of the two high command should be drawn along the Tarnopol-Odessa railroad. GO von Arz, on the other hand, favored a line running from the northern border of the k.u.k. 4th Army through Luck, Starokonstantinow and the eastern border of Podolia to the Bug, and then down that river to its mouth. While the two high commands strove to reach agreement about these suggestions with a lively exchange of messages, FM Böhm-Ermolli had gone forward to the area of operations, where the situation changed every day, raising new questions. He sought to reach local agreements with Linsingen's Army Group and the German Eastern Command. Since Linsingen's units had started earlier they had advanced considerably further than had 2nd Army; their left wing in particular was far to the east. They occupied Kiev on 3 March. At the Proskurow and Zmerinka stations German troops were pushing against the main rail line to Odessa, poised to reach the harbor city as soon as possible. Since arrangements between the high-level commanders still hadn't been ironed out, when the German and Aus-Hung. troops came together there were some unpleasant clashes between their immediate leaders.

4 March through mid-month

On 3 March GM Zeidler had already been instructed by 30 ID HQ to thrust as quickly as possible to the next major rail junction, Birzula. Early on 4 March a German battalion boarded a train at Zmerinka and headed southeast, heedless of the orders of the k.u.k. general. They were followed by cars carrying Sturm Battalion 30 and FJB 18, and then by more Germans. The race between the allies was developing very quickly. This reckless push forward took place with hardly any technical safeguards, one train following another and in contact only by sight; accidents or collisions, leading to bloody casualties, seemed unavoidable. For now only combat troops, their leaders and some ammunition were being shipped. Rations were taken from magazines discovered along the way or from the villages through which the advance continued.

On 5 March the allied battalions, having repaired a break in the tracks, rolled forward. But at the Slobotka station the leading German battalion were ambushed. Their train was hit at close range by artillery and machine gun fire and suffered several direct hits. The units which soon followed them (Sturm Battalion 30, FJB 18 and the other German battalion) threw back the enemy and stormed the station. The victors captured several guns, but themselves lost 7 officers and almost 300 men (mostly Germans). In the darkness of night the Bolsheviks tried to push forward with an armored train, but were repulsed. As a result, the German troops now placed themselves under the commander of the advance guard (GM Zeidler), who ordered the advance to continue more safely. The main body of 30 ID, journeying ahead, had meanwhile passed Zmerinka, followed by 11 ID. A battalion of IR 95, diverted here from Mogilev, had fought an action on this day at Kopajgorod before returning to Kotiuzany. 59 ID, coming northeast from Jarmolincy, were nearing the main line. XII Corps HQ, which arrived in Proskurov on the 4th, called up Infantry Regiments # 18 and 24, hitherto still on the border.

Because of the vast area to be pacified and the increasing hostilities, FM Böhm-Ermolli asked Baden for permission to use all of Hofmann's XXV Corps, and issued new guidelines on 5 March. At this time the Corps' 54 Sch Div were marching toward Bar while the main body of 155 Hon ID were stationed between Dunajewcy and Jarmolincy; Hofmann would now take over from XII Corps responsibility for guarding their common rail network. 54 Sch Div would guard the tracks directly behind the rear of Braun's Corps and 155 Hon ID would watch over the main Zmerinka-Podwoloczyska line plus its branches. A new "Field Transport Office for Ukraine" was established at Zmerinka and given the job of keeping the trains running with help from the native personnel. FZM Braun, relieved of concern for the rearward communications, was to hasten with his divisions to Odessa.

Scouts sent toward Birzula on a locomotive confirmed for GM Zeidler intelligence he'd received from the local population that stronger resistance would be encountered as the journey continued. On 7 March the advanced guard of 30 ID, which now had a makeshift armored train, were already in action. After pushing through several lines of resistance the Aus-Hung. and German attackers (5 battalions and 2 batteries) cooperated well to drive the stubborn enemy from the village and station of Birzula. The victory cost 60 dead and several hundred wounded. The best fighters among the defenders were sailors from the Russian Black Sea Fleet. In the next few days the Bolsheviks sought to halt 30

ID with armored trains and cars, and by breaking the tracks. The leading troops of Jesser's division overcame all these obstacles and worked their way up to Razdielnaya, the last station before Odessa, where they expected to again meet more serious resistance.

On 8 March the two high commands agreed that the provisional border between Böhm-Ermolli's Army and Linsingen's Army Group would be the Bug River between Olviopol and the Black Sea. Thereafter the German troops left the area of 2nd Army. In the preliminary Peace of Buftea the Romanians had conceded the Central Powers use of the railroads running through Moldavia and Bessarabia. Therefore on 10 March GO Arz ordered that 7th Army, after informing the Romanians, should send a battle group from Oknica through Bielcy to Rybnica. The mission was assigned to 2 CD, whose main body were stationed in the Oknica-Mogilev area. Romanian emissaries had informed FML Freih. von Abele that their soldiers in Bessarabia would hold the line Jaruga-Korbul-Kopatnik; therefore the units of Kosak's group were told not to move south of the line Lipkany-Mogilev. However, the Romanians did promise to support the journey of Abele's division to Rybnica, so the movement began. 30 ID also sent a battalion (I/97) from Slobotka; they occupied the town of Rybnica without incident on 9 March. Under Mackensen's Army Group, on 8 March parts of the k.u.k. 145 Inf Bde under Col. Freih. von Jordis (the Sturm Half Battalion, Bns VI/48 and V/103, 4th and 5th Batteries of FAR 60, Sapper Company 2/2) crossed the Sereth together with a similar German detachment under Col. Vogel; they were to travel from Reni through Bender to Odessa.

The advanced guard brigade of 30 ID (6 ½ battalions plus 5 batteries) deployed in three battle groups; on 11 March they captured Razdielnaya station and thrust 7 km beyond it to the southeast. The enemy, mostly sailors, this time had brought heavy ships' guns into the fight along with armored trains; they suffered heavy casualties while the attackers lost just a few men. Since a large amount of rolling stock had been secured at Birzula, movement on the rails now proceeded smoothly. The first troops from 11 ID had also reached this junction; from here Sturm Battalion 11 were diverted east to Olviopol, where they hoped to take river boats down the Bug through Vozniesiensk to Nikolaiev. Half of 59 ID were already on trains behind the main body of Braun's Corps; one of their battalions was marching south of the rail line to Wapniarka. HQ of XXV Corps entered Zmerinka on 12 March; as ordered, they deployed both their divisions behind XII Corps to guard the rail network.

2. The race to Odessa

The Bolsheviks who'd been defeated at Razdielnaya retreated to Odessa, breaking the tracks at several points along the way. The Aus-Hung. leadership didn't have a clear picture of conditions in the great harbor-city or of enemy intentions. Air Company 18 reported that the railroad into the city was open; they sighted cruisers and torpedo boats along with 100 merchant ships and several naval airplanes in the harbor. Other reports indicated that the Bolshevik commander Muraviev intended to resist; he had more than 10,000 sailors plus 50,000 workers to man the defenses, since all men capable of bearing arms had been conscripted.¹²²

On 13 March units of the Central Powers approached the harbor city from two sides (the north and west). In the morning the advanced guard brigade of 30 ID had covered half of the distance between Razdielnaya and Odessa, but then stopped because several stretches of track were damaged. XII Corps HQ therefore intended to have large parts of the 30th and 11th Divisions detrain; they would form attack columns which could move toward the city alongside the railroad column to keep the operation going. The mixed allied detachment from Wallachia was the foremost part of GdI Kosch's LII German Corps (over 212 and 217 ID), which Mackensen's Army Group were sending into Ukraine. On 12 March Col. Vogel had already passed through Tiraspol with two German battalions on trucks, and hurried forward to Moldowanka, a western suburb of Odessa. Here fighting broke out. It didn't seem that Vogel's force was large enough to attack the large harbor-city; he started to negotiate with the local authorities but had no success.

In the morning of 13 March a German liaison officer asked HQ of 30 ID to support Vogel, primarily with artillery. Meanwhile the foremost Aus-Hung. soldiers were ready to move, since Sapper Companies 1/11 and 1/30 had once more opened the railroad. FML Jesser didn't detrain his troops; instead he ordered the commander of 16 Inf Bde to immediately advance into Odessa and reach out a hand to the Germans. Col. Vogel was informed that 30 ID was advancing by train with 10 battalions and 10 batteries. GM Zeidler now led the way with Sturm Battalion 30, FJB 14 and 18, and a battery in the van; since all the tracks were open, they hastened in the afternoon through the freight yard to the main station in the city without catching sight of the Germans or hearing any sounds of battle. The railroad installations and the

¹²²Dragoni, "Die Einnahme von Odessa" (in Österr. Wehrzeitung, 1928; 10th Issue)

harbor were occupied at the same time. The Bolsheviks had already withdrawn to the east, some by land and others on the warships. At short intervals, train after train arrived carrying the remaining troops of 30 ID; FML Jesser assumed command of the city and in the evening announced his success to Baden by means of the Russian radio station. The Corps commander FZM Braun and his staff arrived before midnight. The bold *coup de main* of the leader of the advance brigade, assisted by the arrival and actions of the German group, had been completely successful. In two weeks the leading division of 2nd Army had covered 500 km from the pre-war border to the Black Sea.

Next morning 16 battalions and 8 batteries of the 30th and 11th Divisions were already assembled in the city and the surrounding area. The Germans followed; GDI Kosch arrived in the morning. Although he was the senior general on the scene, FZM Braun refused to take orders from Kosch pending a decision from a higher level. Because of the significant military force in Odessa, the inhabitants seemed to willingly obey all orders. The political situation in this multi-national trade center was very confusing. It would take considerable labor to regulate the administration and maintain order. There were three would-be "governments" and nine separate militia forces; the latter were disarmed except for the Ukrainian and Polish groups. The merchant ships in the harbor were declared to be prizes and taken over by Aus-Hung. crews except for vessels originally belonging to German companies, which were given back to the Germans.

2nd Army HQ asked Baden to send a high-ranking general to command the Aus-Hung. units in southern Ukraine. The high command nominated GO Kirchbach; his 4th Army HQ was dissolved on 15 March and he proceeded to Odessa with part of his staff. The new HQ, called at first "Group Cherson" and then "Armeegruppe Cherson", were placed under 2nd Army; they controlled the three divisions of XII Corps plus 2 Cav Div (still moving by rail through Bessarabia) and 145 Inf Bde. 59 ID was now guarding the rail line Razdielnaya-Birzula. Parts of 4 CD relieved the remaining parts of 4 Inf Bde that had been holding the Zbaraz-Szepietowka line, so that FZM Braun could count on the entire strength of his Corps.

While the occupation troops imposed order in Odessa and started to sift through the large amount of captured supplies, the leadership were concerned about securing the area north and east of the city as far as the Bug. The Bolshevik commander had established himself in the Nikolaiev area, and strong hostile forces were assembled along a semi-circle. An intercepted radio

message talked about "destroying" the nest of traitors in Odessa.

As noted above, Sturm Battalion 30 had been sent through Olviopol toward Vozniesiensk, with Nikolaiev as the ultimate objective; reinforced by half a battalion of IR 103, they had already reached Olviopol after an action. Instead of taking ships (as originally planned) this weak group now were diverted on the railroad through Novo Ukrainka but found the way blocked by the enemy. Only after 59 ID had sent 117 Inf Bde HQ with 3½ battalions and 2 batteries from Birzula to Olviopol was the Sturm Battalion finally able to march south along the Bug. Meanwhile half a battalion of IR 18 with a howitzer platoon moved north from Odessa; they captured Vozniesiensk on 18 March. Thus the plan to thrust quickly through Olviopol to Nikolaiev had been greatly delayed. On 16 March the FJB 27 (with 2 guns) also left Odessa heading for Nikolaiev, but on the way they were checked by the Bolsheviks. Then the Germans, who were more mobile because of their trucks, came forward; on the 17th they occupied the city, which the k.u.k. Feld Jaeger didn't reach until the next day. All of the bloody actions proved that the original concept of a peaceful march into Ukraine was in error; if the troops of the allied Central Powers wanted to penetrate further into the land they could expect to encounter increasing resistance.

3. Occupation of the territory between the Bug and Dnieper (mid-March to mid-April)

Disputes between the allies

To resolve the military and economic questions about Ukraine which still were pending between the two empires, a commission began to meet at Kiev on 11 March. Delegates were led by FML Edler von Langer for the Danube Monarchy and by G.Lt Groener for Germany. After lengthy negotiations, in which both high commands repeatedly intervened, the Aus-Hung. representatives were able to overcome almost all the disadvantages caused by the Monarchy's delay in entering the country. But GO Linsingen would be in charge of all the forces as "Commander-in-Chief of Allied Auxiliaries in Ukraine." At Baden the AOK concurred with most of the decisions, but Emperor Charles emphatically rejected common overall control in either the military or economic spheres. On 16 March Emperor William sent him a letter stating that a unified command structure for the advance in Ukraine was justified by the agreement on 6 September 1916 which had established the inter-allied supreme HQ. But Emperor Charles replied on the 17th that he wasn't convinced. There was no war in Ukraine, where the allies were just trying to help a friendly regime achieve

stability; the 1916 agreement was therefore not relevant to this military operation. He insisted on retaining command of his own troops.

The Germans now stated that they were no longer bound by earlier agreements; they demanded that the demarcation line between the two states should be moved farther south and refused to allow an Aus-Hung. garrison into Kiev (which was needed for the concentration and processing of the Heimkehrer). There were also differences of opinion about Kosch's LII German Corps - its mission and where it would fit in the chain of command - as well as about the division of the ports along the Black Sea and their railroad connections.

The two powers were able to agree, however, that the occupation of Ukraine should be extended east to the line Crimea-Kharkov. And so the troops began to advance into the area on the northern edge of the Black Sea even though the command question hadn't been resolved. Naturally the next orders issued by the respective high commands were contradictory.

On 17 March GO Arz assigned FM Böhm-Ermolli his next mission, which was to secure the railroad leading out of the Crimean peninsula to Kharkov; to ensure freedom of movement he would also occupy the "Governments" (provinces) of Cherson and Ekaterinoslav as far as their northern borders. XII Corps were instructed that after taking Olviopol, Vozniesiensk and Nikolaiev they should secure the rail connections running from the Dnieper to the Bug, and finally reach Cherson plus the rail centers of Alexandrovsk and Sinielnikova (the latter to the east of Ekaterinoslav city). The German OHL, on the other hand, on the 18th arranged that the right wing of Linsingen's Army Group should advance on both sides of the Olviopol-Ekaterinoslav railroad, and that GFM Mackensen at Bucharest should direct Kosch's Corps to occupy Nikolaiev and Sevastopol with German troops and ensure that the railroads leading out of Nikolaiev were under German administration. When the German Eastern Command now learned of the intentions of the Aus-Hung. leadership, they disagreed with the plan to spread the forces of Kirchbach's group so far to the north; the OHL declared they wouldn't allow the left wing of Böhm-Ermolli's Army to march into the same area as Linsingen's right wing. Therefore 2nd Army HQ scaled back their objectives.

The Nikolaiev-Cherson operation

As of 18 March XII Corps had already secured, after some fighting, the three jumping-off points along the Bug; therefore

FZM Braun was ordered to occupy the harbor-city of Cherson in cooperation with the Germans and to gain control of the rail line leading to Alexandrovsk as well as the river shipping on the Dnieper. To carry out this assignment, the Corps commander sent both 11 and 59 ID down the Odessa-Nikolaiev railroad. It wasn't possible to assemble the troops who'd been spread over a wide area in the triangle Odessa-Olviopol-Birzula in their correct order of battle; they could only be concentrated after other units came up to relieve them. For this purpose regiments of 2 Cav Div took over the job of guarding the railroad north of Odessa. FML Jesser was to guard the great harbor-city itself, plus its hinterland and coastal area, with 30 ID (to which IR 90 of 11th ID was attached), 2 CD and 145 Inf Bde. One and a half battalions and two batteries of the 145th Bde were sent to Ochakov because this strategic point lay at the mouth of the bay where the Bug and Dniester reached the sea.

The commander of the Red troops in south Russia, whose HQ was at Kharkov, assembled at that city and around Ekaterinoslav parts of the 1st and 3rd Revolutionary Armies, intending to offer powerful resistance to the allies. The Bolsheviks had a strong back-up position on the Crimean peninsula; it included the main military harbor at Sevastopol, other strong points, the Black Sea Fleet (which wasn't being used in the operations) and plentiful supplies. As at Kronstadt and Petrograd, here also the well-trained naval personnel were the most ardent supporters of - and fighters for - the Communists.

As the advance guard of XII Corps, in the evening of 19 March the commander of 22 Inf Bde (GM Hauser) left Odessa with IR 115 plus two batteries; he was on the way to Nikolaiev where he would pick up FJB 27.¹²³ His mission was to advance to Cherson. Meanwhile on the same day a German detachment was leaving Nikolaiev, where GdI Kosch was already stationed with the HQ of 217 ID and several battalions; the detachment (a company plus 2 guns) were moving by truck to Cherson. But the Bolsheviks pushed this weak group back into the city of Nikolaiev on the 20th. The journey of the Aus-Hung. troops from Odessa was very slow because so far only makeshift repairs had been made to the main railroad (which had just one track). The rail junctions south of Olviopol couldn't be used because companies from 30 ID along with Sturm Battalion 11 were still fighting stubborn partisan bands near Vozniesiensk. One band even temporarily occupied the railroad station there, but a company of IR # 90 were able to permanently secure the important bridge over the Bug. Thus GM Hauser had to send

123Dragoni, "Die Kämpfe um Nikolajew und Cherson im Frühjahr 1918" (in Österr. Wehrzeitung, 1928, 18th Issue)

reinforcements toward Vozniesiensk on the branch line north of the Kolosovka station.

GO Kirchbach arrived at Odessa on 20 March and took over his Army Group, with GM Demus as his Chief of Staff. The k.u.k. 2nd Army were removed from the authority of the German Eastern Command and placed directly under the k.u.k. AOK.

GM Hauser reached a point about 6 km west of Cherson on 21 March; he opened his attack with four battalions (3 Aus-Hung. and 1 German) plus two batteries. After a hot action, in which the attackers lost 200 men, in the evening the railroad station (which lay on the northern edge of the city) was taken. But then a setback to the rear of 22 Inf Bde made it impossible to build on this success. An uprising broke out in Nikolaiev on 22 March; several thousand armed workers and sailors, to whom the Bolsheviks brought support from the northeast with both armored and standard trains, threw themselves against the German HQ and their small garrison. The Germans were in danger of being completely encircled by a larger enemy force; the same danger confronted the first echelon of the Aus-Hung. troops (an improvised armored train of 11 ID, two companies of IR 58 and Sapper Company 1/11), which were arriving at the passenger station and the marshaling yard. GdI Kosch tried to call the k.u.k. 22 Inf Bde back from Cherson to help, but his message didn't get through. All that GM Hauser knew about the situation behind him was that he could no longer count on getting more troops. Therefore he refrained from pushing into the strongly fortified harbor city (which was also defended by warships on the Dnieper), but did hold fast to the ground already gained. XII Corps HQ at Kolosowka couldn't contact either Kosch's German HQ or Hauser. After FZM Braun received the first unconfirmed report about the serious situation at Nikolaiev, he could only hasten forward the trains carrying 11 ID. Armeegruppe HQ at Odessa at first also had just uncertain intelligence; but after they restored communications with GdI Kosch they approved the withdrawal of 22nd Brigade. Parts of the Bavarian CD in Wallachia were also sent to help their endangered comrades.

On 22 March FM Böhm-Ermolli released a new order to GO Kirchbach; based on the progress of the negotiations at Kiev, it laid down guidelines for the next operations. XII Corps were to secure Nikolaiev and Cherson, along with the rail network leading from there into the area of Linsingen's Army Group as well as the shipping on the Dnieper. Kosch's Corps would occupy the Crimea. GO Kirchbach thereupon drafted a plan that would be carried out by tightly controlled units in timed stages. First Nikolaiev

would be securely held and then, to deny the Bolsheviks further access to the area, the railroad running north to Dolinskaya would be occupied. The Germans would also work their way in this direction from Znamenka. The advance toward the Dnieper between Cherson and Ekaterinoslav wouldn't take place until the units were fully concentrated and organized; after the river was reached, the advance into the Crimea could finally begin.

By 24 March the HQ of XII Corps were able to send more units to Nikolaiev (FJB 15, Sturm Battalion 59 and parts of IR 103); they tried to reach the garrison which was under siege in the northwestern part of the city. Bavarian Reserve Jaeger Bn # 1 also arrived. When Battalion VII/63 and Sturm Battalion 11 joined in sharply from the east, it was possible to crush the insurrection. Besides three German battalions, the fighting had involved a total of seven Aus-Hung. battalions plus seven batteries; 13 officers and 335 men were casualties. The four days of street fighting ended on the 25th, and the process of disarming the citizens began. But the situation in the wider area outside Nikolaiev remained unclear, and troops had to stand guard in all directions. At this time XII Corps HQ finally discovered that because of poor maps they had been unaware of a rail line leading to the city from the northeast, which had enabled the Bolsheviks to repeatedly thrust forward undetected to harass the Aus-Hung. troops. On the 24th GdI Kosch had sent a plane from Nikolaiev to 22 Inf Bde to inform them of the order to retreat (which thanks to the efforts of FZM Braun was already unnecessary). GM Hauser, who'd been holding onto the outskirts of Cherson, started negotiations with the enemy to cover his withdrawal, and departed in the night. Half way back to Nikolaiev his group was halted on the next day; the retreat had been canceled, but Cherson had already been given up.

Continuing political turmoil and the need for reinforcements

The events in Nikolaiev and Cherson, which forced the allies back onto the defensive, gave a mighty boost to the fighting spirit of the Bolsheviks. FJB # 13 had to be diverted to the Bug to oppose their partisans. In none of the occupied territories was the situation completely quiet or secure. Near Vinnitsa and Gorodok (in the sector of XXV Corps) there were energetic hostile bands. A major disruption in traffic was imminent along the main railroad from Odessa into the interior because the local personnel, who hadn't been paid in months, were working slowly and unwillingly. The political situation in Odessa, with its population of 800,000, was still tense and confused. The Ukrainian central government at Kiev had sent a "Plenipotentiary" to administer the three southern governments, but he wasn't backed by any local parties; the inhabitants had no use for the new state. It was feared that trouble would break out when the workers were ordered by the Rada's representative to lay down their arms. Because of all these concerns, FML Jesser brought parts of 2 Cav Div to the scene; as ordered by GO Kirchbach he also held back some battalions that were supposed to join XII Corps. Turkish warships and German submarines entered the harbor to add still more strength to the garrison, and there was no major uprising.

The Aus-Hung. high command could no longer ignore the repeated requests for reinforcements; they decided on 23 March to send to Ukraine the 5 Hon CD from Bukovina and 7 CD from Romania. The enemy had excellent modern weaponry, such as armored trains and large-caliber naval guns, placing our troops at a severe disadvantage since they lacked heavy artillery; therefore Heavy FAR 30, which had already been selected to move to the German Western front, were returned to their parent division. There was also a need for more horsemen, but all the AOK could do was to build up the weak squadrons of the divisional cavalry to their full authorized wartime strength of 150 men apiece.¹²⁴

The higher HQ were frequently also confronted by the question of what to do about the formed units (mostly armed) which were wandering over the land and whose political affiliations were unknown or uncertain. The remnants of the dissolved Russian Army were still heading for their homes; as long as they were neutral rather than hostile to the occupying troops, they could be allowed to go their own way in the wide-open countryside, where there was room for everyone. Thus the so-called "Shcherbachev soldiers" (actually almost all officers) crossed the Cherson

124Czegka, "Kavalleriedivisionen", p. 18

Government toward the east; they were entering the territory of the Don Cossacks, where Russian generals prepared to fight the revolutionary government. A Mohammedan corps of 6000 Crimean Tartars, which had been disarmed in Moldavia by the Romanians, were camped around Tiraspol; they wanted to fight alongside the Central Powers to liberate their homeland from the Bolsheviks. After initially displaying some interest, both allied high commands turned down their request; the Tartar corps was dissolved at the end of May. A very unwelcome unit was a division recruited in south Ukraine which the Rada wished to demobilize at Odessa. FML Jesser couldn't tolerate the arrival of armed soldiers of uncertain allegiance in the city, so the troops had to stay outside his sphere of authority. Polish units stationed in 2nd Army's area were told to concentrate at Soroki on the Dniester.

While Nikolaiev was being relieved, south of the Dnieper the right wing of Linsingen's Army Group occupied Elisavetgrad on 23 March; they took Alexandria on the 25th and sent units forward to Dolinskaya. The Germans reached the railroad junction of Alferovo (west of Ekaterinoslav) on the 27th. As ordered by GO Arz, GO Kirchbach instructed XII Corps on 26 March to recover Cherson with 11 ID, while 59 ID assembled in Nikolaiev and secured the rail network on the flank and in the rear of the attackers. GdI Kosch, who still wasn't subordinate to the k.u.k. General-Oberst, was awaiting the arrival of forces coming from Romania (217 ID, parts of 212 ID and of the Bavarian CD) before advancing into the Crimea. The commander of the k.u.k. 11 ID (FML Metz) united his troops in the next few days with Hauser's Brigade (which had halted east of Nikolaiev) and was preparing a well-organized thrust toward Cherson.

The allies come to agreement

The negotiations between Austria-Hungary and Germany at Kiev finally came to a satisfactory conclusion on 28 March. In the name of both high commands, FML Langer and G.Lt Groener signed the military agreement about Ukraine. The Danube Monarchy received the southwestern part of Volhynia plus the Governments of Podolia, Cherson and Ekaterinoslav as its sphere of interest; the German sphere extended over the rest of Ukraine, including Tauria and the Crimea. The garrison of this territory along the northern edge of the Black Sea was under GdI Kosch, who in turn was subordinated to the Aus-Hung. high command. Detailed provisions regulated traffic on the railroads and rivers, the use and common protection of the harbors, and finally the exploitation of the rich coal and iron resources of the Donets

basin. An Aus-Hung. unit (IR # 93) was to be sent to Kiev, the HQ of the German Army Group.

The allies had earlier come to an understanding about ship traffic on the lower Danube and on the Black Sea and established a "Black Sea Office" at Braila, headed by k.u.k. General Staff Col. Hönigschmid. The two navies were responsible for the protection of shipping, for which purpose the armistice commission which had been set up to address all naval questions was turned into a "Nautical-Technical Commission" under German Vice Admiral Hopman, which set up HQ in Odessa. They were also responsible for clearing waters that were infested with mines.¹²⁵

The chain of command was also altered. On 28 March Kirchbach's Armeegruppe HQ resumed the title "4th Army HQ" and was placed directly under the k.u.k. AOK; on the 31st the 2nd Army were to be re-designated "2nd General Command." But this change wasn't effectuated, because GO Kirchbach asked to be relieved, and Emperor Charles accepted the request.¹²⁶ Therefore 4th Army was again abolished, and 2nd Army stayed in existence. FM Böhm-Ermolli moved to Odessa, along with his staff, as Kirchbach's successor; he arrived on 5 April. GM von Sendler was named Chief Quartermaster of 2nd Army; he had become known as an expert in economic and administrative matters during an earlier assignment in Bucharest. At the end of March Prussian GFM von Eichhorn succeeded Linsingen in command of the German Army Group in Ukraine.

In the Austrian half of the Monarchy, where there was a dangerous shortage of food, people were waiting impatiently for the expected grain shipments. Thus on 1 April FM Böhm-Ermolli received an urgent order from the Emperor to increase the extraction of food supplies from Ukraine. The amounts received to date had been insufficient; if the situation didn't improve, it was doubtful that the war could be continued. The most important mission of the troops would be to lay hold of and export food to supply both the Army and the hungry population of the homeland.

¹²⁵Wulff, "Die österreichisch-ungarische Donauflottille im Weltkriege 1914 bis 1918" (Vienna, 1934), pp. 144 ff.
Hopman, "Das Kriegstagebuch eines deutschen See-offiziers" (Berlin, 1925), pp.274 ff.

¹²⁶TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: GO Kirchbach was very ill. He stayed on sick leave until September 1918, when he was appointed Inspector of the k.u.k. forces in France. (Information gleaned from a biographical web-site in 2002.)

Until now 2nd Army HQ had been striving primarily to pacify Ukraine and master the transportation network. Now, although the situation in many respects was still unsettled, they were to demand food supplies, primarily grain and flour. The problem was that the supplies were often located far from the inadequate rail network, and there wasn't enough rolling stock available. The area occupied so far was divided into two large procurement areas - XXIV Corps were in charge of Podolia, while GdI Fabini's newly-arrived XVII Corps HQ¹²⁷ would take over the territory, still not secured, between the Bug and the Dnieper where the inhabitants were supporting the partisans. The Army's management board were everywhere responsible for buying and accounting for the grain. XII Corps would continue the military advance toward the east; their first task was to address the unfortunate consequences of the retreat of Hauser's Brigade from Cherson.

The advance resumes

On 4 April FML Metz opened a systematic attack with 11 ID (12 battalions¹²⁸ and 9 batteries), which he'd divided into three columns; the operation was concluded successfully on the 5th with the capture of the Cherson citadel. Combat on the ground was assisted by gallant air units (Air Company 25 and the German Air Bn 28) and by armed steamships coming up the Dnieper. In the difficult fighting, heavy casualties were inflicted on the Bolshevik force (estimated to be 10,000 strong) before they finally took to flight; the attackers lost 200 men. In rapid exploitation, on 7 April FJB # 27 captured Aleszky, the city lying on the other side of the river, and on the next day Sturm Battalion 11 secured the village of Golaya Pristan, a sally port toward the southeast.

While 11 ID secured Cherson, the HQ of XII Corps weren't ignoring the larger objective of taking control of the entire area west of the Dnieper. This would require units to be switched toward the northeast; therefore FML Pichler's 59 ID were sent from Nikolaiev in the direction of Alexandrovsk. The leading troops of a group under Col. Ambrosius (3 battalions, 2 batteries) reached Snigierevka on 4 April and marched on through Kostromskoye toward Nikopol. The Division's main body were able to use the rail lines north to Dolinskaya, where it forked, and from there they

127Until the arrival of GdI Fabini, the area was under FML Jesser and his 30 ID HQ.

128The Division's IR 90 was stationed in Odessa; two battalions, as well as the Ukrainian Legion which arrived on 4 April, didn't take part in the fighting; however, FJB 27 from 30th ID and III Bn of the German 21 Res IR were attached to 11th ID.

rode its branches east to Apostolovo and north to Znamenka. FML Metz kept a strong garrison in Cherson, while sending a battle group of 11 ID upstream on the Dnieper to Nikopol. For this purpose a battalion from IR 115 sailed to Beryslav on 7 April, followed by the Ukrainian Legion (which had been detached from XXV Corps) and a battery. Parts of Hauser's Brigade were likewise sent toward Nikopol, striving to reach the goal via the Nikolaiev-Apostolov railroad. Kosch's German Corps had been reinforced by GFM Mackensen, who sent the Bavarian CD by land and other units by sea; they deployed near Aleszky and Beryslav for the march into Tauria.

Meanwhile the southern wing of Eichhorn's Army Group were mostly advancing east along the main Olviopol-Znamenka railroad; their advanced guards were already entering Ekaterinoslav on 5 April. The Germans occupied Kharkov on the 10th. Since the entire area bounded by the Dnieper, including the Olviopol-Ekaterinoslav rail line, was part of the Aus-Hung. sphere of interest, FM Böhm-Ermolli ordered FZM Braun to have 5 Hon CD (which was approaching by train) assume from the Germans the task of securing the tracks.

On 8 April the AOK issued orders for the last stage of the operation, the occupation of the Donets basin. For this purpose XII Corps were to assemble 59 ID and the majority of 5 Hon CD in the Ekaterinoslav-Alexandrovsk area; 145 Inf Bde and 7 CD were also to participate. To relieve Braun's Corps of responsibility for the rear areas, 30 ID were to take over the job of guarding the railroad between Olviopol and Znamenka. The spirit and bearing of the Polish, Ruthenian and Czech personnel of this Division had been visibly weakened in Odessa due to their close contact with their compatriots who lived there. Thus 2nd Army HQ felt it was desirable to remove the troops of Jesser's Division from the harmful atmosphere of the great city and send them to the countryside to stand guard and bring in food supplies. The Hungarian Hussars of 2 CD would be more reliable as a garrison for Odessa; in addition, FM Böhm-Ermolli wanted 34 ID, a Hungarian unit which was being made available by the high command. Starting on 10 April the city was placed under FML Edler von Böltz, the former commander of 43 Sch Div; the coastal sector between Akkerman and Ochakov, designated the "Sea Defense District", was commanded by a staff officer of the k.u.k. Navy. On 12 April the Aus-Hung. naval ensign was seen flying in Odessa harbor; Korvetten-Kapitän Wulff had brought four monitors (*Bosna, Bodrog, Körös, Szamos*), two patrol boats (*Barsch, Wels*) and a tug (*Odessa*) from the Danube Flotilla.

Under XII Corps, Pichler's Division reached the line Gruszewka-Apostolovo-Dolinskaya on 11 April. Since both the rail lines and roads had been damaged on the way to Nikopol, as was the great bridge over the Dnieper in front of Alexandrovsk, the trains carrying 59 ID were diverted through Dolgincevo and Dolinskaya to Ekaterinoslav to avoid wasting time. Only Hauser's group would continue ahead to Nikopol, which Battalion III/103 entered on 12 April after a short engagement; from here they would eventually move on to Alexandrovsk, as would the Ukrainian Legion. The other units of Metz's Division were guarding the area Cherson-Nikopol-Dolinskaya which the Corps had left behind. On 15 April the trains carrying FZM Braun's HQ and the first troops from 59 ID rolled into Ekaterinoslav, where they found the leading regiment of 5 Hon CD had already arrived. And by now the German troops had moved past the city to the east, and were standing in front of Alexandrovsk. The k.u.k. IR # 41, which had left 43 Sch Div and was to be assigned to 59 ID, was moving through Podolia.

4. The push into the Donets area and to the Sea of Azov (mid-April to the end of May)

After Eichhorn's Army Group captured Kharkov, they informed FM Böhm-Ermolli that their right wing (Knoerzer's Corps of two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade) would advance in mid-April beyond the eastern border to Ukraine to Taganrog and Rostov on the Sea of Azov, while another corps reached the railroad running north from Rostov. 15 LW ID, hitherto part of Knoerzer's Corps, would thrust south past the line Sinielnikova-Alexandrovsk to join Kosch's Corps. At the start, the Germans' route would take them through areas allotted to the Danube Monarchy by the Kiev agreement. GFM Eichhorn justified his choice by referring to the course of the railroads, adding that the German units would enable the k.u.k. 2nd Army to use fewer troops in occupying the area. There would be no collisions with the k.u.k. XII Corps, since the Germans would be moving prior to that command. FM Böhm-Ermolli raised no objection. Knoerzer's troops were following the west-east rail line to Avdeyevka in the coal fields, but Braun's k.u.k. Corps could still use the more southerly line from Alexandrovsk to Volnovacha; from the latter town they'd be able to turn north into the mining district or south to the harbor of Mariupol which had been promised to Austria-Hungary.

The final advance in the East

Alexandrovsk fell into German hands already on 16 April. Under

Hauser's group, the Ukrainian Legion took part in this action; the other components of the column were held up by partisans and didn't enter the city until the next day. The movement of XII Corps' promised reinforcements was delayed. Allied traffic was jammed along the main rail line to Ekaterinoslav, and empty trains couldn't return to the rear. 7 CD still hadn't left Romania. GM von Mouillard's 5 Hon CD were 1200 horses short of the bare minimum required to haul batteries and machine gun detachments; the Division was thus immobilized and could only guard the railroad. Thus for the advance to Alexandrovsk FZM Braun had available just 59 ID (with 7 battalions, 9 batteries and 2 sapper companies) plus a railroad company. Col. Jordis' weak 145 Inf Bde was following them and would garrison the city and its surrounding territory.¹²⁹ On 18 April FML von Pichler sent his advanced guard on trains to the east - Sturm Battalion 59 plus a battery and two technical companies. Experience had shown that the sappers would be needed since the Bolsheviks by now had a good understanding of how to tear up rail lines; they also were carrying on the campaign with rolling trains.

After a brief skirmish Sturm Battalion 59 took Pology on 19 April; they had to capture the important junction at Volnovacha by storm on the 20th. Thus they cut the Bolsheviks' route between the Donets industrial area and Mariupol harbor. The Communists made repeated efforts to restore this connection, bringing troops north by train to break through past Volnovacha, where they were supported by artillery. Fighting continued until 23 April, and cost us 57 men. Finally the weak advanced guard received sufficient reinforcements (FJB 3 and 15, parts of Infantry Regiments 24 and 103 plus three batteries) and the stubborn attackers were put to flight. FML Pichler now sent the majority of his troops to the north. Since the coastal city of Berdiansk (in the German sphere) was vulnerable to bombardment from the sea and had asked for help, one battalion and one battery were diverted there on 24 April; they protected the town until they were relieved by German troops. Mariupol was occupied on the 28th by a battalion from IR 24 plus artillery.

By mid-April it was already clear to 2nd Army HQ that they didn't have sufficient units to carry out their multitude of assignments, in which they were engaged against adversaries over

129The infantry with Col. Jordis were just the troops hitherto stationed at Ochakov (Bns VI/48 and V/103 plus the Sturm Half-Bn). Battalion V/76 didn't land at Odessa until 24 April, and then stayed there. The AOK pulled Bns V/69 and V/71 out of Wallachia. Thus 145 Inf Bde was weaker in Ukraine than it had been in Romania.

an enormous territory. No Aus-Hung. troops were available to garrison the northeastern corner of the Ekaterinoslav Government, which had first been reached by the Germans. FM Böhm-Ermolli asked the high command for 15 ID, which could follow 34 ID (then moving by train to Birzula). But GO Arz didn't intend to agree. He regarded the occupation of Ukraine as ultimately a secondary operation; it was doubtful whether one more division would noticeably improve the situation there. It was much more important to concentrate all units for a decisive blow against Italy, where it was possible to end the war victoriously. Unless absolutely necessary, the AOK were also reluctant to send more troops into unavoidable danger of political contamination in Ukraine. On the contrary, they wished to detach battalions from 2nd Army to help keep order back home. FM Böhm-Ermolli, however, didn't change his mind and once again asked for the 15th Division. Since the occupation of the Donets basin was in progress, the Army commander decided to cancel the plans for the Hungarian 34 ID to replace 30 ID north of Odessa; instead the 34th would continue to travel until they reached XII Corps. GdI Fabini's XVII Corps HQ had arrived, and on 20 April they took over the Cherson district, which was guarded by 11 ID and the larger part of 30 ID (parts of the latter were still in Odessa). The AOK approved these measures and on 26 April also promised to send 15 ID from Transylvania, although it couldn't leave until mid-May.

So that the advance into the mining area along the Donets could be directed by one commander, on 22 April the 59 ID was placed under G.Lt von Knoerzer. The retreat which the Bolsheviks had conducted at Volnovacha made it easier for the allies to take possession of this area, which was thickly settled by a radical proletariat. The German Corps sent one division from the north to Bakhmut and the other from the west to Nikitovka. Behind them, trains brought the k.u.k. IR 41 to guard the rails from Sinielnikova to Avdeyevka, where they linked up with 59th Division. Two more railroad companies (under XII Corps HQ) were working to repair the bridges at Alexandrovsk and Vasilkovka. FML Pichler, who now also had available Heavy FAR 30 and some batteries from XXV Corps, opened actions on 24 April to pursue the enemy from Volnovacha (where he left the junction strongly garrisoned). In the following days his 59 ID, without encountering resistance, spread out from Avdeyevka to Nikitovka. By the end of April the allies stood along the eastern border of Ukraine.

But the Germans advanced still further; on 1 May they entered Taganrog, and on the 8th Rostov. Pichler's Division stayed in

place, and on 4 May were once more placed under XII Corps. The Germans handed the eastern corner of the Donets area (around Bakhmut) to FML Edler von Luxardo's 34 ID. On 6 May enemy ships appeared off the harbor of Mariupol and opened heavy fire against the city but didn't cause much damage. After Air Company 18 responded by bombing the ships and a battery opened fire, the action ended. The artillery defenses were strengthened to prevent a repetition of this attack on Mariupol. To support the Aus-Hung. Army units against hostile groups and to impress upon the local population the power of the occupying forces, in May several vessels from the Danube flotilla steamed up the Dnieper as far as Alexandrovsk; also a monitor cruised along the Bug up to Vozniesiensk.¹³⁰

At roughly the same time when the k.u.k. XII Corps were carrying out their final mission in the East, GdI Kosch was also advancing south from the Dnieper. One column apiece pushed forward on 17 April from the bridgeheads of Cherson and Beryslav. At Perekop they forced their way into the Crimea, while the 15 LW ID (which had left Knoerzer's Corps and come from Alexandrovsk), crossed through Tauria by rail and entered the peninsula farther east. Then the Bavarian CD pivoted east toward Feodosiya while Kosch's main body advanced south to defeat Bolshevik sailors at Simferopol. On 1 May the great military base at Sevastopol along with a number of vessels and arsenals fell to the Germans without any fighting. The main body of the revolutionaries' fleet had previously departed - some ships sailed to Novorossisk, others to the Sea of Azov. The Bavarian horsemen had meanwhile reached Feodosiya; on 2 May they captured the old coastal fortress of Kertch, the key to the Sea of Azov.

The situation in May

The military penetration of Ukraine could be regarded as complete by mid-May, but the political situation of the country - divided into so many parties - didn't improve. There was no strong government to take charge.¹³¹ On 30 April the Rada cabinet under Holubowicz, which had returned to Kiev along with the Germans,

130Wulff, pp. 157 ff.

131TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A summary of the extremely complicated political situation is provided by Fedshyn, "Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution" (Rutgers University, 1971), pp. 105-183. The original text refers to Holubowicz as the "Hetman" of the Rada government, which is in error. Holubowicz's title was Prime Minister, and the old title of Hetman wasn't brought back into circulation until Skoropadsky assumed it after his coup.

had to give way to a new government. Under German protection a former Russian G.Lt, Skoropadsky, took over as "Hetman." But he didn't find many supporters either, and the confusion only increased. The concept of Ukrainian independence didn't awaken any enthusiasm in the bulk of the population; the Ukrainian language, though declared official, wasn't even spoken by the majority of the government. Desire to re-unite with Russia was openly expressed. Creation of a national army never advanced beyond the first stages. The two divisions which the Germans had created at Kovel were brought up to join the garrison. The "1st Ukrainian Cossack Rifle Division" which had been established with Aus-Hung. assistance were still stationed at Vladimir Volynsky at the end of June.

It was feared that disturbances might break out in Odessa on 1 May [the workers' holiday], so the city commander declared an alert to days earlier; however, there was no trouble. 2nd Army HQ wanted to prevent partisan uprisings by searching for weapons in the countryside, where security still left much to be desired, as well as in the city. There were frequent attacks on outposts and other violent acts. Strong measures had to be taken against villages where the inhabitants were hostile and inclined to support the partisans.

Anticipating the eventual arrival of more reinforcements and the primarily peace-keeping mission of the future, FM Böhm-Ermolli assigned sectors and troops to all his subordinates on 12 May. XXV Corps stayed in Podolia. XVII Corps, with HQ at Cherson, were responsible for the Elisavetgrad district; their 11 and 30 ID were to be joined by FML Graf Marenzi's 7 Cav Div. The leading regiment of the latter unit (DR # 12) were already coming by train to Novo Ukrainka; the Division's main body were still moving from Romania. FML von Aust's 15 ID still needed to entrain in Transylvania; it was intended that they should reinforce XII Corps, which had to give up their parts of 145 Inf Bde to FML Böltz's Odessa group. Böltz also commanded FML Abele's 2 CD. The coastal defense district controlled 2 ½ infantry battalions, artillery and naval units. Certain harbors received mixed garrisons; these were Odessa, Nikolaev (with the HQ and parts of 212 German ID plus the k.u.k. FJB 27), Mariupol and Rostov on the Don. The garrison of the latter city included FJB 3, which thus was stationed farther east than any other Aus-Hung. troops. The north Moravian IR # 93 were stationed in Kiev.

Within the various districts the individual units were assigned specific areas to occupy; the foreign garrisons were supposed to cooperate as closely as possible with the local civil

authorities.

Naval forces along the northern coast of the Black Sea included the Turkish fleet (led by German officers) and Bulgarian torpedo boats. Wulff's Aus-Hung. flotilla stood guard over the harbor of Odessa and the great rivers.

On 16 May FM Böhm-Ermolli was recalled from his post by a letter from the Supreme Warlord. The Aus-Hung. units in Ukraine were re-designated the "Army of the East." Emperor Charles entrusted command of this force to GdI Alfred Krauss, with GM Belitska as his Chief of Staff. The new Army commander arrived at Odessa on 19 May.¹³² The Monarch expected this energetic leader, who had organizational talent, to substantially increase and speed up the flow of food and raw materials to the homeland. A later chapter will evaluate the extent to which the high-flown hopes of riches from Ukraine would be fulfilled.

C. The break-up of the former Eastern front (March to mid-June)

In March the old permanent position, where the war in the East had become stationary at the end of 1917, and which had served as a demarcation line during the armistice, no longer had any purpose. The German forces of GFM Prince Leopold had crossed the zone between the armies at many points and secured a wide band of new territory stretching from the Baltic into western Ukraine before peace was concluded with the Soviet government. In the southeast Linsingen's Army Group were still moving ahead, and alongside them the Aus-Hung. 2nd Army had joined the Germans. When Romania signed the preliminary peace treaty on 5 March the military mission of Kövess' Army Group (1st and 7th Armies) was completed. Now both the high commands could allow the old front to break up behind the forces that were still advancing. Because of the enormous area the Germans had occupied in northwest Russia and Ukraine they were obliged to leave numerically substantial forces in the East, although (as previously noted) they were the less powerful units with older personnel. The long chain of adjacent divisions which had formed a defensive wall now was converted into an army of occupation spread over a wide landscape. Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, began to completely abolish its own Eastern front; in March there was a massive movement to the Southwest, which for the Monarchy was the only remaining major theater of operations.

¹³²Krauss, "Ursachen", pp. 253 ff.

The first HQ to become superfluous were 4th Army in Volhynia (due to the German advance). At the start of March the last German units (2 Gd Cav Bde and 10 LW ID) departed. Then the k.u.k. AOK sent 32 ID, 46 Sch Div and 56 FA Bde (ex 204 Res FA Bde) to the Southwestern front. XXII Corps HQ, without troops, were sent to 6th Army where they became responsible for training replacements. 4th Army HQ were dissolved on 15 March when GO Kirchbach and his staff (as described previously) went to Odessa. Still stationed in Volhynia were 2 ID, 45 Sch Div and 12 Reit Sch Div; they were under FML Kanik's X Corps HQ, which moved to Vladimir-Volynsky and were placed under 2nd Army.

When XII and XXV Corps advanced into Ukraine in March, FM Böhm-Ermolli at first left some of his remaining troops on guard along the border under the V and XVIII Corps HQ. 27 ID and 38 Hon ID entrained for south Tyrol. In April the Army's seven German divisions also left Galicia. When FM Böhm-Ermolli and his HQ moved to Odessa, their sphere of authority was restricted to the forces operating in Ukraine. From X Corps HQ the AOK created the "4th General Command"; led at first by GdI Edler von Weber and later by FZM Heinrich Goiginger, this HQ came to Lemberg, from which it led the troops stationed in the areas formerly under the 2nd and 4th Armies. A strong military security force was still needed in these territories haunted by long years of war; other tasks included the removal of the combat troops along with the installations created to supply and feed them, and improving the lines of communication. Also the General Command worked closely with the civil authorities to hopefully return the areas to their peacetime condition. Meanwhile the number of combat units continued to sink. The HQ of V Corps were dissolved and those of XVIII Corps sent to Conrad's Army Group. In April the 45 Sch Div were sent to GO Freih. von Sarkotic, the commanding general in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 21 Sch Div and most of 25 ID were placed under the Minister of War as "Assistenz" troops¹³³ for Galicia and Moravia. In May the 12 Reit Sch Div entrained for the Southwestern front.

Opposite Kövess' Army Group, after the Treaty of Buftea the

133 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: "Assistenzen" were troops detailed to the interior to preserve order. The Army was naturally reluctant to use combat units for this purpose unless there was no alternative. The Ersatz (replacement) depots could also have been employed as Assistenz, but as noted in an earlier chapter many of them were quite unreliable at this time. By the end of the war the Army was creating a new series of Assistenz battalions specifically for the maintenance of order, so that the combat units could be used at the front.

Romanians evacuated the last outposts they'd been holding on Aus-Hung. soil. By mid-March the k.u.k. 7th Army occupied the sliver of Bukovina within the triangle Sereth-Gurahumora-Suczawa, and 1st Army stood guard along the entire eastern border of Transylvania with IX and XXI Corps. XIII Corps HQ were relieved from 7th Army and moved to the Southwest. When 2 CD entered Ukraine to join 2nd Army, GM Mihanovic's 187 Lst Inf Bde received the assignment of guarding the Larga-Mogilev area in Bessarabia under Nöhring's group.

On 11 March the high command instructed FM Kövess to send the 39th, 40th and 51st Honved Divisions to Hungary, where the government needed troops to help with the requisition of food supplies. Around the end of the month 7 ID left to serve as Assistenz troops in Vienna and in the Steinfeld industrial area. On 26 March FM Kövess was ordered by Baden to set up a cordon opposite Romania to support the border police and to supervise the Heimkehrer. On the cordon 1st Army employed Divisions 15, 37 and 72 plus the 16 Hon Inf Bde, while 7th Army used 63 ID, 43 Sch Div and 187 Lst Inf Bde. All other troops were deployed along the rail lines, prepared to entrain. Kosak's group command and (later) IX Corps HQ were dissolved; XXI Corps HQ moved to south Tyrol.

The break-up of the front proceeded quickly. Kövess' Army Group HQ were dissolved on 5 April, followed ten days later by HQ of 1st and 7th Armies. In their stead, GdI von Hadfy's VIII Corps HQ became the 1st General Command at Kronstadt and FZM Edler von Habermann's XI Corps HQ became the 7th General Command at Czernowitz. While the troops assigned to guard the borders stayed in place, others entrained for the Italian front - 5 and 16 ID; 3, 6 and 20 CD; 18 FA Bde. 28 Lst Mtn Bde was broken up; the battalions were dissolved (as part of the reduction of the Hungarian Landsturm) while the staff became HQ of 208 Hon Inf Bde and as such joined 70 Hon ID of Boroevic's Army Group. 36 ID went to the Southwest in May, whereupon FML von Stöhr took over their old sector between Mogilev and Nowosielica; 187 Lst Inf Bde watched the adjacent area between the Pruth and the Sereth. 53 ID, 74 Hon ID and 11 Hon CD left the East along with Artillery Brigades 12, 15, 37 and 64.

The remaining units on security duty were soon further reduced. After the dissolution of 63 ID (only its Regiments # 203 and 204 continued to exist) the 7th General Command was also abolished and its area placed under the 4th General Command; thus between Bukovina and Volhynia the latter controlled 2 ID, 43 Sch Div, 49 Inf Bde (from 25 ID), 187 Lst Inf Bde and 4 CD. These units,

like those stationed in the interior on Assistenz duty, had given up their artillery. 1st General Command was instructed to dissolve 72 ID; the 143 Inf Bde were given Landsturm battalions and in June went to Wallachia along with 216 (ex 16) Hon Inf Bde. The 155 FA Bde (ex 72 Hon Res FA Bde) entrained to join 155 Hon ID in Ukraine. Thus the only units still under 1st General Command were 37 Hon ID and IR 204 (from the dissolved 63 ID).

The Central Powers retained the right to occupy and economically exploit Wallachia as part of the Peace of Bucharest (7 May). Thus the military administration established there in 1917 remained in place. An economic staff with representatives from both Empires was responsible for extracting natural resources from the country.¹³⁴ Just as in Ukraine, here an agreement between the allies about how to share the spoils was achieved only after lengthy negotiations.

After the treaty of Buftea was signed, GFM Mackensen started to entrain five German divisions for the Western front. In April the Aus-Hung. high command pulled 8 CD for the Italian front. The Turks moved their VI Corps (15th ID) to Asia. Later the AOK ordered that 92 ID should be dissolved; some of its battalions joined their parent regiments, others went to 62 ID or 143 Inf Bde (the latter was now assigned to the Romanian garrison). SchR # 5 had earlier joined 43 Sch Div in Bukovina. 52 FA Bde (ex 92 Res FA Bde) and 60 FA Bde (ex 73 Res FA Bde) took trains to the Southwest. But in turn the 2nd Army sent 72 FA Bde (ex 55 Res FA Bde) which had left 155 Hon ID. Until June a security force was maintained (though greatly reduced) on the Sereth against the Romanians in Moldavia. Meanwhile the allies divided Wallachia into zones of influence, which were occupied by the equivalent of four German and two Aus-Hung. divisions (the latter consisted of FML von Brunswik's 62 ID, GM Edler von Stika's 143 Inf Bde and Col. von Paleta's 216 Hon Inf Bde). The HQ of 9th German Army moved to France, but Mackensen's overall HQ stayed in Bucharest.

IV. The West and the Orient through mid-June

A. The German offensive in France

134 Sobotka, "Der Anteil Österreich-Ungarns an der Militärverwaltung in Rumänien 1917-1918", in Kerchnawe's "Die Militärverwaltung in den von den öst.-ung. Truppen besetzten Gebieten" (Carnegie Institute, öst.-ung. Series, Vienna, 1928), pp. 305 ff. Also Kiritzesco, pp. 403 ff.

After the German OHL decided to seek a decision with arms on the Western front in spring 1918, the first task was to choose the point at which the blow would be delivered. The German Crown Prince suggested an offensive on both sides of Verdun, which he hoped would result in the destruction of the 11 French divisions stationed along the arc of the defenses, the capture of the fortress, and a shorter front. But this thrust would lead into difficult broken terrain. Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria wanted to attack the British in the Armentières sector, so as to throw them back to the ports of the English Channel. GFM Hindenburg was also inclined to attack the English first, since he considered them the chief bulwark of enemy resistance, but less tactically proficient than the French. If the Germans could reach the Channel, they'd threaten the overseas communications of the island Kingdom and even bring its southern coast under fire from long-range guns.

But the proposed attack in Flanders would have to be delivered through the swampy valley of the Lys and thus very much at the mercy of the weather. Therefore GdI Ludendorff, who also wished to first defeat the English, finally decided to seek a breakthrough in the sector on both sides of St Quentin, a weak part of the enemy line in which little difficulty would be presented by the terrain.¹³⁵ But there was a disadvantage - the thrust would lead through an area which the Germans had devastated during their retreat to the Siegfried Position; also the attackers would have to move over the wide battlefield of the Somme, covered with craters from shellfire.

The basic concept was that the offensive would proceed toward the northwest, with the left wing leaning on the Somme, until the English front could be rolled up farther to the north.¹³⁶ There were sufficient forces available for a breakthrough, although not enough to carry out secondary attacks to deceive and pin down the enemy reserves. Consideration was also given to the possibility that the first assault wouldn't reach its goal. If this was the case, thrusts would be directed against other "soft" spots along the enemy front until one succeeded. Preparations had been made for this scenario, in which the second assault would target the English lines near Armentières.

The great breakthrough attack would be delivered north and south of St Quentin on a broad front by the 17th and 2nd Armies of Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group, with a total of 35 divisions and

¹³⁵Hindenburg, pp. 301 ff. Ludendorff, "Erinnerungen", pp. 471 ff.

¹³⁶Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 304

3700 guns. The 18th Army of the German Crown Prince's Army Group (24 divisions and 2500 guns) were instructed to advance to the upper Somme and Crozat Canal to protect the flank of the main attack.

The March offensive

On 21 March the 62 German divisions (including 3 in the OHL's reserves) with 6200 guns opened the offensive on a 75 km front between Arras and La Fère. The majority of the 152 Aus-Hung. heavy guns in France were assigned to the attacking armies.¹³⁷ This powerful force struck the English 5th and 3rd Armies which had a total of 30 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions; since the Battle of Cambrai they had been deployed in greater strength in the northern part of the sector rather than the south.¹³⁸

In their first onslaught the Germans captured the foremost English position in the entire area under attack. Afterwards the 17th German Army gained little ground while the 2nd and (especially) 18th Armies could advance rapidly. To keep the front from being ripped apart at the junction between the English and French, on 23 March the 3rd French Army, hitherto stationed in reserve, were thrown into the battle on the left of 6th Army. Furthermore, troops that could be spared from Alsace and Champagne, along with 1st Army HQ, were very quickly brought to the Oise. But before the arrival of these fresh forces could have an effect, the German 18th Army, exploiting their favorable tactical situation, had passed their original objective and crossed the Crozat Canal; the 17th captured Peronne. The unexpected success of 18th Army compelled the OHL to allow them to continue to push to the southwest. The original plan had been

137According to the "Mitteilung der deutschen Forschungs-anstalt für Kriegs- und Heeres-geschichte" (at Potsdam), the k.u.k. artillery were assigned as follows:

- . With 17th Army - Heavy FAR 2 and 11 (each with three 15 cm howitzer batties and one 10.4 cm cannon batty); 30.5 cm Mortar Batties 5/Hvy AR 1, 14/Hvy AR 6 and 1/Hvy AR 9.
- . With 18th Army - Heavy FAR 45 and 72; 15 cm Auto How Batties 7/Hvy AR 1 and 11/Hvy AR 10; 15 cm Auto Can Batty 12/Hvy AR 10; 30.5 cm Mor Batties 2/Hvy AR 9, 9/Hvy AR 10 and 6/Hvy AR 1; 38 cm How Batties 1/Hvy AR 1 and 2/Hvy AR 6; 24 cm How Batty 13/Hvy AR 8.
- . With 5th Army - Hvy FAR 59 and 206; 24 cm Can Batty 4/Hvy AR 1, 30.5 cm Mor Batty 9/Hvy AR 7.
- . With Army Detachment "A" - Hvy FAR 25 and 54

138French Official History, Vol. VI, Part I, p. 230 and Appendix 2.

completely altered, since now the French were also under attack. The main effort was being shifted to the south. Nevertheless 17th Army were still supposed to broaden the area they were attacking north past Arras; thus the offensive was proceeding in three directions (northwest, west and southwest).

But the thrust at Arras was unsuccessful; therefore 17th Army were ordered to stop their efforts. The center of the attacking group - the inner wings of 2nd and 18th Armies - were still able to advance to Albert, Moreuil and Montdidier. Then, toward the end of the month, their impetus was also exhausted. The Germans weren't able to capture the important transportation center of Amiens, since meanwhile their enemies were also taking some important measures.

Due to the powerful German stroke, which had wrought destruction in particular upon the 5th English Army, there had been a great danger on 25 March that the front would collapse. The English General Headquarters were already considering whether to withdraw slowly to the Channel ports. The French initiated precautions for the protection of their capital, which was under bombardment from an enormous German cannon near Laon. Then General Foch, the Chief of the French General Staff, intervened energetically. At his urging, on the 26th at Doulens he "was instructed by the French and English governments to bring the allied military operations on the Western front into harmony." For this purpose he would reach an understanding with the two commanders-in-chief (Pétain and Haig), who were instructed to provide him with all necessary information.¹³⁹ This surely wasn't a completely satisfactory solution, but was yet another step on the road to a unified command which Foch had been advocating for a long time.

At this time Foch's first goal was to bring the fluid front to a halt in front of Amiens. He set to work with extraordinary energy. The 1st and 3rd French Armies created a new army group which stood up to the Germans without bending. Using French reserves from other sectors of the front and from Italy, Foch began to build a maneuver group for an eventual counterattack; it consisted of the new 5th and 10th Armies. The English sent reserves from Flanders to the south, and replaced their 5th Army HQ with 4th Army HQ. The Army stationed in Flanders, hitherto the 4th, was re-numbered as the 2nd. And the Americans intended to greatly increase their armed assistance. But since Foch felt that his authority needed to be expanded, another conference was

139French official history, Vol. VI, Part I, p. 324. Foch, p. 24. Tournés, p 82. TRANSLATOR's NOTE: Also see Barrie Pitt, "1918 - The Last Act" (New York, 1962), pp. 116-119.

held on 3 April at Beauvais (this time the American government was also represented). Here Foch was "entrusted with the strategic direction of military operations." The English, French and American commanders-in-chief remained the tactical directors of their armies.¹⁴⁰

On 4 April, after bringing up several fresh divisions, the Germans resumed their attack toward Amiens. But they soon realized that their enemies' resistance was too strong, since meanwhile the French had brought 45 infantry and 6 cavalry divisions into the area north of the Oise. The offensive toward Amiens, to which a total of 90 German divisions had been committed, was now finally terminated. It had achieved a great tactical success, as proven by the capture of an area 60 km deep plus 90,000 prisoners. But the breakthrough that was supposed to lead to mobile warfare hadn't been accomplished. Thus the offensive had been only a major sortie from a besieged fortress.

Critical historians of the World War have stated that the main reason for the failure to break through was the alteration of the original plan by shifting the main effort toward the south (although admittedly this was made inevitable by the course of events). Another reason was the attackers' limited mobility; they lacked armored cars, cavalry and a reserve army. But even if such a reserve force had been available it seems questionable whether it could have been brought up quickly over the thoroughly devastated and barren battlefield in time to intervene at the decisive point.¹⁴¹ GdI Kuhl, on the other hand, stated that the greatest mistake was the lack of diversionary attacks that could have pinned down the enemy reserves at other points. He wrote, "It's regrettable that a number of Aus-Hung. divisions weren't brought to the West, either to create diversions or to free German divisions for this purpose. This would have been better than going ahead with the Austrian offensive in Italy, which had little chance to succeed."¹⁴²

After the attack on Amiens was canceled, most of the Aus-Hung. batteries - having expended their ammunition - moved from the Western theater to the Southwest. Just a few batteries participated in the following actions.

140Foch, p. 40. Tournés, p. 91. Pitt, pp.129-130

141Moser, "Ernsthaft Plaudereien über den Weltkrieg" (Stuttgart, 1925). [Ritter], "Kritik des Weltkrieges. Von einem Generalstäbler" (Leipzig, 1920), pp. 218 ff.

142Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 343

The succeeding attacks

Since the March attack hadn't gained the hoped-for breakthrough, the OHL decided to continue the fight in other sectors of the front with the units they'd been holding back for this eventuality. New blows would be struck at various points to demolish the enemy front. Therefore on 9 April the 6th Army attacked between the La Bassée Canal and Armentières, with the main concentration at Hazebrouck. The southern wing of 4th Army joined this operation on the next day. The first thrust, which was directed against the 2nd English Army, wrecked two Portuguese divisions near Armentières.¹⁴³ But as the German offensive continued it soon bogged down in difficult terrain criss-crossed by many damp trenches. Several French divisions came up to support the gallant Englishmen. Though the Germans threw a total of 36 divisions into the battle, they weren't able to get past Kemmel Hill, Bailleul and Merville. On 19 April Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group fell back onto the defensive. Once again the strategic goal hadn't been achieved. During this period the last remaining Aus-Hung. batteries left the Western theater of operations.

Neither of the Germans' tactical successes had improved their strategic position. The front had grown longer, requiring a larger force to hold it. But there was already a noticeable shortage of replacement troops. The Germans also had to anticipate the intervention of American divisions. Yet they had already decided that to maintain morale they couldn't abandon the captured territory to shorten the front. And the OHL had also decided that they couldn't relinquish the initiative to their opponents. For this reason they were determined to continue attacking, still against the English in particular. But they knew that behind the enemy front there were strong reserves stationed between the Oise and the North Sea. The Germans intended to draw these reserves away with a thrust at another point. For this purpose they chose an apparent weak spot between Noyon and Reims, along the Chemin des Dames.

On 27 May the Army Group of the German Crown Prince attacked with 7th Army plus the western wing of 1st Army. The eastern wing of

143 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually only the 2nd Portuguese ID faced the German assault. 1st ID had just been relieved from the line, and the unfortunate 2nd Division were holding the sector of both units pending the arrival of English troops to replace them. Thus the Germans had a stroke of luck: these unreliable troops were defending a line twice the normal length.

18th Army joined the advance several days later. The total initial strength was 35 divisions, joined later by 6 more. Success was facilitated by the fact that the preparations for the operation were completely concealed from the enemy.

On the opposite side stood the 6th French Army of 15 divisions.¹⁴⁴ In the initial assault on the northern slope of the Chemin des Dames ridge, the Germans quickly punched through the first and second positions and advanced to the southern bank of the Aisne. In the evening of the 28th they had already reached their objective, the line Soissons-Fisme.¹⁴⁵ Influenced by this brilliant opening success, the OHL let the attack continue; by 30 May it had gained ground up to the Marne at Chateau-Thierry and Dormans. But attempts to keep advancing and to capture Reims failed, because Pétain quickly sent the French 5th Army (20 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions) to the threatened area.¹⁴⁶ The Germans then sought by widening the attacking front to capture the Compiegne-Soissons sector. But in fighting between 9 and 13 June their gains were unimportant, since here the 10th French Army came up from reserve and were thrown into the fighting.

The battles of Soissons-Reims and of Noyon doubtless represented a new German tactical success on a large scale. At one point they had advanced 60 km; the enemy had lost 63,000 prisoners and more than 600 guns. Paris lay just three days' marches from the new German front. The position of the "Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France" (Foch's title since 14 April) seemed in danger; the German attack in Champagne had obviously taken him by surprise. Public opinion in France was very concerned, and the English made hardly any effort to conceal a malicious joy. But Clemenceau still trusted the General, and used his authority to protect Foch in the Chamber of Deputies. In an address to that body on 4 June, the "Old Tiger" stated "We will prevail as long as our official circles perform at their full capacity. I will fight in front of Paris, I will fight in Paris, I will fight behind Paris."

This speech certainly didn't indicate any inclination toward seeking peace, which the Germans had hoped might be how the French would react to this latest defeat. Similarly, Lloyd

144The total included 4 English divisions which had come here to recuperate.

145Bose, "Deutsche Siege. Das Vordringen der 7. Armee über Ailette, Aisne, Vesle and Ourcq bis zur Marne (27. Mai bis 13. Juni)" (Oldenburg, 1929), pp. 97 ff.

146Tournés, p. 126

George appeared unconcerned about the ongoing success of the German submarines. Despite the battle the Germans had won, their military situation was actually worsening. The front was about 100 km longer than it had been on 20 March. The deep bulge in their line was vulnerable to flank attacks. Despite the arrival of new troops from the East and from the replacement depots, as well as from reducing the number of men serving in the interior, the total wasn't sufficient to make up for casualties. And meanwhile the enemy forces in the west were growing visibly stronger. A number of American divisions were already stationed in the Vosges and by St Mihiel. It was also known that strong forces were being shifted from Italy and Macedonia to France.

In fact the number of American soldiers in Europe rose from 60,000 in March and 93,000 in April to 240,000 in May and 280,000 in June. This increase was possible because the English gave priority to shipping Americans over the ocean, while cutting back their own importation of goods. At the end of March, 2 English and 4 French divisions had already left Venetia to return to France, where they were followed in April by 2 Italian divisions plus 60,000 Italian laborers.¹⁴⁷ And two English divisions had also come from Palestine to the Western front.

But the German OHL still wouldn't go over to the defensive. If they admitted defeat there would be a devastating impact on their troops, on the German people, and on their allies. Therefore the OHL resolved to continue to seek victory with an offensive. But they gave up the idea of overwhelming the English; instead in July they would launch a new assault on the French near Reims. But first the Aus-Hung. Army would provide some relief by attacking the Italians.

B. The southeastern theaters in the first half of 1918

1. The Macedonian front

The Central Powers

In spring 1918 the Bulgarians' full attention was directed toward the Western front. They confidently anticipated the German offensive on French soil, hoping it would achieve the desired decision and lead to a victorious conclusion of the war on all fronts. Therefore the Bulgarian high command understood why the

147Tournés, p. 115

OHL were withdrawing German troops from Macedonia and sending them to the main theater of operations, even though they were also reluctant to see these excellent formations depart. At the end of 1917 there had still been 22 German battalions plus 72 batteries at the most important points along Bulgaria's southern front; by summer only 3 battalions and 32 batteries remained.¹⁴⁸ Left with just their own resources, the Bulgarian high command couldn't plan any independent, wide-ranging operations, despite the temptation to aim for Salonika, the age-old port of Macedonia.¹⁴⁹ Therefore the only assignment of the Bulgarian Army was to wait for a decision in France while holding their current positions at least until summer, when the oppressive heat would preclude any operations.

After concluding peace with Romania, the Bulgarians could count on reinforcing their southern front with forces hitherto stationed in Dobruja. Nevertheless, was Bulgaria still capable of exerting its strength for what was perhaps the final effort? In the most recent period there were evident signs that the sound old military spirit of the peasant population, which had been demonstrated in many actions, was in decline. The lack of material resources - food, clothing and military equipment - begat to awake a very great longing for peace among the Bulgarian soldiers. There had already been both minor and major mutinies, such as an incident involving an infantry regiment at Macin in February 1918.¹⁵⁰ Also, Bulgarian battalions refused to carry out a major attack west of Lake Ochrida, although it had been laboriously prepared in great detail for months and would have undoubtedly succeeded. On 30 May the Bulgarians lost to Greek troops a strongly-fortified position on the heights which dominate the area west of the Vardar valley at Skra di Legen (16 km west of Gjevgeli); the troops had failed both while defending and while counter-attacking.¹⁵¹

GdA von Scholtz's Army Group HQ and the Bulgarian high command did everything possible to remedy this situation. Officers and men were given various training courses so they could meet the greater demands of the latest defensive tactics. Commanders continued to insist that the positions should be prepared for stubborn resistance. Despite the Germans' own shortage of food

¹⁴⁸Kirch, p. 10. Dieterich, p. 17

¹⁴⁹Nedev, p. 171

¹⁵⁰Kellner, "3 Jahre in der Bulgarischen Front" (Klagenfurt, 1932), pp. 70 ff.

¹⁵¹Bujac, "Les campagnes de l'armée hellénique 1918-22" (Paris, 1930), pp. 50 ff.

and raw materials, they helped the Bulgarians out with rations and arms.¹⁵² But they had no illusions about the declining quality of the Bulgarian Army, reckoning that it had little capacity for an offensive. Yet it seemed that the Bulgarians were still strong enough to stand up to an enemy attack; their positions on the heights were very strong thanks to the terrain. Thus through June time was spent improving the defenders' conditions along Bulgaria's southern front, while enhancements were added to the installations which already existed. In this entire period the only fighting involved occasional small-scale operations plus artillery duels which originated on both sides of the front.

The Entente

Also on the opposing side events on the Western front set limits to the use of the allied Army of the Orient. As long as German attacks threatened France, there could be no question of a large-scale, decisive offensive in Macedonia. The forces on the Salonika front were deemed too weak to attack on their own, and for the time being they couldn't expect to get any more personnel or equipment. Instead, during spring a quarter of the English infantry and some other troops were taken away to replenish the thinned ranks in France.¹⁵³ Thus for now the Entente troops, like their opponents, could only hold onto their existing positions. French General Guillaumat, the new "Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Troops in the East", adhered strictly to the instructions issued by the inter-allied war council on 16 December 1917; he would simply defend the front and eschew any wide-ranging plans. Guillaumat had indeed inherited a difficult situation from his predecessor. There was no true spirit of fighting in a common cause among the motley components of the Salonika front. The contingents came from countries with very different - often conflicting - objectives and special interests. Particularly damaging were the clash between the English and French perceptions of the mission of the Orient Army, and the lack of instructions for coordinating a common defense. By March it was finally possible to group the units in accordance with an overall defensive plan, to deploy reserves, and to regulate the supply services. The re-grouping took place after the dissolution of the Russian "2nd Special ID" (due to Bolshevik disturbances). But the Italians' demand that their 35 ID should be moved to the extreme left wing (opposite Albania) still couldn't be honored due to the lack of reserves.

152Mach, "Alexander Tanew, ein Verteidiger Deutschlands" (Berlin, 1924), pp. 22 and 50 ff.

153Robertson, p. 362

On 1 March General Guillaumat gave the French General Staff his opinion on the possibilities for offensive action.¹⁵⁴ He believed that the restricted resources of the Salonika front made it impossible to pursue long-range goals such as the recovery of Serbia or the destruction of the Bulgarian Army. But he intended to assist the overall situation by attacking with limited goals; this would pin the enemy down. A thrust up the Vardar and over the lower Struma seemed to offer the greatest prospect of success; three French, two English and two Greek divisions would participate. Guillaumat estimated it would take three to four months to prepare. Since the summer heat prevented operations in Macedonia he believed he couldn't start the offensive until fall.¹⁵⁵

On 17 March approval for this plan of attack arrived from Paris. But Guillaumat was once again urged to quickly finish preparing his defenses since "this is essential for the security of the allied troops in the East and of Greece."¹⁵⁶

Meanwhile the offensive by the German Western armies began on 21 March 1918. Since General Foch feared that German reinforcements would move from Macedonia to France, on 4 April he sent General Guillaumat new orders; contrary to the instructions of 17 March, the Orient Army were now supposed to prepare to attack as soon as possible. To reduce preparation time to the minimum, on 14 April Guillaumat decided to attack only along the Vardar, canceling the operation planned for the lower Struma.¹⁵⁷ An advance toward the upper Devoli would harass the Austrians in this area and ascertain their intentions.

Preparations to attack gradually brought new life to the stagnant front. At many points there were actions which varied in intensity. The thrusts by the left wing of the French forces against the Aus-Hung. XIX Corps will be described in some detail later. Meanwhile several actions flared up to the east and west of the Vardar valley. The successful outcome of the Entente attack around Skra di Legen on 30 May (mentioned above) had the greatest impact. This victory was easily achieved and raised

154French official history, Vol. VIII, Appendices, p. 539

155Diakow, "Der französische Operationsplan auf dem Balkan im Herbst 1918" (in Mil. wiss. Mitt., Vienna; 1936 edition, pp. 702 ff.)

156French official history, Vol. VIII, Appendices, p. 633

157Lepetit, "La genèse de l'offensive de Macédonie" (in Revue Militaire française, Paris; 1922 edition, Issue 5)

spirits throughout the Eastern army, especially among the Greeks. It also gave hope to the Serbs, who were tired of waiting inactive opposite their homeland.¹⁵⁸ General Guillaumat now wanted to take advantage of this reviving spirit; he planned to open the main attack in the Vardar valley in early June; it would be supported by secondary thrusts by the Greeks over the Struma and by the Serbs. But before he could finalize this new operational plan, Guillaumat was recalled to Paris on 8 June.

Thus in early summer the two sides in Macedonia confronted each other warily; each expected an attack from the other, while looking to the West for a sign that they could launch an assault of their own.

2. Events in Albania through mid-June

a. The pause in fighting in winter; the operational plans

At the front in Albania there was an almost complete pause in fighting during winter and for much of spring, broken however almost daily by the outbreak of apparently unplanned skirmishes which soon died down. Although the HQ of the k.u.k. XIX Corps ordered that operations should be undertaken "to enhance our fighting spirit", most of them never progressed very far; others - such as an attack on the Feras bridgehead on 31 March - ended in failure. Troops on both sides quite reasonably had an aversion to these kinds of operations. Also noteworthy is the commanders' toleration of some very un-military habits which were due to the nature of an irregular campaign involving units of the same nationality (Albanian) on both sides. Parts of the "front" were at times completely open to traffic. When this happened even the opposing commanders could cross unhindered into enemy territory. In such areas there was smuggling, often welcomed by both sides, and an opportunity for spies to pass through the lines. Overall, neither party gained or suffered much from these transactions.

Due to the great importance of this country on the Adriatic coast, it's not surprising that all the Balkan states carried on lively propaganda directed at the Albanian population, who were

158 Alimpic, "The Genesis of the Fighting on the Dobropolje" (in Serbo-Croatian in the "Ratnik"; Belgrade, 1926 edition, Issue 10)

sharply divided politically. Also the mixed messages from within the Entente camp naturally caused the Albanians concern for the fate of their land. Because of all the discord within the population and interference from the enemy, the Aus-Hung. military circles regretted the fact that their own Foreign Ministry at Vienna were uncertain about the Monarchy's goals in the area. The soldiers were especially surprised in spring 1918 when the Ballhausplatz instructed them to follow a passive political course. This was unfortunate because in this period the Albanians who lived in areas occupied by the Entente were becoming hostile to the occupiers due to the pro-Greek policies of the latter.

Continuing logistical and medical problems

In 1916 the Aus-Hung. XIX Corps, after taking Durazzo, had continued to advance over the Skumbi to the Vojusa without preparing adequate lines of communication. Thus they had underestimated the geographical problems and undoubtedly moved beyond the point where they could operate effectively.

It was hardly possible to bring up sufficient supplies overland since there was no connection between the well-constructed field railroads in north Albania, radiating from Scutari, and the endpoint of the narrow-gauge Bosnian line at Zelenika. XIX Corps HQ therefore had to bring supplies through the primitive Albanian harbors, most of which were just points to unload cargo, without any facilities. And the harbors were under constant threat from the strong navies of the Entente. Goods from the homeland were first shipped down the Adriatic coast from Fiume in small steamers to the Bay of Cattaro, where a relatively small amount of supplies could also be shipped on the narrow-gauge Bosnian line to Zelenika. From Cattaro the vessels sailed ahead mostly at night, right along the coast and protected by warships, to the Albanian roadsteads. Considering the overwhelming superiority of the Entente fleets, it's remarkable that this traffic could continue for months - later using hastily improvised transports - without interruption.¹⁵⁹ Only two steamers were lost: "Linz" hit a mine on 19 March and sank with 628 men, and "Bregenz" was hit twice by Italian torpedo boats in Durazzo harbor in the night of 12-13 May (234 persons were killed).

Most items were sent to Durazzo, where the docking facilities had been considerably expanded. From this point the amount of food and military gear that could reach the front depended on the

159 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: See also Sokol, pp. 416-424 (for 1917) and 631-646 (for 1918).

capacity of the motorized field rail lines, which suffered from a lack of rolling stock and a constant need for repairs.

The weather in winter 1917-18 was milder than in its predecessors. The rainy season began later and the rainstorms themselves were significantly smaller. Thus there was less flooding than normal in most river valleys. The troops withstood the winter better than in previous years. Above all, malaria quickly abated in the cold weather. For operational and tactical reasons the commanders hadn't taken the most effective health measure, which would have been to move the troops into malaria-free areas. Despite the arrival of a healthier season, it still wasn't possible to replace all the men lost in the front-line units, particularly from malaria. The main reason was that replacement troops, after being shipped from Fiume to Durazzo, could only reach the front in exhausting marches; there was only enough transport to carry supplies and the sick.

Operational planning

As objectives for future operations on the Albanian front, the higher-level commanders on both sides were looking at two areas which could affect the overall situation -

- . the territory around Valona harbor, which served the Entente as a naval strong point and as a source of supply for their units fighting in Albania, and
- . the Korca basin, which was adjacent to the wings of the main armies in Macedonia.

It's not surprising that both of these sectors (at opposite ends of the front) played a special part in the operational concepts of the contending commanders.

Scholz's Army Group had suggested an offensive to recover the line south of Pogradec. XIX Corps HQ in turn proposed that the first goal of this action should be the re-capture of the eastern part of the Kamia Ridge. The plan evolved slowly during consultations with the German and Bulgarian staffs.

Implementation would require significant forces to be shifted to the area around the upper Skumbi and Devoli Rivers. Since the supply system here was far from adequate, pack-animals would have to be drawn from the assets of the western part of XIX Corps' front. Horses would be taken not only from the supply trains, but also from the artillery. Thus the ammunition columns would be converted to stationary depots, and many of the mountain batteries on the Vojusa front would lose their mobility. Because of these drawbacks and the extreme shortages, the plan for transferring horses still hadn't been carried out by the end of

May 1918, when Bulgaria's failure to cooperate caused the cancellation of the operations south of Pogradec.

At the start of 1918 the HQ of XIX Corps were also contemplating a thrust past Valona. The concept had originated with the AOK at Baden during the successful fall offensive against Italy. Instructions from the high command to XIX Corps on 29 October 1917 mentioned the possibility that the Corps could launch a surprise attack with the resources already available.

XIX Corps HQ, on the other hand, preferred a well-prepared and well-supplied offensive; this view was also adopted by the AOK in mid-January 1918. But due to the lack of supplies back home and the difficulties in shipping, the build-up couldn't be completed prior to the onset of the malaria season; the attack would have to wait until fall. Nevertheless, preparations were to begin immediately; they included the extension of the Albanian field rail lines to Lejani and Busmazi, the construction of artillery positions and improvements to the hitherto inadequate telephone network. But plans for constructing roads into the immediate battle zone on the Vojusa weren't carried out due to the later course of the fighting.

In the enemy camp, at the start of the year there was also growing awareness of the great strategic importance of the Valona area and of the overall significance of the Albanian front for the Entente troops in the East. Although the Italian government had occupied Valona harbor for mainly political motives, the place was now serving the general interests of the Entente. The allied naval staffs declared that they had to rely on the retention of the harbor; without it they couldn't make full use of their base on Corfu, or be able to secure the Straits of Otranto and the sea route to the Orient. And the land front in Albania was directly guarding the left wing of the forces in Macedonia in whose interest the operationally-important Korca basin had to be held.

The Entente inter-allied high command instructed General Guillaumat, as commander of the Orient Army, to prevent any invasion of Greece. Also, along with General Ferrero (commanding the Italian XVI Corps), he was responsible for holding onto the Albanian front. For now, despite Guillaumat's plans for an eventual offensive, he restricted his efforts to a defensive stance. To deal with their opponents' anticipated thrust out of Albania, the French units stationed west of the Baba planina (156 ID and the Malik Group) were joined under the "3rd Divisional Group." Their mission, in cooperation with the Italian XVI Corps

and the Greek divisions around Janina, was to protect the old Greek heartland toward the northwest. A mobile reserve was detached to the area around Korca to link up with the Italian and Greek forces.

b. French and Italian attacks from the end of April through mid-June

The French believed that the best way to clarify the intentions of the Aus-Hung. troops and to interrupt their preparations would be to carry out a limited offensive on the upper Devoli, with simultaneous feint attacks in the area near the sea. Although the latter operation didn't materialize, on 23 April the mobile reserves on the upper Devoli launched a successful reconnaissance thrust. This surprise French attack struck a thin line of outposts in the sector of k.k. Landsturm Infantry Battalion I/23, which offered stiff resistance before falling back to the heights farther west. The only reaction of the HQ of Group I/XIX was to send Border Jaeger Battalion 3 from their station on the middle Devoli to the scene of the action; a mountain battery went with them. The HQ didn't want to take any larger-scale defensive measures until the situation was clarified; this was accomplished on the next day. Surprisingly, the enemy retreated and the lost positions were re-occupied without any fighting.

The actions in May

At the start of May the HQ of XIX Corps received an increasing flow of reports regarding the enemy's new plans of attack. At first it was surmised that the Italians would thrust through Cafa Glavs toward Berat. But soon it seemed more probable that at least the first attack would be conducted by the French, to strike the bulge in the front held by Albanian irregulars between the Osum and Devoli Rivers.

In fact the French Army of the Orient did intend to help in the defense of Valona with a thrust into their opponents' flank in the area between the Devoli and the Osum. The first goal was to occupy the Ostrovica ridge, which would open overland routes between the valleys of the two rivers and to the Italian front, to the advantage of all the Entente troops in the Balkans. But Italian cooperation could be gained only through an agreement with General Ferrero, since the latest attempt to subordinate his XVI Corps to the commander-in-chief of the allied Orient Army had failed (at a meeting of the Entente War Council on 21 April). Thus the basic concepts of the plan were now hammered out in a

meeting at Valona on 3 May; the operation would start on the 15th.

The first action was a feint along the Vojusa front where a drumfire bombardment was directed against the Aus-Hung. lines on 14 May. But since the Italians meanwhile were continuing to build up their own defenses, it was soon recognized that this bombardment was intended solely as a diversion, especially since numerous intelligence reports led XIX Corps HQ to expect an assault on the front held by the irregulars. The only new development was that for the first time the Corps had to anticipate that the French and Italian forces were operating in coordination.

And in fact on 15 May a French detachment of all arms, along with some Albanian militia, did attack on both sides of the Kelizoni Brook and toward the Cafa Martis, while the Italian Tanaro Brigade crossed the upper Osum on a broad front.

On the front under attack, the area from the Osum River to the Ostrovica ridge was held by about 1000 Albanians under Ghilardi, and the area between the ridge and the Devoli was defended by Salih Butka's irregulars (about 600 riflemen). Although the attack against the heights west of the Kelizoni Brook came to a halt, the French forces sent toward the Cafa Martis [Martis Pass] reached the southern slope of the high ground in the evening. Salih Butka continued to defend the pass itself; his bands were backed up by two companies of Border Jaeger Battalion 5. The Italians had soon been checked by Ghilardi's men on the heights north of the Osum valley.

Because of the strong reaction of reserves deployed on the Kelizoni, the French believed that a further advance on their northern wing would be impossible; therefore on 16 May they restricted their effort to an attack on the Cafa Martis. The parts of Border Jaeger Battalion 5 deployed here were threatened with encirclement by larger French forces; therefore after very stout resistance they broke through to the west. The Italians, on the other hand, had very little success during the day. On 17 May, however, when the French moved through the Cafa Martis they endangered Ghilardi's northern wing so that his bands also had to withdraw along the Italians' front. The French units had already achieved their limited objectives, so they stopped their advance in the evening of the 17th. Our picket lines now ran west of the Cerevoda, Mazarecka and Kelizoni Brooks, which had steep banks and were similar to ravines. Along the eastern banks the Italians and French reverted to the defensive.

After a few days the HQ of XIX Corps already recognized that the enemy thrust between the Osum and Devoli had run its course. Therefore they abandoned their earlier plan for a counterattack, especially since larger forces couldn't be supplied in the area that had just been lost. The last few days of fighting had consumed the supplies that had been accumulated originally for the canceled offensive through Pogradec.

The French pulled units out of their front, which was now shorter and in a much more favorable position; therefore until June there was a pause in the fighting. The time was also used for a new deployment of units on the Aus-Hung. side. 3 battalions and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ batteries remained in the Tomorica sector under Col. von Spaics; farther north Col. Freih. von Vever was holding the Kamia sector with 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ battalions and 3 batteries. The new defensive position was well sited, but now it was occupied mostly by regular troops. The remnants of the irregular bands were no longer reliable or capable of combat. In the recent actions the Albanian volunteers had fought well in the Ostrovica area (where most of them lived) but when our troops abandoned this district the majority went back to their homes in enemy territory, either as individuals or in large groups led by their clan chieftains.

The actions in June

In the first half of June fighting broke out again in the area where the Devoli has its source. Already at the start of May intelligence reports had arrived at Salonika concerning an impending Bulgarian attack toward Pogradec. Therefore General Guillaumat strengthened the 3rd Divisional Group with the French 76th Division. Soon afterwards it was decided that the best way to clear up the uncertainty along the western wing of the Orient Army would be to attack west of Lake Ochrida. The thrust would be directed against the Aus-Hung. troops occupying the western part of the Kamia Heights; the terrain was very difficult, but the French hoped that therefore the defenders would be less alert and victory might be easier. The attack would be the responsibility of the French 57 ID.¹⁶⁰

In the night of 9-10 June the French main body overran the

160 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original text goes on to state that the 57th ID consisted of two mountain brigades, but this is incorrect. The Division contained three ordinary infantry regiments; the only anomaly in its organization was that it had a mountain artillery battalion in addition to its field artillery regiment.

southern wing of the thin lines of Schützen Battalion IV/23, which was holding a sector 15 km long on the Kamia (at a height of 2150 meters). The attackers' southern group overcame stubborn resistance from advanced detachments of the k.k. Landsturm Infantry Battalion I/23 on the Lenia Heights. Thus on the first day of fighting the French had already taken the most important tactical points, the Kamia massif plus the Lenia. Under current conditions the defenders could hardly have prevented this development. To supply the entire area between the Osum and the source of the Skumbi there was only one available road, a barely passable route through the Devoli valley. With the existing transport, the needed supplies could only be brought to installations in the valley at Bulcar; thus the reserves of Group I/XIX had to be held back at Bulcar and Gramsi.¹⁶¹

Since FML von Gerhauser was absent, on 10 June GM Edler von Lerch was responsible for leading Group I/XIX. His mission was to check the French onslaught at the points he considered most favorable for defense. Already in the evening of the 10th Lerch decided to create a line of resistance running over Mt Komjani and the heights west of Kukri, and sent his reserves to this area. XIX Corps HQ also sent three independent battalions plus IR 88 (which had come from Tyrol with two battalions) marching toward this line. Scholtz's Army Group HQ were asked for support, but their only response was some tactical advice (to launch a thrust over the Gora Top ridge).

On 11 June the French drove back a weak company that had still been holding out on the heights east of Kukri; opposite the French southern wing Landsturm Infantry Battalion I/23 also had to abandon the field after offering fierce resistance. But the enemy didn't follow up on 12 June. Therefore it was possible to restore a front between Komjani and the heights west of Kukri, as well as the connection with the Bulgarian Ochrida Division south of Gora Top, using the reserves which had meanwhile arrived. The new situation compelled XIX Corps HQ to pull back the troops still stationed along the Mazarecka Brook, who were now in a dangerous situation; they withdrew to Cafa Gjarperit. On the 13th and 14th the French repeatedly attacked the Komjani heights, but were unable to overcome the defenders' stubborn resistance; therefore they had to be content with the successes they'd won on 10 and 11 June.

On 16 June the HQ of XIX Corps were also of the opinion that

¹⁶¹This deployment of the reserves was also necessary for tactical reasons, so that they could deploy as needed on either side of the Devoli.

renewed enemy assaults on this part of the front were hardly feasible. Therefore they abandoned their original plan for a counterattack, which would have been effective only if it included a very difficult flanking thrust from the north. The Austro-Hungarians were therefore content to hold their new positions, which were favorably situated, especially since there was growing evidence that the enemy would attack the sector on the Tomorica. IR # 88 were shifted to that point.

The area captured by the French included the important positions they'd been seeking, as well as the bridge at Gopes which allowed their troops on opposite sides of the Devoli to stay in contact with each other. Furthermore they were menacing the Aus-Hung. positions to the south of this river.

c. The partisan movement in Serbia in spring 1918

Although the partisan movement had been growing at the start of 1917, by the end of the year sharp and thorough measures by the Belgrade Military Government had nearly put an end to the activity of partisans with political motives. However, robber bands, which had been a feature of Balkan life since the days of the Turks, continued to flourish.

In spring 1918 the bandits increased their attacks on transport columns carrying food, and their violence against former colleagues and local functionaries who were cooperating with the Central Powers. The size of the bands was once more increasing, and they had large sums of Serbian currency (issued in 1917). The Orthodox clergy began to join them. Because of these developments and reliable intelligence reports from the southern districts (Krusevac, Mitrovica, Uzice and Prijepolje), the authorities had to reckon that politically-motivated partisan warfare would flare up again in spring, with the objective of inciting a general popular insurrection in the rear of the Albanian-Macedonian front. They believed that the Krusevac district was the focal point of the dissidents. The partisan bands had many secret routes to the Serbian Army, on both sides of Lake Ochrida, through which they received orders, intelligence and ample supplies of money.

Quick action was necessary to nip this threatening menace in the bud, especially since the Bulgarians also had failed so far to completely pacify the inhabitants of the Morava valley. Several former guerilla leaders who presumably were planning for the uprising in the Krusevac district were arrested. Then in April

the Orient Corps, who were completing their organization at Belgrade, made a surprise raid along and west of the Morava as far as Mitrovica, accompanied by all the other mobile units under the General Government. The Orient Corps covered about 300 km of trackless terrain in 12 days. Without having to resort to arms, this sudden appearance of relatively strong infantry detachments at widely-separated points provided visual proof to the inhabitants that any attempt to rebel was hopeless.

Activity by bandits in the Serbian General Government continued, although perhaps to a lesser extent than was the case before the war, but political calm in the country wasn't disturbed again in spring and into the summer. This situation wouldn't change until the military situation in France and on the Macedonian front began to turn in favor of the Entente.

3. Winter and spring 1918 in Turkey

At the start of 1918 the Turkish high command were developing wide-ranging plans. In particular they had great hopes for the front in the Caucasus, where they had a good chance to regain the provinces of Batum, Kars and Ardahan (lost to Russia in 1878); this topic was being discussed at Brest-Litovsk. The Turks had decided to present the world with a *fait accompli* here by having their 3rd Army take the offensive. Prospects for the planned operation were favorable because of the collapse of the Russian Army, the confusing political situation in Russia and (especially) in the Caucasus, and the slight fighting value of the Georgian and Armenian units, which were already infected with Bolshevism. Perhaps the Turks would be able to even fight their way to the oil-rich area around Baku or create a route through the Caucasus to the Turko-Tartar nationalities of Russia. This was part of the "Pan-Turanian" program to strengthen the Turkish-speaking element in the Ottoman Empire by gaining the adhesion of related groups who until now had been under foreign rule. Thus it seemed that the annexation of the Persian provinces of Azerbaijan and Ardilan, the territory of the Volga Tartars, Crimea and Turkestan (including the Khanates of Khiva and Bohkara) were possible objectives.

By setting this goal Turkey parted company with the Central Powers' overall high command, which wanted them to devote their main effort to pinning the English down in Palestine. But at least if they took Batum and Tiflis the Turks could then move down the railroad to Tabriz, and operate successfully against the

British who were stationed in northern Persia.¹⁶²

Although peace negotiations were still in progress at Brest-Litovsk, at the start of February 1918 the Turks responded to a call for help from the Ottomans living in the Caucasus - who were squabbling with the Armenians, Russians and Georgians - by having the 3rd Army advance along a broad front. By the end of April all the pre-1914 Turkish territory had been re-occupied after fighting with irregular forces. Despite negotiations with the Trans-Caucasian republic, the Turkish columns continued to advance; they destroyed the newly-formed Armenian Army in two actions, and finally halted by the end of June at Batum, Ardahan, south of Tiflis, and at Elisabethpol, Tabriz and Urmia. At the latter places they became engaged in stubborn fighting with Armenian and Nestorian guerillas that lasted into July.

Because of the size of the operational area and the variety of tasks to be accomplished, at the start of June the Turkish units in the Caucasus were re-organized. 3rd Army HQ became an Army Group under Halil Pasha. The troops remaining under the new 3rd Army commander would hold the Batum-Kars area. The newly formed 9th Army would secure the eastern Caucasus against English or Bolshevik attacks. A division sent forward to Elisabethpol would be the cadre for another army that would be formed from Tartars.¹⁶³

While the Turks were advancing in the Caucasus, there was also heavy fighting in Palestine. On 19 February very strong English forces threw the weak eastern wing of the 7th Turkish Army out of their positions and pushed ahead past Jericho to the Jordan River. The deterioration of the situation in Palestine in the last few months now led to a change in command for the Army Group. On 1 March Liman von Sanders, the defender of the Dardanelles, took the place of GdI von Falkenhayn in control of the front in the Holy Land.¹⁶⁴

162Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", p. 499

163Pomiąkowski, p. 363. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The details of the re-organization described here are incorrect. The commander of the 3rd Army had also been nominally the leader of the "Caucasian Army Group", which however had just one army under its control. A new commander was appointed to 3rd Army in June; at that point 9th Army was also created, and a new "Eastern Army Group" came into being. The additional volunteer force, called the "Army of Islam," was recruited mainly from Azerbaijanis.

164Liman von Sanders, "Fünf Jahre Türkei" (Berlin, 1919), pp. 249

Meanwhile the English commander-in-chief General Allenby had developed a plan for a decisive offensive against the Turks in Palestine. First he wanted to push back their front west of the Jordan far enough to gain elbow room for a thrust into the area east of that river, where the Arabs were in open revolt. The English would enter the Arab stronghold of Es Salt and block the Hejaz railroad, cutting off the Turks still stationed south of Amman. Then Allenby intended to deliver the decisive blow from the center of his front, in the direction of Nablus and Tul Keram. The Navy would take part in the operation in the west, as would the Arabs in the east.¹⁶⁵

On 9 March the English renewed their attack with strong forces between the Jordan and the road leading from Jerusalem to Nablus. The Turks of 7th Army, fighting valiantly, were pushed back about 6 km but then were able to check the enemy thrust.

Allenby believed that he had already gained enough ground to undertake his plan of attacking east of the Jordan. On 26 March the English thrust over the river toward Amman. But in the "First Battle of the Jordan", which lasted until 31 March, they were defeated by units from the Turkish 7th and 4th Armies which were thrown together. The British did no better in the "Second Battle of the Jordan", which broke out at the end of the next month (30 April-4 May). Troops of the German Asia Corps and the 2nd Battery of the k.u.k. Field Howitzer Battalion in Turkey, plus one gun of the Aus-Hung. 10.4 cm cannon battery, played a glorious part in ending the battle victoriously.¹⁶⁶

Because of these defeats east of the Jordan, and because two infantry divisions had to be transferred to the Western front, Allenby's planned breakthrough of the Turkish front had failed for now. Two English limited attacks (in the center and coastal sectors of the line) were repulsed by the stubborn defenders. At the end of June, when fighting died out along the Palestine front, the lines of the Yildirim Army Group remained unbroken. After a long series of setbacks, the outcome of the operations against a numerically-superior enemy with much better equipment had been favorable. This increased the self-confidence of the Turkish troops, and their faith in the leadership. But the

ff.

¹⁶⁵"History of the great war - Military operations" (hereafter cited as the English official history), "Egypt and Palestine" (London, 1930), Vol. I, pp. 310 and 350

¹⁶⁶Adam, "Die österreichisch-ungarische Artillerie in der Türkei" (in Schwarte; Vol. V, p. 566)

shocking shortage of men and supplies was causing Liman Pasha increasing concerns.

In Mesopotamia the 6th Turkish Army, whose logistical situation was hopeless, fought with less steadfastness and less luck. The English opened an offensive on a broad front at the end of March; by the end of May, after inflicting heavy casualties on the Turks, they reached the line Khan Bagdadie - Tekrit - Kerkut, where the heat of summer put an end to the operation.

There is nothing to report about activities on the other Turkish fronts (the Dardanelles and the Anatolian coast).

Thus, although 1918 had opened with a defeat (the loss of Jericho), it seemed in summer that the situation wasn't completely hopeless. All of Trans-Caucasia was in Turkish hands, and it had been possible to hold Palestine and Syria against heavy attacks. These factors made up for the substantial Turkish setbacks in Mesopotamia. But the complete lack of replacement troops, food and military equipment was becoming an ever more threatening problem.

V. The Last Offensive of the Aus-Hung. Army

A. Winter 1918 in the Southwest

1. New organization of the front

At the end of December 1917, when the din of battle subsided on the Piave and in the adjacent mountains, the next task of the Aus-Hung units was to create a permanent position along the front. The troops, whose morale was uplifted by the great victory they'd won in the autumn, set to work with a good will at building the trenches plus rear-area supply facilities and communications, a task with which they were by now very familiar. But everywhere the wish was expressed that this would be the last winter at war they would have to endure.

Now the high command believed the time had come to also reorganize the chain of command. Already during the fall offensive the great number of higher HQ had proven to be impractical. Therefore their number was reduced as the front received a new order of battle.

The k.u.k. AOK started on 21 December by dissolving the HQ of the 2nd Isonzo Army; its corps and divisions were placed under the 1st Isonzo Army. On 26 December GO Freih. von Wurm, with Col. Edler von Körner as his Chief of Staff, united all units of Boroevic's former Army Group under his command as the "Army of the Isonzo." Then at the start of January the HQ of the Southwestern front was dissolved; Emperor Charles had already discussed this measure with FM Archduke Eugene at Udine on 20 December.¹⁶⁷ Thus the Archduke was no longer on active service; first he had led the Balkan forces at the end of 1914, then for two and a half years he'd directed the defensive fighting against Italy with great success; in fall 1917 his confident direction had contributed substantially to the great victory. On 11 January 1918 GO von Boroevic, with Col. Ritter von Pitreich as his Chief of Staff, took control of his new Army Group at Udine; it consisted of the Isonzo and 14th German Armies. From the latter Army, GdI Alfred Krauss' Group (I Corps) had transferred to 11th Army on 4 January; on the previous day the Edelweiss (XIV) Corps had transferred from the 11th to the 10th Army. The border established between Conrad's and Boroevic's Army Groups was set

¹⁶⁷Arz, "Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 205

along a line running from Mt Spinuccia (northeast of Mt Grappa) and over Mounts Peruna and Tomatico; then it passed east of Feltre through the Val di Canzoi to the Cimon del Piz and finally along the pre-war border of Tyrol.

At the start of January the German OHL asked that the process of releasing their higher HQ and troops still stationed in Venetia should be accelerated. Therefore the k.u.k. AOK first had to find a replacement for the German 14th Army HQ, whose commander and chief of staff had already departed around New Year's Day. Authority over the remaining German units in Venetia was invested in the newly-arrived GdK Graf zu Dohna, with G.Lt von Hofacker as his chief of staff. GO Archduke Joseph was chosen to take over this army sector; as already narrated, he had given his Army Group in the East up to FM Kövess. On 22 January the Archduke, with FML Freih. von Willelding as his chief of staff, took over the HQ of the newly-formed k.u.k. 6th Army at Udine. His greatest desire had been to once more have a command against Italy and therefore he willingly placed himself under GO Boroevic, his junior in rank.¹⁶⁸ At any rate this anomaly was soon corrected, since on 1 February the Emperor promoted Boroevic to Field Marshal.

The only German troops still at the front under 6th Army were in the 117 ID. The other divisions still in Venetia (the 200 ID, Jaeger Division and Alpenkorps) had already gone into reserve by the rail stations at St Luzia and Prvacina, and would depart as soon as the train timetables permitted. The last German troops left the Italian theater of operations in mid-March.

Boroevic had inherited from Archduke Eugene responsibility for the administration and regulation of the occupied territory, for which purpose he had the right to issue ordinances with the force of law. Soon after Italian soil was occupied it had been flooded by a large number of bureaucrats whose job was both to administer the area and to exploit it economically. No fewer than 1100 officers and civil servants had already arrived at Udine by the end of November 1917. Establishment of a "General Government" was planned. To ensure parity between the allies, the "German Agency for Occupied Italy" was also set up at Udine. But the area conquered was too small to justify the creation of a General Government. Venetia remained under the administrators of the Army's lines of communication. The responsible office (consisting of an economic and a government section) was called an "administrative detachment" under the General Staff of

¹⁶⁸Arz, "Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 208

Boroevic's Army Group; it was directed by GM Leidl.¹⁶⁹

Between the respective line of communications commands of the two armies, at the start of December 1917 a third such HQ had already been established on both sides of the upper Piave valley (directly north of Feltre). It was called the "Belluno Etappen Group Command", and led by GM Ferdinand von Kaltenborn. Its creation was the result of a suggestion from FM Conrad that a new Army HQ should be set up for the battle zone between the Brenta and Piave. The AOK hadn't gone so far as to create an Army because the lands along the upper Piave, although geographically a single area (and thus given their own Etappen command), were served by just one supply line with very limited capacity. Thus the divisions stationed in the Grappa sector had to draw supplies from two directions - the Sugana valley and the Venetian plains. The impossibility of putting the operations between the Brenta and Piave under a unified tactical and logistical command remained a long-term and insoluble problem. A final HQ on the lines of communication was created to address some tasks in the Monarchy's own coastal lands (which had suffered greatly during the Isonzo battles); here there was a need to restore installations and to collect booty left behind by the Italians. This office was called the "Görz Etappen Group HQ", and from 30 December 1917 was commanded by FML Kuchinka.

These measures considerably simplified the chain of command in the Southwest. There were just two Army Groups. FM Conrad's Group held the mountain front with 10th and 11th Armies. Boroevic's Group, stationed mostly in the plains along the Piave, controlled the 6th and Isonzo Armies and the two new Etappen Group HQ (Belluno and Görz) established at the end of 1917. The Pola military harbor and its hinterland were placed directly under the AOK.

2. Actions and hardships in the winter months

At some points the enemy very soon disturbed the pause in fighting which we needed to quickly develop the defensive installations and to give the men the rest they wanted. Apparently their goals were to push our troops who were west of the lower Piave back to the eastern bank, and to gain ground to the north on both sides of the Brenta so as to threaten the line of communications running out of the Sugana valley and parallel

¹⁶⁹Leidl, "Die Verwaltung der besetzten Gebiete Italiens" in Kerchnawe, "Die Militär-verwaltung", pp. 318 ff.

to the front through Primolano to Feltre.

On 14 January parts of the Italian XXIII Corps tried to enlarge their small bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Piave vecchio near Capo Sile. Their first attack was repulsed. When the enemy repeated the effort they broke into the position of the 41 Hon ID. Since the efforts by the Honved to throw back the Italian incursion were unsuccessful, this task was re-assigned to 10 ID, which relieved 41 Hon ID between 20 and 24 January. The implementation of the planned counter-attack will be discussed later.

Meanwhile heavy fighting had also broken out between the Brenta and the Piave. Here on 14 January the 4th Italian Army (XVIII, VI and IX Corps) attacked the still incomplete positions of I Corps on Mt Pertica and those of FML Ludwig Goiginger's group on Mt Asolone. At both points the attackers penetrated small parts of the line. Reserves were bought up and on the same day drove the enemy out of our works. Three days later another Italian onslaught against Mt Pertica was once more repulsed by the Edelweiss Division. Similarly the 28 and 60 ID were able on the 16th to defend Mt Asolone against night-time attacks. Except for a final attempt against Mt Pertica, which collapsed on 25 January, the enemy now gave up their fruitless efforts.

In mid-January the upper echelons of the Aus-Hung. command received an increasing number of reports that the enemy intended to force their way over the Piave at Susegana and farther north. The k.u.k. AOK paid particular attention to these reports because they'd accurately identified the presence of the English XIV Corps on the Montello and of the French XXXI Corps on Mounts Sulder and Tomba, and because intelligence about an impending assault was also being received through Switzerland. With the agreement of the OHL, they held the German divisions (which were scheduled to depart) in the area west of the Tagliamento so they'd be available if needed to help repel an offensive. On 21 January the construction of about 20 plank bridges over the Piave islands was noted along a stretch of the river just 2 km long south of Susegana, so there seemed no doubt that an attack would be launched - as surmised - on 22 January. But the offensive didn't materialize. Perhaps all these measures were just a deception to divert our reserves and attention from the Sieben Gemeinde plateau.

The Italian attack east of Asiago

Here the Italian command on the plateau sent their troops forward

at the end of January in a powerful, well-prepared assault. The intention was to take the high ground of Mt di Val Bella, Col Rosso and Summit # 1108 farther east (which the Italians called the Col d'Echele); then the enemy would advance to the source of the Frenzella ravine. The main attack on the three peaks would be carried out by XXII Corps with 33 ID. To the west of the 33rd, the 57 ID would keep pace by advancing past Mt Sisemol. XXVI Corps, adjacent on the left, were to launch diversionary assaults toward Asiago; the Alpini of 52 ID (XX Corps), stationed east of 33 ID, would carry out similar operations from Valstagna toward the Sasso Rosso. For the decisive assault the Italians had 35 battalions available (counting the reserves held in readiness); 900 guns would direct their fire against a target area that was just 3 km wide.¹⁷⁰

This surprise assault on 28 January struck Kletter's group, which was still very much in need of recuperation after the Meletta fighting. Under this command the 6 ID, which had been holding Mounts Sisemol and di Val Bella, was relieved by the under-strength 21 Sch Div. The Col del Rosso and Col d'Echele were defended by 106 Lst ID, which was already greatly reduced. Behind them the 18 ID were recuperating. The steep slopes of the Sasso Rosso were guarded by 179 Inf Bde.

In the first day of combat the impetuous assault of the Italian 33 ID broke through the thin lines of 106 Lst ID, and established a firm foothold in the lines of 21 Sch Div on Mt di Val Bella. But after fighting that surged back and forth, all positions remained in the defenders' hands. The attack by 57 Italian ID on Mt Sisemol failed completely. The detachments of XXVI Italian Corps which carried out the feint against the town of Asiago were also pinned down by the accurate fire of the Aus-Hung. 52 ID. The Alpini, who'd climbed out of the Brenta valley, were only able to establish themselves on some crags by the church south of Foza.

But on 29 January the attackers renewed their onslaught, in part with fresh forces, and defeated the defenders of Mt di Val Bella and of the Col del Rosso. The Col d'Echele, which now lay far ahead of the rest of the front, was therefore systematically evacuated during the night. The new line ran straight from Mt Sisemol to Stoccaredo. 11th Army now hurriedly moved their scanty reserves to the threatened sector. KJR # 2 reinforced the badly shaken 21st Schützen Division. 18 ID took over the sector of 106 Lst ID, which had melted completely away; the remnants of the latter unit were pulled from the front. The enemy tried to

¹⁷⁰Cabiati, "La riscossa" (Milan, 1934), pp. 338 ff.

advance further on the last two days of January, but our fire frustrated their attempt. Then the fighting died out.

The enemy had gained a little ground at the cost of 268 officers and 4972 men (of whom 20 officers and 790 men were captured). But the casualties of Kletter's group (whose HQ became "VI Corps" on 1 February) were also very heavy. 106 Lst ID reported the loss of 122 officers and 1425 men. The k.k. Landsturm Regiments # 6 and 25 were left with no more than 50 riflemen apiece. There were no exact casualty reports from 21 Sch Div, in which the Schützen Regiments # 6 and 7 had suffered greatly. The Italians claimed to have taken 100 officers and 2500 soldiers prisoner during the fighting.¹⁷¹ There is no doubt that the Italian attack had temporarily placed 11th Army in a critical situation, and delayed the process of creating the new infantry regiments. This successful thrust was also striking proof of how quickly the enemy had recovered their strength and will to fight.

Other actions during the winter

Except for some isolated skirmishing by outposts, there were no other noteworthy actions along the front between the Astico and the sea through the end of March.

But west of the Astico, Mt Pasubio was the scene of a gruesome event. There had been constant skirmishing around and under the defensive lines which both sides held on the flat top of the mountain. The Italians were dangerously close to our lines, so it was decided to render them harmless by blowing up their position on the tableland. But the enemy had similar plans. Thus for many weeks the drilling machines of both sides bored into the rock. The Italians set off an explosion on 21 January that damaged mainly their own defenses. Then the Kaiser Jaeger Division finally finished all of their own preparations for an underground assault. With the exception of the English operation at Messines (near Ypres) in 1917, this was the largest mine explosion of the World War. The tunnels were filled with 50,000 kg of ecrasite, which was set off around 3:00 AM on 13 March. As if it had been struck by a gigantic fist, the Italian position on the tabletop first flew high into the air, and then collapsed into ruins that buried all the survivors. For 20 minutes jets of flame flared out of the fissures in this jumbled rocky grave. The Italians were paralyzed, and didn't fire a shot. They never again attempted to attack here.

In the winter months, especially February, there were also major

¹⁷¹Cabiati, "La riscossa", p. 339

operations by the air forces. A German bomber squadron (the 4th) was still working with the Aus-Hung. airmen. On 26 January the air units of Boroevic's Army Group dropped bombs with a total weight of 21,000 kg on the railroad and military installations in Castelfranco, Treviso and Mestre. On 20 February Italian planes attacked the Innsbruck railroad station. Four days later our flyers expended 24,000 kg of bombs while assaulting the rail installations at Treviso plus the Italian air bases at Castello and Trevignano. The 26th of February was especially eventful. On this day the Italians bombed the towns of Cles, Mezzolombardo, Trent, Calliano and Bozen. That night, as revenge for Innsbruck our units dropped 18,700 kg of bombs on the Venice arsenal. On the 28th several Italian air bases were again pounded by 13,000 kg. On the same day the enemy flyers struck the Pola military harbor. And finally on 12 March our own flyers carried out another successful air attack on Mestre.

The chronic logistical crisis

For the physical and psychological welfare of the troops, the lack of food and clothing, along with the effects of winter weather, were more of a trial than fighting which seldom was of more than local significance. After the arrival on the Piave the miserable condition of the erstwhile defenders of the Karst had improved in a surprisingly short time. Their full stomachs worked wonders; also the rich booty helped to supplement their own pitiful clothes. But both the government and the k.u.k. AOK overestimated the quantity of supplies that had been seized. Long after the food and other booty from the occupied areas had disappeared, orders spoke of "requisitioning in the country."¹⁷² Therefore at first the only items shipped to Venetia were coffee, tinned rations, sugar, salt, condiments and smoking supplies, while the Tyrol Army Group held back the scanty stocks of food they had in the interior. But at the start of January 1918 the resources of Venetia began to dry up. A food crisis developed here in the middle of the month; it intensified in February and reached its high point in March. The personnel suffered greatly due to the insufficiency of their diet, which was also very monotonous.¹⁷³ It's hardly surprising that the average weight of

172 Anton Pitreich, "Der k.u.k. Piave-front" (an un-published manuscript)

173 The combat troops received a daily bread ration (baked mostly from low-quality corn meal) of barely 500 grams; during the crisis this was often reduced to just 125 grams. The supply of livestock was completely insufficient, providing an average of less than one third of the already reduced "official" meat ration (200 grams per man). Thus the soldiers at the front

the men was just 50 kg.

The lack of fodder for the horses was even more acute, and measures taken to address the problem were insufficient. In some parts of the Venetian plains it was possible to release the animals to graze; also corn stalks could be used as fodder. But in the mountain positions it was almost impossible to feed the horses, who died in droves. Thus the artillery were all but immobilized.

The higher-level HQ in the field complained about this situation with troubled words. FM Boroevic, who was concerned for the welfare of his troops, sent the following message on 17 February to the Chief of the General Staff: "The supplies of food for the Isonzo and 6th Armies [are] critically low; there are unmistakable signs that the men are weakened and their discipline is breaking down because of the period of hunger which has now lasted four weeks. The appeals of all the commanders and other officers are starting to lose their effectiveness. As we have foreseen and repeatedly stressed, this development can have dire consequences. If the Army is destroyed by hunger, the interior will surely be the next victim if the problem isn't solved. A quick, comprehensive and large-scale re-organization [is] urgently necessary."

This message was followed nine days later by another cry for help, as follows: "The troops are no longer heeding the repeated claims that the interior is also starving and therefore they must hold out. This is because they are aware that there are wide areas in the Monarchy where food supplies are still not exhausted, and that the situation of the German soldiers is far better. The men won't tolerate any experiments; they have to be fed sufficiently to live and to fight. Therefore we are once again urgently requesting energetic measures to overcome the present supply crisis as quickly as possible."

In similar terms the commander-in-chief in Tyrol complained in March about the insufficient food supplies. But since there were major shortages also in most parts of the interior, the high command was facing a problem that couldn't be solved in a way that would satisfy everyone.

Reinforcements for the Southwestern front

were getting at best 160 grams of meat while those in reserve often received none. Instead of fresh vegetables (which were seldom available in the winter season), the men had to eat their hated mixture of cornmeal and baked greens.

In addition to the insufficient rations, the difficult service in the trenches - especially on the mountain front - caused great hardships for the troops. Therefore on 7 January FM Conrad was already asking to have enough divisions available so that in the sector between the Assa ravine and the Piave there would be one unit standing in reserve behind each division at the front. Five days later the AOK ordered that from the units stationed in the East the 26 Sch Div and 42 Hon ID should be sent to the Tyrol Army Group. The Edelweiss Division and 106 Lst ID were sent to recuperate in the interior (but it was soon necessary to employ these troops on Assistenz duties). Furthermore, several Landsturm battalions were shifted from Tyrol to relieve units on the Eastern front. In February and March the following came by train to south Tyrol - 32 and 27 ID, 38 Hon ID, and 56 FA Bde (the former 204 Res FA Bde). XXVI Corps HQ, which had joined Conrad in January, had taken over the sector of Goiginger's group on Mt Asolone; XIII Corps arrived in March and took over the sector in the Adige valley. The new divisions were all assigned to 11th Army; 56 FA Bde joined the 56th Schützen Division which was under 10th Army.

To replace the departing German troops, Boroevic's Army Group also received divisions from the Eastern front. The following arrived by train in February and March - 31 ID, 70 Hon ID, 46 Sch Div and the 1 and 9 Cav Divisions. In mid-January the k.u.k. XXIV Corps HQ, which had been in reserve, replaced the German LI Corps HQ in command of the sector opposite the Montello.

Outline order of battle in the winter

Here is a summary of the numerous changes in division assignments which took place on the Southwestern front. The organization is shown as of 1 January 1918, with alterations noted through 1 April.

- * FM Conrad's Army Group *
- . 10th Army
 - . Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group
 - . Area I [by Ortler Pass]
 - . Area II [Tonale Pass to Mt Adamello]
 - . XX Corps
 - . 49th ID [Adamello to Judicarien] - Had the Adamello & Judicarien "Sectors"
 - . Riva Sector [by Lake Garda]
 - . 56th Sch Div [in Adige valley] - Had 141 Inf and 21 Mtn Bdes

- . 29 Mtn Bde - In reserve by Trent until dissolved
- . New arrival - XIII Corps HQ came in mid-March; took over the Adige valley sector
- . Border change - On 3 Jan the front of 10th Army was extended to the Astico, so that it also commanded XIV Corps
- . 11th Army
 - . XIV (Edelweiss) Corps - Soon re-assigned to 10th Army (see above)
 - . KJ Div [Pasubio sector] - Had 2 KJ and 88 Inf Bdes; the latter was dissolved and its HQ moved to the East at the end of April
 - . 59 Mtn Bde [Mt Cimone sector]
 - . In reserve - 1 KJ Bde (at Bozen and Trent; in mid-February temporarily attached to VI Corps)
 - . III Corps
 - . 19th ID [by the Assa ravine] - Had 96 Inf and 56 Mtn Bdes; at the start of March was relieved by 6th ID. The Bdes of the 19th were then dissolved. At the end of March the Div with a new organization took over the Mori sector of 10th Army. HQ of the former 96 Bde went to the East, HQ of 56 Mtn Bde went to 52nd ID.
 - . 52nd ID [Canove-Asiago sector] - Had 15 Inf and 13 Mtn Bdes; in March the Div was relieved by 38th Hon ID, then recuperated and re-organized at Pergine
 - . New arrival - 38th Hon ID; it arrived in the Adige valley at the start of March, and in mid-March relieved 52nd ID

- . Kletter's Group (on 1 February became VI Corps)
- . 6th ID [Mt Sisemol & Mt di Val Bella] - Relieved at the end of Jan by 21st Sch Div; moved to III Corps where it relieved 19th ID at the start of March
- . 106th Lst ID [Col del Rosso] - Relieved at the start of Feb by 18th ID; Div assembled at Belluno and on 23 Feb was sent from Toblach to the East
- . 37 Inf Bde [Frenzela ravine] - Relieved on 20 Jan by 179 Inf Bde; at the start of Feb was held in readiness near Gallio, then relieved by Sch Regt # 9 (from 26th Sch Div); finally the 37 Bde joined the rebuilt 19th ID in the Mori sector
- . Reserves (as of 1 Jan) -
 - . 21st Sch Div - At Trent; relieved 6th ID at the end of Jan, but was relieved in turn by 42nd Hon ID in Feb; then moved from Trent to the East
 - . 181 Inf Bde - Was dissolved (IR # 22 moved to 6th Army)
 - . 18th ID - Had 1 and 9 Mtn Bdes; rested in the Sugana valley until end of Jan, then relieved 106th Lst; in March the 18th Div in turn was relieved by the 26th Sch Div
 - . 179 Inf Bde - By Folgaria; on 20 Jan relieved 37 Inf Bde in VI Corps; at the end of Feb the 179th Bde was dissolved
- . New arrivals -
 - . 42nd Hon ID - Arrived in mid-Feb; relieved 21st Sch Div and 1 KJ Bde at the end of Feb
 - . 26th Sch Div - Sch Regt # 9 arrived first and in mid-Feb relieved 179 Inf Bde¹⁷⁴; the Division's main body arrived at the end of Feb and relieved 18th ID
- . Border change - On 4 Jan the border of Conrad's Army Group and of 11th Army was moved to Mt Spinuccia, so that they also would command XXVI and I Corps.

* Southwestern Front HQ (of FM Archduke Eugene) - HQ were taken over by FM Borojevic on 11 Jan and re-designated "Borojevic's Army Group" on 15 Jan. (See also the border change noted directly above.) *

- . 14th German Army (replaced on 20 Jan by the k.u.k. 6th Army)
 - . (At the start of January, the Army's left wing was still led by Krauss' Group which in turn had two corps HQ -

¹⁷⁴TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: There is an un-resolved discrepancy here. The original first states that Sch Regt # 9 relieved 37 Inf Bde at the start of Feb, but then claims the Regt relieved the 179 Inf Bde.

Goiginger's (1st, 55th and Edelweiss ID) and Tutschek's (22nd Sch Div, German Jaeger Div, 50th ID); during the month Krauss' command was broken up and replaced by the XXVI, I and XV Corps HQ as shown here....)

- . XXVI Corps

- . 1st ID [Mt Caprile] - Had 7 and 22 Mtn Bdes, which were stationed at the front in rotation; Div was relieved at the end of March by 27th ID and moved through Bozen to join 10th Army
- . 55th ID [Mt Asolone] - Had 38 Inf and 26 Mtn Bdes; relieved on 4 Jan by 28th ID; moved to Feltre and later to Fonzaso
- . Reserves as of 1 Jan -
 - . 28th ID - At Sedico; relieved 55th ID on 4 Jan. In turn was relieved at the end of Jan by 4th ID and from mid-Feb was held in readiness behind VI Corps; then moved to Fonzaso; from mid-March was recuperating at Trent
 - . 4th ID - At Lamon and Fonzaso; on 4 Jan moved to Belluno and at the end of Jan relieved 28th ID
- . New arrivals -
 - . 27th ID - Arrived at Pergine at the start of March; relieved 1st ID at the end of the month
 - . 32nd ID - Arrived in the Adige valley at the end of March; moved through Borgo to Fonzaso

- . I Corps

- . Edelweiss Div [Mt Pertica] - Relieved on 20 Jan by 94th ID and moved to Belluno; in February the Edelweiss infantry were sent to Lower Austria and Bohemia for Assistenz duties
- . 22nd Sch Div [Mt Fontana Secca] - Had 98 K-Sch and 43 Sch Bdes
- . Reserves on 1 Jan -
 - . 60th ID - Had 2 and 10 Mtn Bdes; relieved 94th ID in mid-March
 - . 94th ID - Had 25 and 57 Mtn Bdes; stationed north of Belluno until 20 Jan, then relieved the Edelweiss Div; in turn the 94th was relieved in mid-March by 60th ID
- . XV Corps
 - . German Jaeger Div [Mt Spinuccia] - Was relieved by 48th ID and then stationed north of Pordenone; between 21 Feb and 12 March left the Italian theater from Prvacina (near Görz)
 - . 50th ID [Alano] - Had 3 and 15 Mtn Bdes; relieved on 12 Jan by 20th Hon ID and moved through Belluno on 22 Jan to Aviano

- . Reserves on 1 Jan -
 - . 48th ID - At Aviano; relieved the German Jaeger Div on 8 Jan
 - . 20th Hon ID - At Azzano and Decimo; relieved 50th ID on 12 Jan
- . NOTE: From this point onward all the units at the front were stationed along the Piave
- . Kaiser's Group (became II Corps on 8 Jan)
 - . 9th ID [by Valdobbiadene]
 - . 35th ID [by Vidor]
 - . New arrival (in Feb) - 41st Hon ID (from XXIII Corps, see below)
- . Hofacker's Group (became XXIV Corps on 15 Jan)
 - . 13th Sch Div [opposite the Montello]
 - . German 117th ID [between the Montello and the Ponte Priula] - Relieved on 13 Feb by 17th ID; rested at Sacile for the rest of Feb; between 1 and 17 March left the Italian theater from Santa Lucia
 - . Reserves on 1 Jan -
 - . German 200th ID - Moved from Feltre through Belluno and Vittorio to Osoppo; between 28 Jan and 20 Feb left the Italian theater from Santa Lucia
 - . 17th ID - At Cinto Caomaggiore; on 3 Feb relieved German 117th ID
 - . New arrival - 31st ID came with 7 bns to Cordignano at the end of Jan; on 10 Feb moved to Belluno and relieved parts of the 4th ID (IR # 88) and of the Edelweiss Div. At the end of March the 31st Div moved back to Vittorio.
- . Army of the Isonzo (until 11 Jan this HQ was briefly the only component left of Boroevic's original Army Group)
 - . XVI Corps
 - . 33rd ID [from the Ponte Priula to Papadopoli Island]
 - . 58th ID [Papadopoli Island]
 - . New arrival - 46th Sch Div came to Pordenone at the start of March
 - . IV Corps
 - . 57th ID [east of Papadopoli Island] - Relieved at the start of March by 64th Hon ID and moved to 6th Army
 - . 29th ID [by the Ponte di Piave]
 - . Reserves on 1 Jan -
 - . German Alpenkorps - North of Pordenone; between 23 Jan and 20 Feb left the Italian theater from Prvacina (near Görz)
 - . 64th Hon ID - Stationed north of Motta di Livenza, directly under the AOK; in March relieved 57th ID

- . New arrival - 70th Hon ID; arrived by Portogruaro at end of Jan; moved in mid-Feb to Vittorio and at the start of March to Belluno; then came back to Pasiano
- . VII Corps
 - . 44th Sch Div [east of the Ponte di Piave] - Relieved in mid-Feb by 24th ID, and moved to Codroipo
 - . 14th ID [west of Nonenta di Piave]
 - . In reserve on 1 Jan - 24th ID by Palmanova, then Cinto Caomaggiore; in mid-Feb it relieved 44th Sch Div
 - . New arrival - 9th Cav Div; arrived in Jan at Udine; then was by Pramaggiore
- . XXIII Corps
 - . 12th ID [between Nonenta and S Dona di Piave]
 - . 41st Hon ID [from S Dona to the mouth of the Piave] - Was relieved on 20 Jan by the 10th ID; moved to Cison di Valmarino; in mid-Feb entered the front under II Corps, which were extending their sector toward the east
 - . 1 Lst Inf Bde [at the mouth of the river]
 - . Reserves on 1 Jan -
 - . German 26th ID - At Udine; left the Italian theater on 20 Jan from Prvacina (near Görz)
 - . 10th ID - At Portogruaro; on 20 Jan relieved 41st Hon ID
 - . New arrival - 1st Cav Div; arrived at Udine at the start of Feb and moved to Portogruaro

3. Development of the operational plan

a. Suggestions of FM Conrad and orders of the high command

The concepts of the Army Group commanders

After peace was concluded with Russia and Romania, the k.u.k. high command were able to calculate approximately how many divisions they would need for security in the East and the occupation of Ukraine. All other units hitherto stationed in the Russian theater of operations should now be moved to the Southwestern front so that a decisive thrust could be mounted against Italy with as much strength as possible. During the winter months this operation was the subject of earnest deliberations at Baden. But FM Conrad had also begun at a very early date to develop plans for an assault on Italy. As always he was the standard-bearer of the concept of an offensive; naturally he returned to his favorite idea of thrusting from the

Sieben Gemeinde plateau toward the southeast.

Thus on 30 January, during the actions around Mt di Val Bella and the Col del Rosso, the Field Marshal sent to Baden a report in which he indicated that the mountain front - and especially the sector between the Adige and the Piave - was the most important part of the Italian theater of operations. All forces and resources not needed elsewhere should be sent here so that the attack could be undertaken with full confidence of success. But FM Conrad also felt it was necessary to concentrate in this particular area to keep the enemy from themselves taking the offensive. In the Field Marshal's opinion, the Italians couldn't dare to thrust east into the plains beyond the Piave until they had gained ground toward the north. Conrad's belief in this theory was strengthened when, as described above, the enemy captured three mountains in the eastern part of the Sieben Gemeinde sector. But the high command weren't ready to adopt Conrad's suggestions.

Eight days later the Field Marshal informed 11th Army that despite the lack of agreement from the AOK he was holding fast to the concept of a spring offensive between the Astico and the Piave. A thrust west of the Brenta to the edge of the high ground was desirable, with a simultaneous capture of the western part of the Grappa massif. Then, if possible, the thrust would continue into the plains. In a memorandum in mid-February Conrad was already considering how to deploy the forces; he envisioned needing 18 divisions for the main attack between the Astico and the Piave and 7 more for the subsequent thrust. The other units available in the Southwest should advance from Oderzo toward Treviso to throw the enemy back to the Sile and thus roll the Piave front up toward the north. But if Boroевич's Army Group lacked the strength for this operation, they should at least deploy their available attacking divisions on the extreme right wing of 6th Army on both sides of the Piave so they could accompany the attack of the 11th Army.

Conrad wasn't ignoring the fact that a pincers offensive from two fronts (one from the Sieben Gemeinde plateau and the other from the lower course of the Piave) would have an increased chance of success. But he asserted forcefully that a thrust from Oderzo to Treviso would only drive the enemy back onto their own lines of communication; "these [communications] can be destroyed only from the north." Finally Conrad wanted to leave forces near points where the enemy could make dangerous thrusts (such as by the Adige valley, the Judicarien sector and the Tonale Pass) in sufficient strength so that the Italians couldn't win any success

and thus draw our reserves toward these areas.

When the Emperor visited Tyrol, FM Conrad was informed of the planned transfer of troops from the East. On 22 March Conrad expanded his original plan; with the additional forces he wanted to conduct an accompanying attack in the Adige valley. On the other hand it seemed to him that a thrust on Tyrol's western front would be too distant from the main effort; in his opinion it might be carried out by German units if any became available after a major success in France.

Unlike Conrad, FM Boroevic didn't advocate any plans for an attack. He believed that the war was now entering its decisive phase and would come to an end in the current year. For this period of time, the Field Marshal asserted at Udine, even after bringing forward the units from the East the Monarchy wasn't strong enough to exert sufficient pressure at a decisive point. Therefore during the winter months Boroevic's activity was restricted to strengthening and training the forces under his command while he had them carefully arrange their defensive positions.

The concepts of the AOK

But meanwhile the idea of a decisive attack against Italy was also assuming a more solid form at Baden. On 8 March Lt Col. Sigismund Ritter von Schilhawsky, who led the "Italy-Group" of the AOK, released a memorandum on the subject. He estimated that on the front in the Southwest Austria-Hungary's 44 divisions were facing 72 divisions from Italy and the Western powers, but that the strength of the latter would soon decline because of the German offensive.

In choosing a point to attack, the western and southern fronts of Tyrol (as far as the Astico) weren't considered. The sector between the Astico and Asiago was also regarded as too difficult a target because here the Italians had been improving their strong positions for two years. An attack on both sides of the Brenta seemed to offer the best prospect of success. The main effort (contrary to Conrad's suggestion) should take place east of this river, even though the Italians had been building the defenses in the Grappa area since fall 1916.¹⁷⁵

175In a paper presented to the military archive on 30 November 1936, GM Waldstätten reported that the original concept was for a thrust by about 20 divisions in the area on both sides of the Piave. But the idea was rejected because it would be impractical to supply such a large force there. For the same

According to Schilhawsky's memorandum, an attack in 6th Army's sector toward Mt Tomba and the Montello would be very difficult because first the Piave would have to be crossed at points where the stony river bed was wide and exposed to enemy fire. More promising would be an assault farther down river, in the sector of the Isonzo Army, over the Papadopoli Island which was already in our hands. Here the troops would only have to cross a narrow arm of the river; although this stream was deep, its level would be lower during the summer. In summary, the "Italy-Group" recommended a pincers attack, which would be feasible once all the artillery could be concentrated in the Southwest; if conducted simultaneously and in great strength from the north and east, the operation had a good chance of success.

In the second half of March the promising start of the German offensive in the West caused preparations for an assault on Italy to be accelerated. On 23 March the HQ of Conrad's Army Group received instructions in which the AOK declared their concurrence with the Field Marshal's plan of attack. The high command went on to state that "The main thrust will be delivered from the area between Asiago and the Piave, powerfully supported by artillery and trench mortars (firing mostly gas shells) on both sides of the Brenta; it will reach the foot of the mountains as quickly as possible and force the Italians to break up their front along the Piave. The goal of the operation is to reach the Bacchiglione sector." Its code name was "Operation Radetzky."

On the same day (23 March) the high command sent a second order to Bozen, regarding a thrust on the western front of Tyrol. At an appropriate point in time a substantial force was to attack in the Tonale sector; they would advance to a line running from Mt Adamello north of Edolo and Tirano to Mt Masuccio on the border between Italy and Switzerland. Thus they would "occupy a large amount of Italian soil, threaten Lombardy (especially Milan) and shorten our front." This attack was given the code name "Operation Avalanche."

A few days later (on 28 March) the AOK informed FM Boroevic about the orders they'd sent to Bozen and instructed that XV Corps - on the right wing of 6th Army - was to participate in the offensive by 11th Army. "The main attack, to be carried out between the Astico and the Piave, will be accompanied by a thrust of the Isonzo Army toward Treviso." The code name for this assault was

reason the offensive couldn't be conducted between the Brenta and the Piave, where in fact it would have been even more difficult to keep 20 divisions supplied.

"Operation Albrecht."

Now the units most recently made available in the East were divided between the two Army Groups on the southwestern front. The Group in Tyrol would receive XXI Corps HQ, the 5, 16 and 36 ID, 74 Hon ID and 6 CD. They also would get 53 ID (but without its artillery) plus Field Artillery Brigades 18, 52, 60, 39 and 40, the Mountain Artillery Regiments # 4, 9 and 12, and finally a number of heavy Aus-Hung. batteries from the German Western front. Boroevic's Army Group were allotted the XVIII and XXII Corps HQ, Cavalry Divisions 3, 8, 10, 11 and 12, Field Artillery Brigades 12, 64, 7 and 51, and the 28th Lst Mtn Bde. The large-scale railroad movement would start on 8 April and was scheduled to be finished in 50 days.

The high command believed that with these orders they had clearly sketched out the objective and planned course of the offensive. The Tyrol Army Group, supported by the right wing of 6th Army and aided by a diversionary operation ("Avalanche") in the Tonale sector, would deliver the main attack ("Radetzky") between Asiago and the Piave; the Isonzo Army were to deliver an accompanying thrust ("Albrecht") toward Treviso. The higher HQ in the Southwest should now carry out the necessary preparations. But the contrary ideas and counter-proposals of these HQ would cause substantial alterations in the planning for the offensive.

b. Changes to the plan

Discussions between the high command and FM Conrad

Based on the instructions already received from the AOK, but still not knowing how many divisions he'd be assigned, on 1 April FM Conrad sent his operational plan to Baden. The main attack would be carried out with emphasis on the front west of the Brenta; the first goal was the line Pasubio-Vicenza-Cornua (on the western edge of the Montello). He reckoned his Army Group would need a total of 31 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions. Therefore Conrad asked for 16 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions, the numbers which he was lacking. But when he learned that he'd be getting just 6 more divisions (5 infantry, 1 cavalry), he indicated he was satisfied and would still adhere to the basic concept of his plan. 12 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions would attack on the western bank of the Brenta¹⁷⁶; 8 divisions

176Here Conrad still seems to have been counting on getting three more cavalry divisions as he had originally envisioned.

(including XV Corps) would operate on the eastern bank. For the thrust over the Tonale Pass he intended to employ two divisions in addition to the garrison already in place.

The staff at Baden didn't agree with Conrad's suggested plan in its entirety. From GM Waldstätten's marginal notes, it can be determined that the AOK believed the force on the western bank of the Brenta would be too strong and that on the eastern bank too weak. They also objected to Conrad's reference to the attack by Boroëvic's Army Group as a "secondary operation." In general, GM Waldstätten was of the opinion that because of the difficult railroad and logistical situations on the mountain front it was necessary that the attacking group here should be "on the one hand no stronger than absolutely necessary and on the other kept as weak as possible." Farther on his marginal notes stated that "Operationally and strategically Boroëvic's Army Group will exploit the tactical success of Conrad's Army Group." GM Waldstätten now offered to travel to Bozen to inform FM Conrad of the intentions of the high command. But the Emperor instead invited the Field Marshal to Baden, where he arrived on 11 April.

Shortly before this Conrad had asked to be given one more infantry and five cavalry divisions from Boroëvic's Army Group so he could add to the strength of his thrust on both sides of the Brenta. Furthermore, he'd referred to the deployment of strong forces on the Piave as "irrational", because here the most that could be achieved was to push the enemy back with a frontal assault. And if the Italians wavered after a successful Aus-Hung. breakthrough on both sides of the Brenta, then the concentric advance by both army groups with their inner wings would free up strong forces; in this case a follow-up thrust by Boroëvic's reserves from the Piave wouldn't be necessary. Conrad also had reservations against the AOK's plan to create a strategic reserve between Belluno and Vittorio. He was concerned that these units would arrive too late to help either attack (on the Brenta or on the lower Piave), and that they would be better deployed behind 11th Army.

There are no minutes of FM Conrad's audience with the Emperor on 11 April. Apparently he was able to explain all the operational and tactical reasons behind his plan and to convince his sovereign that the possibility of success was great, since the AOK didn't order the Field Marshal to change his dispositions.

Although he wasn't given all the reinforcements he'd requested, the trains carrying Cavalry Divisions 3, 10 and 12 plus the XVIII Corps HQ would be sent to Tyrol rather than to Boroevic.

Starting on 1 June the XV Corps (with Divisions 20, 48 and 50) would be placed for tactical purposes under 11th Army.

Furthermore, FM Boroevic was instructed to send four of his most mobile divisions as a reserve of the high command to Belluno and Vittorio. Both Army Group commanders had reservations about this change, Boroevic because it would weaken his own strength and Conrad because he felt that the reserves were being deployed at an unfavorable point. The AOK concluded their orders (issued on 21 April) by stating that the two army groups should attack simultaneously, while the operation at the Tonale Pass would open two or three days earlier.

Discussions between the high command and FM Boroevic

At the end of April the operational plan of Boroevic's Army Group was also ready. The Isonzo Army would deliver the main attack from Oderzo toward Treviso. 6th Army would accompany them along the southern edge of the Montello. Further subsidiary operations were planned near S Dona di Piave and at Cortellazzo. In conjunction with the advance by 11th Army, XV Corps would first take the ridge of Mt Spinuccia and then Mt Pallone; from here they could roll up the enemy front on Mt Tomba. FM Boroevic estimated he'd need 23 or 24 divisions. Based on his original instructions from the AOK, he was supposed to have 30½ infantry and cavalry divisions, so he'd be able to hold back 6½ or 7½ as reserves. But according to the latest orders three cavalry divisions were being diverted to Conrad's Army Group and four infantry divisions were being placed in the AOK's reserve. Thus Boroevic would be left without any troops in his own reserves, which he considered "very regrettable."

Of the units actually under his control, FM Boroevic figured that three divisions would serve with XV Corps (which he also was responsible for supplying), while three infantry and two cavalry divisions served on 6th Army's Piave front. For the Isonzo Army's thrust to Treviso he figured he'd use nine and a half divisions (including units to exploit the thrust and to guard both its flanks). One division would link the attacking group with 6th Army to their north; three infantry and two cavalry divisions would guard the operation in the south (as far as the sea). Thus, not counting the AOK's reserves, Boroevic would employ 19½ infantry and 4 cavalry divisions.

At the end of the message, the Marshal added the following

sentences in his own hand: "I must finally once again assert my conviction that the decisive thrust should be made from the Piave and will succeed. Weakening [my force] by around ten divisions (three under XV Corps and four sent to the AOK reserve, plus the three cavalry divisions) seems hazardous to me. Reserves in the rear are worthless; only available [units] have value."

The staff at Baden understood the basis of Boroevic's concern, but took no action to increase the forces in Venetia.

The AOK insists on a pincers attack

From the operational plans submitted by both army group HQ, the k.u.k. AOK had to conclude that each of the commanders intended to carry out the principal attack. Both had raised good points in their justifications. From a purely theoretical standpoint a thrust by Conrad's Army Group perhaps promised larger-scale results because - if successful - it would push the enemy toward the sea and cut the lines of communication to the Italian front on the Piave. Similarly, however, a thrust by Boroevic's Army Group would cut the communications of the Italian armies stationed between the Astico and the Piave and severely damage these forces. And the AOK themselves had recognized and pointed out the difficulties of deploying and supplying a large concentration of troops in the mountains.

In opposition to both army group HQ, the AOK was planning a pincers attack from two "equally important" directions - the mountain front and the lower Piave. The drawback of this type of operation, as the staff at Baden certainly understood, was that the defeat of one of the pincers would have a negative effect on the second one because they were so closely inter-related. On the other hand, a pincers attack could produce the greatest success as long as each group was so strong that it would probably be victorious on its own.

However, this wasn't the case in the Southwest in 1918. Between the Astico and the Piave, Conrad's Army Group had 23 divisions; Boroevic's Army Group had 23½ divisions (counting the AOK's strategic reserves stationed nearby).¹⁷⁷ The two groups were roughly equal in strength, but neither of them had a noticeable superiority over the enemy in their sectors. The AOK believed that nevertheless the vigorous action of the attacking armies could ensure success. Thus on 5 May they wrote FM Boroevic regarding the conviction of FM Conrad and 11th Army HQ that

177The 12th Reit Sch Div, stationed at Toblach, isn't included in this calculation.

victory could be won only when the main attack took place on both sides of the Brenta. "It's fully consistent with the intentions of the AOK," the memorandum stated, "if 11th Army make all their preparations based on their assertion that they can win a decision on their own. Naturally it's clear to the AOK that only a serious commitment can lead to the success of the completely equal operations 'Radetzky' and 'Albrecht'."

But the Field Marshal in Udine didn't believe that the operation planned by the AOK would meet its goals. On 9 May he sent a report to Baden regarding his lack of reserves (due to giving units up to Conrad's Army Group) and the limitations thus placed on his armies' objectives.¹⁷⁸ At the end, Boroevic wrote:

"If we want an 'attack' (not a 'thrust' nor an 'accompaniment' to another, larger assault) on two fronts per the AOK's order of 21 April, the necessary units should not only be available, but also grouped in a productive manner. If the units aren't available, then the operation must be canceled, since no one would want responsibility for failure due to attacking with insufficient force. In my opinion there are sufficient forces in the Southwest, but I find that their deployment isn't correct." A report from Conrad's HQ had stated that the enemy were apparently preparing to defend against a thrust on both sides of the Brenta (especially on the western bank), while holding the Piave front in lesser strength; Boroevic commented that this report was "a brilliant argument against making the principal effort from Tyrol, unless we intend to grab hold of the bull by its horns." Finally the Field Marshal repeated his often-stated conviction that the much easier attack from the Piave front would win a great victory and asked for a quick decision as to what forces he could definitely count on, "so that the commanders under my authority will have a firm basis for their further preparations."

More detailed planning

After this serious warning cry, Boroevic's Army Group were reinforced by the infantry of 51 Hon ID (released from the interior) and then by Field Artillery Brigades 37 and 4 "K." On this occasion the AOK once more disagreed with the apparently widespread opinion in the Southwest that the attack by Boroevic's Army Group over the Piave would be just a "thrust of secondary importance." But at the same time FM Conrad also received

178Here Boroevic was referring to the cancellation of a planned operation at Cortellazzo in cooperation with the Navy, the goal of which would have been to open a way through the lagoons toward Venice.

reinforcements - the Edelweiss Division (which had been in the interior) plus the 2nd, 15th and 25th Field Artillery Brigades. On the other hand, due to the reorganization of the infantry and the new overall order of battle the 94th ID, stationed under the Tyrol Army Group, was dissolved. The same fate befell 28 Lst Mtn Bde, which was on the Eastern front but had been instructed to join FM Boroevic; this Brigade's battalions were broken up as part of the reduction of the Hungarian Landsturm. Despite several requests by Conrad for the 12th Reit Sch Div, the AOK held that unit back at Toblach because it hadn't finished receiving equipment and training for mountain warfare.

Meanwhile under 6th Army there was an alteration to the mission of XXIV Corps, which had been to accompany the offensive of the Isonzo Army with a thrust through Arcade along the southern foot of the Montello. The Army commander GO Archduke Joseph regarded this attack as extremely difficult as long as the Montello, which dominated the surrounding area, was still in enemy hands. Reconnaissance reports now indicated that it wouldn't be hard to cross the Piave by the northern foot of the Montello and to secure this high ground, since as the infantry advanced they would soon enter an area on the other side of the river which couldn't be hit by the Italian artillery. Therefore at the end of April the Archduke suggested that he should carry out his mission of supporting the Isonzo Army with a thrust over the northeastern foot of the Montello toward Volpago. FM Boroevic declared he had no objection as long as 6th Army could carry this out with the forces already assigned. When the Emperor, along with the Chief of the General Staff, visited the Army Group sector on 3 May, he was informed of the proposal; since there was also no objection at the All-Highest level, 6th Army HQ could begin preparations as they desired.¹⁷⁹ But the Archduke soon had reservations as to whether he could capture and also retain the Montello with his weak Army of just five divisions. Therefore in a letter to GM Waldstätten on 29 April he requested two divisions as reinforcements. But Waldstätten referred the Archduke back to his own Army Group commander, and didn't neglect to add that he "wasn't a supporter of the attack planned by 6th Army."

When the AOK reviewed preparations for the attack on 1 June, they recommended that the Montello operation should be canceled. FM Boroevic in fact ordered 6th Army to just hold their positions, while sending any un-needed forces to join the Isonzo Army. But it would be a difficult task to shift the bulky heavy artillery and bridging gear, which would further delay the start of the

¹⁷⁹FM Archduke Joseph, "The World War as I Witnessed It" (in Magyar; Budapest, 1933), Vol. VI, pp. 244, 257 and 277 ff.

offensive. Anyway, GO Wurm asserted that capture of the Montello (which he also believed would be easy) was essential for the success of his Isonzo Army's attack, which otherwise would be hampered by the difficulty of seeing the enemy's deployment on the flat plains. Thus this interlude ended when the HQ of the two armies came to an agreement, which was approved by the higher level HQ, that the attack by 6th Army's XXIV Corps would proceed as planned.

An overview of the final plan

Thus the overall goals and assignments for the offensive by the armies stationed in the Southwest were fixed; the operation was scheduled to start on 11 June.

Under Conrad's Army Group the 11th Army were to attack with all six corps; first they would reach the line Schio-Thiene-Breganze-Marostica-Bassano-Asola-Cornuda in one bound. Their main effort would be on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, where the central sector was once more held in strength; XIII Corps HQ were taking command here after being relieved by XXI Corps HQ in the Adige valley sector. 11th Army HQ felt it was essential that on the first day XIII Corps should already have broken through to the southern edge of the woods that spread out south of Asiago. Progress east of the Brenta was dependent on the quick capture of Mt Grappa; its fall was to be ensured by strong frontal pressure from I Corps while the XXVI and XV Corps cut off the massif from the west and the east.

The further southward advance of these three corps past the line Bassano-Cornuda was to be regulated based on the enemy's reaction. In 11th Army's western group, after reaching Thiene and Breganze the XIII Corps would thrust without pausing toward Vicenza, while their flank on the east was guarded by VI Corps. III Corps were instructed that after they reached the foothills they were to pivot through Schio to the southwest; thus they'd enable XIV Corps of 10th Army to advance to the line Pasubio-Recoaro. Three divisions were stationed west of the Brenta in 11th Army's reserve. FM Conrad had just one division (stationed near Fonzaso) in his own reserve; he intended to bring it forward through the Brenta valley. The thrust over the Tonale Pass would serve as a diversionary operation.

On the Piave front, the Army of the Isonzo would thrust ahead with the tightly-concentrated Corps XVI, IV and VII, primarily along the axis Oderzo-Treviso; the first objective was the line Postioma-Paese-Preganziol. The operation by this main body of

Boroevic's Army Group would be facilitated by a thrust at S Dona di Piave (by parts of XXIII Corps) and an accompanying attack over the Montello (by XXIV Corps). Each Army HQ had one division in reserve, FM Boroevic himself had none. The AOK's strategic reserves were four infantry divisions (in the Belluno-Vittorio-Sacile area) and one cavalry division at Toblach.

Thus there would be attacks almost everywhere along the 120 km long front between the Astico and S Dona. On the front of 11th Army (56 km broad) there were 20 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions; behind the long Piave sector there were 15½ infantry and 4 cavalry divisions (not counting the AOK reserve). No particular point had been chosen as decisive. Apparently the AOK hoped they could later select one by committing their reserve in the appropriate direction as the operation developed. Therefore these four divisions were stationed between the principal attacking groups. But they were only half as distant from the principal front of the Isonzo Army (west of Oderzo) as they were from that of 11th Army (south of Asiago). Thus it seems that the staff at Baden were calculating that Boroevic's Army Group would be able to exploit a success more readily than the troops on the mountain front. From a marginal note which GM Waldstätten added to a document, we can deduce that the AOK expected Conrad's Army Group to win a tactical victory with a thrust as far as the Bacchiglione, and that Boroevic's Army Group would then carry out the strategic exploitation as far as the lower Adige.¹⁸⁰

4. Build-up by railroad for the June offensive¹⁸¹

On 1 April 1918 the order was issued to move strong forces to the Southwestern front and to complete the deployment by the end of May. This task caught the Danube Monarchy's transportation

¹⁸⁰But as a partial objection to this theory, we note that GO Arz in his work "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges" (p. 262) wrote "I believed....that we would sufficiently accomplish our mission of tying down the enemy if we defeated our opponents in the Grappa area and on the Piave and occupied the area as far as the Brenta. I believe that at that time we weren't capable of a wider-ranging offensive. We would have considered moving farther ahead without a pause only if the circumstances for continuing the assault were favorable."

¹⁸¹An appendix at the end of this volume gives details about all the large-scale troop movements by rail during 1918.

network in a situation that was substantially worse than in any of the earlier large-scale deployments. Great demands were already being made on the system because of the oppressive economic shortages, there was a shortage of locomotives and boxcars because so many were under repair, and the extent of the rail network had been enlarged because of the occupied territories. Therefore it seemed impossible to increase the capacity of the railroads for this troop movement. The preliminary estimate was that 1050 trains with 180 axles apiece would be needed. The movement could be carried out only in a relatively long period (50 days) and by curtailing other traffic.

This new task had to be initiated even though the front and the interior suffered from lack of food, fuel and many other necessities, many major transportation needs were already being neglected, and 18,000 loaded cars were sitting immobile - unable to reach their destination due to traffic jams. Thus great difficulties were encountered in the areas where the troops had to entrain and detrain.

The rail lines to south Tyrol (through Wörgl and Lienz) and the lines that entered the occupied part of Venetia (running to Pontafel, Cormons and Cervignano) were already under heavy strain due to the daily needs of the Army Groups which they supplied. In south Tyrol in particular - which south of Franzensfeste could be reached by just a single line - it was possible to increase daily traffic only slightly. Trains entering Venetia had similar problems. But difficulties also arose in the areas from which the AOK had to bring units to the Southwest. More than 400 trains had to use one line from Bukovina. The task of bringing Aus-Hung. troops from Romania was complicated by the urgent need to also import Romanian grain and by the simultaneous transport five German divisions to the West. The shipment of goods from the interior had to be carried out in stages because the shortage of food at the front made it essential to still give priority to shipping rations as they became available.

Therefore the chief of the field railroad service:

- . further restricted civilian travel (which had already been cut back for a long time),
- . interrupted the passage of civilians' shipment of goods,
- . stopped trains carrying to the Southwest the new March formations and men on leave,
- . reduced the number of military trains moving to the East, and
- . postponed all internal military transportation.

Furthermore the AOK saw to it that the railroads had sufficient

fuel (which was already very scarce) and that the Army itself provided rations for the railroad personnel involved in the deployment. It was believed that all these measures would be adequate for current needs.

After the allotment of the rolling stock, it was possible to begin sending the troop transports through the Monarchy on 8 April. The movement involved four major routes. Each day twelve trains would have to go to Tyrol and nine to Venetia; furthermore two trains carrying the heavy and very heavy artillery from the West were able to arrive each day.

Each unit used just two to five trains per day. In this fashion the following rolled to the area of the Southwestern front:

- . about 600 trains carrying four whole infantry divisions plus the non-infantry components of one infantry and two cavalry divisions from Bukovina, followed by four field artillery brigades and various formations assigned at Army-HQ level,
- . 60 trains carrying two cavalry divisions and two field artillery brigades from Romania, and
- . about 140 trains carrying two corps HQ, the non-infantry components of four infantry and two cavalry brigades, a Landsturm mountain brigade, a field artillery brigade and three mountain artillery regiments from Transylvania.

Two infantry divisions that were supposed to join Conrad's Army group were sent instead to Venetia and had to proceed the rest of the way in difficult marches on foot through Belluno and Feltre.

At the same time, about 120 trains were used by

- . two corps HQ plus a cavalry division from Galicia and Volhynia,
- . the foot soldiers of two infantry divisions hitherto serving as "Assistenz" troops in the interior, and
- . the heavy and very heavy k.u.k. artillery units from the West (which arrived at stations on the northern border of Tyrol).

Parallel with these movements, about 380 trains carried the extra supplies necessary for the offensive, some from the Eastern front and some from the interior.

The artillery from the West arrived by 10 May; the larger units arrived gradually between mid-April and the start of June at their assigned stations. The supplies and equipment were sent forward at the same time.

5. Logistical preparations

The logistical preparations took place simultaneously with the transfer and deployment of divisions from the East and from the

interior. Because the Southwestern front could expect just seven train-loads of supplies each day, the preparations would have to take eight to ten weeks. This didn't affect the overall timetable, since the arrival of reinforcements would take just as long; at any rate, supplies could only be sent forward as they (gradually) became available in the interior. Thus the schedule was dependent on the process of procuring food and producing ammunition and special military gear. Of the diverse types of supplies involved, here we will discuss only the most important - rations, artillery ammunition and bridging gear.

Rations

As suggested by 11th Army HQ, the best course would have been to have stocks of food available on the Southwestern front prior to the arrival of the new divisions. But this was impossible because of the shortage of rations. Just as in the winter, during spring this shortage presented insurmountable difficulties. Relief from Ukraine still hadn't become effective. At the end of April the population of Vienna were so hungry that the head of the joint Austro-Hungarian food commission - GM Ottokar von Landwehr - on his own authority seized several German steamships that were bringing Romanian grain up the Danube.¹⁸² These 24,500 tons of corn did free the Imperial capital of fear of starvation for some time, but did nothing to help the front, and in particular the armies that were scheduled to attack.

In March the rations at the front were reduced to 200 grams of meat products and 500 grams of bread; naturally this wasn't well received by the troops. Afterwards the supplies needed for the offensive, including food, became available on a very irregular basis. This interfered with the shipment schedule, which had been carefully prepared due to the transportation problems mentioned earlier. The impact in the mountains was particularly negative, since here supplies still had to finally be delivered to the positions on the heights by cable railways.

So that the front would no longer have to depend on sporadic shipments of food, the AOK instructed that stocks should be accumulated. 11th Army were to have available rations for 14 days per man¹⁸³ and 26 per horse; Boroevic's Army Group would have 10 days' rations for both men and animals. In addition, 11th

182 Landwehr, "Hunger - Die Erschöpfungsjahre der Mittelmächte 1917-18" (Vienna, 1931), pp. 191 ff.

183 The 14 day figure included the "basic allotment", which was the amount of new food per man along with two reserve portions.

Army would store several days' supplies on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau so they'd be available for both the garrison troops and the reinforcements and reserves who were to come to the front lines just before the attack began and during the breakthrough. It was hoped that after the enemy's front was broken it would be possible to live off captured food just as in fall 1917. Since it was so hard to supply the mountain front, Conrad's Army Group would receive their allotted rations first, followed by Boroevic's Group.

But since the supply of food in Tyrol was totally inadequate, 11th Army could barely issue the already limited daily rations. On 1 June the Army's HQ reported that supplies "were in no way adequate to the demands of the operational situation. The Army lives continuously from hand to mouth and can hardly even provide the basic food allotment, which has been repeatedly reduced, let alone set aside the necessary reserve stocks." It was also impossible to build up the strength of the troops to the level which they'd need for the offensive.

The situation of Boroevic's Army Group was no better. Here the authorities were also responsible for feeding the approximately 800,000 inhabitants of the occupied territory. Because of repeated requisitioning in Venetia, the supplies of food in the area were completely exhausted. At the start of May the AOK ordered that enough cattle should be on hand to provide ten days' rations; this unavoidably endangered the spring planting and harvesting that was already under way.

The condition of the troops due to their completely inadequate diet was described in a report which Archduke Joseph issued on 12 May. The physical strength of the men had sunk because of constant hunger, and despite maximum efforts they weren't able to carry out all their duties. They asked "to attack soon so they will no longer be hungry." A report by the Archduke on 28 May was even more alarming; he'd received a delegation of enlisted men to review ways to improve the situation, and found that the actual daily ration of the front line troops included just 50 grams of meat. On such short rations, the Archduke wrote, the regiments' ability to fight would soon become questionable.

After getting this report, later on 28 May FM Boroevic sent another of his many messages of warning to Baden. He stated, "No one should be responsible for starting an operation with insufficient material preparation and with troops who are under-nourished and therefore not ready for action. If we don't want to embark on an adventure with unforeseeable impact on the morale

of the troops, the supply situation we've already reported to the AOK makes it necessary to postpone the start of the offensive until the men have at least the minimum necessary equipment plus sufficient food to enable them to fulfill their mission."

Thereupon the AOK inquired whether the attack could start as intended on 11 June; FM Boroevic wired back that his Army Group couldn't be ready prior to the 25th, and followed up by sending a written justification. Without waiting for the latter, the AOK adopted a suggestion by Conrad and re-scheduled Operations "Albrecht" and Radetzky" to start on 15 June.

Meanwhile, in the last days of May it was finally possible to slightly increase the meat ration; increases followed in the rations for fodder (on 1 June) and for bread (on the 8th). In the short amount of time prior to the start of the offensive these measures naturally couldn't substantially enhance the strength of either men or horses. Thus Austria-Hungary entered this fateful battle with completely under-nourished troops.

The following rations were available on the Southwestern front as of 14 June 1918 (figures show the number of days' supplies available for each man or horse).

ARMY:	<u>Isonzo</u>	<u>6th</u>	<u>11th</u>	<u>10th</u>
Bread/flour...	5	5.7	6.5	2
Hardtack...	3.5	2	2.66	2.25
Fresh/frozen meat...	1	1	.75	1.5
Preserved meat...	4.5	3	3.6	2
Vegetables...	9.5	6	6.75	14
Hard fodder...		10.5	10.6	16.25 15
Rough fodder...	0	2	.5	2.25

Guns and ammunition

Artillery would play a very important role in the planned offensive by opening the way through the enemy positions for the oncoming infantry. Furthermore, on the Piave they would have to pin down the enemy until the river barrier was crossed.

Afterwards fire from the guns would accompany the foot soldiers for as long as possible as they advanced into the flat plains. Hence it seemed necessary to post the batteries, especially the most unwieldy ones, as close as possible to the river bank. Thus once the plan of attack was fixed one of the first projects was to bring the artillery into positions from which they could fire. But this deployment was greatly hampered by the extraordinary shortage of horses.

In particular, the limited mobility of the batteries in the newly-arrived artillery brigades was actually catastrophic. As the HQ of the Isonzo Army reported at the end of April, these units were in "shocking condition." Thus after three months of recuperation the 70th Artillery Brigade still couldn't be deployed because they were able to replace only 100 of the 400 horses previously lost; moreover, they had 150 men less than the minimum necessary. Most of the 51st and 64th Artillery Brigades were immobile; some of their batteries had just three to five horses, and one battery had none at all. The units also lacked many of their guns, especially heavy ones. The condition of the 12th Artillery Brigade was no better. Gradually new horses arrived and the situation was partly alleviated, but the authorized number of animals never became available. The fact that all batteries on the Piave front nevertheless were ready to fire when the offensive started was due to the Aus-Hung. Army's already well-developed capacity to improvise and make do.

Conditions were even more difficult under 11th Army. Because of the large differences in elevation that had to be overcome, deployment of artillery on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau was very tedious. The process was especially lengthy for VI Corps because the Grigno-Barricata road hadn't been completed in time (and later was discontinued). Lack of roads in the Grappa area caused equal problems in moving the batteries there. In fact, on 15 June some of 11th Army's batteries still weren't in position; this was due to the difficulties noted above as well as to delays in railroad transport attributed to the carelessness of some lower-level HQ.

At the start of April the AOK set the following standards for ammunition supplies during the offensive - 1000 rounds for each field and mountain cannon, 800 for each field howitzer and 15 cm M.99 howitzer, 600 for each 15 cm M.14 howitzer, 400 for each 10.4 cm cannon, 200 for each 15 cm automatic cannon or howitzer as well as for each 30.5 cm mortar, and finally 100 rounds for each 24 cm cannon, 38 cm howitzer and 42 cm howitzer. There would be 160 rounds for each medium trench mortar and 80 for each heavy piece. To meet this target, 16,000 tons of ammunition were added to the stocks already at the Tyrol front; they were shipped on 55 sixty-axle trains. The Piave front received an additional 10,200 tons on 34 sixty-axle train. And more shells were sent to make up for daily consumption.

But later the assignment of additional artillery brigades made it necessary to increase the ammunition supply; thus by the start of

the offensive 138 sixty to seventy axle trainloads had been sent to Tyrol. The total number of trains sent to the Piave wasn't recorded. The following summary shows the number of guns available in the Southwest on 15 June, plus the ammunition supplies of the three attacking armies.

[FK = field cannon, FH = field howitzer, K = cannon, H = howitzer, M = mortar]

10th Army had 1360 guns (including 70 x 8 cm and improvised flak K)

- . 1021 light guns - 192 x 8 cm FK, 288 x 10 cm FH, 180 x 7.5 cm Mtn K, 76 x 10 cm Mtn H; also 285 fixed and captured guns
- . 247 medium guns - 34 x 10.4 cm K, 10 x 15 cm M.99 H, 111 x 15 cm M.14 H, 4 x 15 cm auto K; also 88 fixed and captured guns
- . 22 heavy guns - 4 x 30.5 cm M, 1 x 38 cm H, 1 x 42 cm H; also 16 fixed and captured guns

11th Army (including XV Corps) had 2935 guns (including 106 x 8 cm and improvised flak K)

- . 2256 light guns -
 - . 672 x 8 cm FK (968 rounds plus 125 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 1074 x 10 cm FH (638 rounds plus 106 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 324 x 7.5 cm Mtn K (947 rounds plus 218 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 160 x 10 cm Mtn H (688 rounds apiece; gas rounds unknown)
 - . 26 fixed and captured guns (ammunition supply unknown)
- . 527 medium guns -
 - . 140 x 10.4 cm K (300 rounds apiece, no gas rounds)
 - . 40 x 15 cm M.99 H (625 rounds plus 81 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 314 x 15 cm M.14 H (553 rounds plus 81 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 20 x 15 cm auto H (ammunition supply unknown)
 - . 12 x 15 cm auto K ditto
 - . 1 x fixed or captured gun ditto
- . 46 heavy guns -
 - . 1 x 24 cm K (ammunition supply unknown)
 - . 6 x 24 cm M (1000 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 33 x 30.5 cm M (200 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 3 x 38 cm H (55 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 3 x 42 cm H (105 rounds apiece, no gas)

6th Army had 768 guns (including 70 x 8 cm and improvised flak K)

- . 556 light guns -
 - . 192 x 8 cm FK (1110 rounds plus 190 gas rounds

- apiece)
- . 316 x 10 cm FH (830 rounds plus 114 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 36 x 7.5 cm Mtn K (1880 rounds plus 294 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 12 x 10 cm Mtn H (850 rounds plus 114 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 132 medium guns -
 - . 30 x 10.4 cm K (370 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 8 x 15 cm M.99 H (1240 rounds plus 68 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 86 x 15 cm M.14 H (710 rounds plus 68 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 6 x 15 cm auto H (323 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 2 x 15 cm auto K (230 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 10 heavy guns -
 - . 8 x 30.5 cm M (307 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 2 x 38 cm H (38 rounds apiece, no gas)
- Army of the Isonzo had 1770 guns (including 116 x 8 cm and improvised flak K)
- . 1302 light guns -
 - . 420 x 8 cm FK (1110 rounds plus 119 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 666 x 10 cm FH (760 rounds plus 113 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 156 x 7.5 cm Mtn K (1440 rounds plus 293 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 60 x 10 cm Mtn H (760 rounds plus 113 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 336 medium guns -
 - . 82 x 10.4 cm K (350 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 48 x 15 cm M.99 H (850 rounds plus 120 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 190 x 15 cm M.14 H (550 rounds plus 120 gas rounds apiece)
 - . 2 x 15 cm auto H (780 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 14 x 15 cm auto K (190 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 16 heavy guns -
 - . 12 x 30.5 cm M (230 rounds apiece, no gas)
 - . 1 x 35 cm K (100 rounds, no gas)
 - . 1 x 38 cm H (100 rounds, no gas)
 - . 2 x 42 cm H (103 rounds apiece, no gas)

Summary - The total artillery strength on the Southwestern front, not counting the coastal sector or Pola Military Harbor, was 6833 guns.

These figures show that 11th Army hadn't received all of their

prescribed ammunition supply, due to the transportation problems described above. But within Conrad's Army Group the allotment of supplies, based on operational and tactical considerations, made up for the shortage. XV Corps, which were supplied from 6th Army, had the same average number of rounds as the latter Army. In the interior the high command had only a very limited amount of reserve ammunition, which was in especially short supply for the mountain howitzers and guns of heavy caliber.

Gassing the enemy's positions and batteries was to be an important part of the artillery preparation. Three types of shells were in existence - green, blue and yellow cross; the first category were produced in Austria, but the others would mostly have to be supplied by Germany. "Blue cross" was an irritant that penetrated gas masks, forcing the enemy to remove their masks and thus leaving them vulnerable to the "green cross" shells which were fired simultaneously. But "blue cross" ammunition wasn't provided by the German OHL until the start of June, so it arrived too late to be employed in our offensive. "Yellow cross" gas had a protracted life after its release, and it ate into its victims' skin. 6th Army HQ felt that its use was unavoidably necessary to render harmless a strong and dangerous group of Italian artillery on Mt Sulder, but because of their own needs the Germans couldn't make any of it available. When Archduke Joseph learned of the Germans' refusal from the AOK, he had mixed feelings. Experience in the West had indicated that there was a drawback to the use of "yellow cross" shells - dangerous levels of the gas remained in the affected area throughout the day, which would have been a particular danger to our troops since they lacked the necessary protective clothing.

Boroevic's Army Group had originally estimated they would need a minimum of 423,000 gas rounds for the light guns and 37,000 for the 15 cm howitzers. Furthermore they wanted 15,000 yellow cross shells. But their allotment was gradually cut back until finally the Piave front had available hardly more than 151,000 green cross shells for the 7.5 cm and 8 cm cannon, 88,300 for the 10 cm howitzers and 28,650 for the 15 cm howitzers. The exact number of gas rounds available to the Tyrol Army Group can no longer be determined.

Overall the Aus-Hung. Southwestern front had a quite limited ammunition supply, especially by comparison with the forces engaged in the major fighting in the West. The stocks were undoubtedly insufficient for a battle of material, which ultimately would have to be anticipated. But the commanders felt they could overcome the ammunition shortage; they hoped they

could break through in the first onset, trusted in the excellent performance of the artillery, and felt that their troops had a psychological and tactical superiority over the Italians.¹⁸⁴ But the limited supply and inferior effectiveness of our gas shells caused serious forebodings that couldn't be suppressed during the tense days of preparation. Only too soon it would be proven that these concerns were quite justified.

Bridging equipment

Boroevic's Army Group had to make special preparations to cross the Piave. This river in itself wasn't a great obstacle - downstream from Ponte di Piave it was 140 to 270 meters wide and 5 to 7 meters deep. But the planned combat assault by five corps against an alert enemy made it necessary to employ numerous technical troops and a large number of boats and bridging gear. The equipment would also be needed to cross the numerous smaller streams as far as the Adige River, which was the ultimate strategic goal of the offensive.

The Army Group HQ estimated they would need 72 sapper companies for the job; there were already enough units available under the 6th and Isonzo Armies. After more sappers arrived by train, the total number of companies was 76. There were also 8 bridging companies stationed in Venetia. But the majority of the personnel in the sapper companies weren't sufficiently trained to work in the water; therefore as new replacement troops came up they went to the lower Tagliamento where they were shown how to steer boats and build bridges. Also crossing exercises were held on the Livenza, in which infantry and artillery detachments participated as well as the sappers.

It was believed that 86 sets of military bridge equipment would be needed to cross the Piave; the figure included 10 sets held in reserve to replace losses. On 15 June there were actually 84 sets available. Just 40 of them had horses; the rest were supposed to be moved by motor vehicles, which would be assigned to them as the need arose. Also on hand were almost 1000 barges plus a number of motor boats and special flat-bottom vessels.

To continue the advance to the Adige, the armies would need enough material to construct heavy bridges with a total length of 10,000 meters, and also 20 portable Herbert bridges, each 25 meters long. Part of this material was available on time. However, no more equipment to build Herbert bridges was stored in the interior, so gear would have to be provided by dismantling

184Anton Pitreich, "Piave-front"

bridges in the East and shipping the parts to the Southwest.

Thus there were roughly enough personnel and equipment as, per estimates, would be needed to cross the Piave. This fact, together with the experience gained in earlier river crossings (including streams much mightier than the Piave), made the troops justifiably confident that they would succeed in the upcoming operation.

6. Actions on the Southwestern front during spring (from the start of April to the start of June)

Fighting was limited during April and the first half of May; in the sector of Conrad's Army Group this was attributed to the winter weather that still dominated the mountains. But as always during periods of positional warfare there were repeated local actions at certain key points along the front.

Initially the contested points were the Judicarien basin, Mt Rochetta (near Riva), the fortifications in the Adige valley, and the western flank of our Pasubio position. In the latter area parts of the Kaiser Jaeger Division were engaged in bitter fighting around Mt Corno between 10 and 13 May; it ended when the heights finally passed into enemy hands. Farther east there were numerous skirmishes in no-man's land near Canove, south of Asiago, on the northern slopes of Mount di Val Bella and of the Col del Rosso, and also on the heights leading down from the Sasso Rosso. Patrols and sentries also clashed in the area between the Brenta and on the Piave, for example on Mounts Asolone, Pertica and Spinuccia as well as in the Piave valley at Fener. A favorite target of the Italian heavy artillery was Conegliano; in revenge our own long-range cannon bombarded Montebelluna.

Fighting in the air was increasingly lively. At night both sides sought to inflict damage with bombing raids in the bright moonlight. In daytime the long-range English fighter planes became an increasing nuisance. Their targets were often troops who were performing exercises or detraining, as well as supply columns or even individual trucks on the roads. But at the start of April, as the number of English and French divisions in upper Italy diminished, the number of these air attacks also declined.

Local attacks by the Italians

Enemy assaults increased substantially, both on the ground and in

the air, starting in the second half of May. Thus on 24 May the Italians used 32 planes to bomb the airfield at Feltre, knocking 22 of our planes out of action. On 6 June there was another damaging raid, this time against the airfield at Motta di Livenza; we took revenge by bombing the Italian airports at Treviso and Montebelluna. On 10 June a Caproni squadron carried out a bombing mission against Pramaggiore, this time fortunately without any great effect. During the daily combat between individual pilots and the ever increasing enemy reconnaissance flights, it became evident that the Italians planes were superior in numbers and quality.

Enemy thrusts on the ground also appeared to unfold as part of an overall plan. On 23 May strong elements of the Italian XXIX Corps attacked the position of 56 Sch Div between the Zugna Torta and the Adige. The first two assaults collapsed under our defensive fire. In the third attempt the enemy were able to penetrate the foremost trenches, but were soon forced out again due to counter-thrusts by the gallant Kaiser-Schützen of the III Regiment.

The most important action prior to the great battle in June took place in the area of the Tonale Pass. Here the Italians intended to capture the route over the crest and to penetrate the Val di Sole [Sola] (Sulzberg). They had implemented a similar scheme in spring 1916 by taking a detour over the Adamello Glacier; at that time they had won an initial success, capturing the glacier, but they were checked by our offensive from south Tyrol. Now they revived their plan, which was to be carried out in strength. No fewer than 23 Alpini battalions were held ready in the sector of III Corps' 5 ID, along with many guns and trench mortars. There were months of careful preparations, including construction of a tunnel through the mountain ridge leading up to the C Presena (Point 3069); this would allow the attackers to deploy in an area from which they could take the defenders by surprise.

The first goal of the operation was to conquer the heights south of the Tonale Pass - the Presena summit (which was surrounded by glaciers) and the mountain fortress of the Monticello. At first only a diversionary assault would be mounted north of the Pass. In the night of 24-25 May powerful destruction fire was unleashed by 9 heavy, 117 medium and 62 light guns along a front that reached to Pizzano. This created a cloud of poison gas over the defenders' routes leading to the area. The main blow was struck by five Alpini battalions, reinforced by many storm detachments and followed by five more battalions.¹⁸⁵ In the affected sector,

¹⁸⁵Ronchi, "La guerra sull'Adamello" (S Daniele del Friuli,

on 24 May Area III (GM Freih. von Ellison's group) had stationed a dismounted half regiment of the Tyrol Mounted Rifles, k.k. Landsturm Battalions 170 and 173, four high mountain companies, three independent machine gun companies, seven mountain batteries (six cannon and one howitzer) and two trench mortar batteries.

1921), pp. 178 ff. Patroni, "La conquista dei ghiacciai" (Milan, 1930), pp. 149 ff.

On 25 May the Alpini did take the defenders completely by surprise; after bitter hand-to-hand combat that lasted all day they defeated the Austrians and captured the C Presena. On the 26th they went on to storm the western summit of Mt Monticello (# 2432). But the eastern summit was held in a stubborn action conducted by the gallant defenders, who were reinforced by several Jaeger companies from 1 ID (including some from the Viennese FJB 21). After the Italians again failed to take the eastern summit on the 28th, they halted their operation. Enemy reports announced the capture of 870 Austrian soldiers plus 12 guns, 14 trench mortars and 25 machine guns. The loss of the Presena summit in itself was very significant, since it provided the Italians a vantage point from which they could view the Vermigliana valley. Thus preparations for the assault by Archduke Peter Ferdinand's group ("Operation Avalanche") were greatly hampered.

On 26 May the enemy also started to attack on the opposite wing of the Southwestern front, near the mouth of the Piave where the 1 CD was stationed. While the Division's left wing were able to defeat the assaulting detachments from XXIII Italian Corps, farther west other enemy troops broke through the thin lines of the k.u.k. HR # 12 near Bressanin and pushed forward about one kilometer. On the 28th the reserves of 1 CD attempted to counterattack in a dense deployment along the causeway road but suffered murderous casualties. In this fighting the cavalry regiments lost a total of 15 officers and 1671 men; the Italians claimed that these losses included 7 officers and 422 men taken prisoner.

This action proved that the cavalry divisions still hadn't received sufficient training to fight dismounted in the thickly cultivated plains of Italy. The HQ of the Isonzo Army took this opportunity to suggest that the cavalry stationed in the Southwest should trade places with the infantry divisions still on Assistenz duty in the interior. An alternate suggestion was that the cavalry regiments should be reduced to cadres and their personnel transferred as welcome replacement troops to infantry units. But neither suggestion was adopted by the higher HQ. Several days after the unfortunate action by 1 CD, on 2 June the Viennese Lst IR 1 - now stationed near Bressanin - thwarted an Italian surprise attack, inflicting heavy casualties.

The enemy very substantially increased their artillery fire against 11th Army in the first days of June; it seemed that they were trying to disrupt our preparations to attack, which we hadn't been able to conceal. Deserters, including some reserve

officers, had probably betrayed information to the Italians. The enemy also gassed the valleys and ravines east of Gallio, apparently because they believed troops had concentrated there. On 4 June the ammunition dumps at Asiago and Tezze were ignited by artillery fire; in the latter town alone about 3000 tons of shells exploded.

Between 6 and 8 June English and Italian scouting detachments in strengths of up to a battalion thrust against our positions on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, which led to lively combat. Similar fighting developed in the Grappa sector. Here, in addition, the k.u.k. 50 ID were able on 6 June to recover a previously lost outpost on Mt Spinuccia.

In these days and weeks there were also increasing incidents when enemy propagandists approached our trenches and by various means sought to encourage our men to desert. As mentioned earlier, some of their efforts were successful.

On 11 June snowstorms descended on Tyrol's western front, while rain clouds and fog appeared over the other parts of the theater of operations. This caused fighting to die down on the ground and in the air. But all the actions of the last eight weeks had demonstrated to the k.u.k. commanders that the enemy had been warned and were prepared to vigorously resist our offensive.

Outline order of battle in the spring

Here is a summary of the changes in division assignments which took place on the Southwestern front. It shows the organization as of 1 April and notes changes through 15 June; for the order of battle on 15 June, see the next section.

NOTE: On 15 April all the remaining mountain brigades became infantry brigades and were given new numbers based on their divisional assignments.

* FM Conrad's Army Group * (from early May the XVIII Corps HQ were directly assigned)

- . 10th Army
 - . Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group
 - . Area I
 - . Area II - Also called Ellison's Brigade
 - . In reserve - 1st ID (at Bozen; in May moved into the Val di Sole behind Area II and entered the line in June for the offensive)
 - . New arrival - 22nd Sch Div (from I Corps, q.v.)
 - . XX Corps

- . 49th ID - Had the Adamello & Judicarien "Sectors"; the former became the 97 Inf Bde, the latter the 98 Inf Bde
 - . Riva Sector
- . XIII Corps - On 21 May the Corps HQ were relieved by XXI Corps and moved to take over the Asiago sector
 - . 19th ID
 - . 56th Sch Div
- . XIV (Edelweiss) Corps
 - . KJ Div
 - . 59 Mtn Bde - On 15 April became 159 Inf Bde
- . 11th Army
 - . III Corps
 - . 6th ID - Half of the Division was relieved in May¹⁸⁶ by 6th Cav Div, but all of 6th ID were back in line under III Corps at the start of June
 - . 38th Hon ID - Re-assigned to XIII Corps when that HQ took over near Asiago
 - . Reserves -
 - . 28th ID - at Trent; in III Corps' reserve at the start of June
 - . 52nd ID - at Pergine; entered III Corps' line at the start of June between the 6th and 38th Divisions
 - . New arrival - 6th CD (arrived at Matarello in mid-April; relieved half of 6th ID in May and still at the front in June)
 - . VI Corps
 - . 42nd Hon ID - Re-assigned to XIII Corps when that HQ took over near Asiago
 - . 26th Sch Div
 - . In reserve - 18th ID (at Roncegno; at the start of June entered the front between 26th and 42nd Divisions)
 - . New arrival - Edelweiss Div (the infantry arrived in the Sugana valley at the start of June; Div then entered the front between 18th and 26th Divisions)
 - . XXVI Corps
 - . 27th ID
 - . 4th ID - At the end of April relieved by 32nd ID; moved to Fonzaso; temporarily relieved 60th ID (of I Corps); at the start of June the 60th returned to the front and the 4th was placed in XXVI Corps' reserve
 - . Reserves -
 - . 94th ID - At Belluno; dissolved in April

186 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The relief of parts of 6th ID by the 6th CD may have been in April rather than May; the original contains un-resolvable discrepancies.

- . 32nd ID - Relieved 4th ID at the front at the end of April
- . I Corps
 - . 60th ID - Relieved by 4th ID in mid-May; returned to its old place in the line at the start of June (replacing 4th Div)
 - . 22nd Sch Div - Relieved by 55th ID in mid-April; moved to Bozen (came under 10th Army) and moved into the Val di Sola [Sole] and placed under Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group
 - . In reserve - 55th ID (at Feltre; in mid-April relieved 22nd Sch Div)
- . New arrivals in the Army
 - . XIII Corps HQ - Arrived in early May and took over the Asiago sector (between III and VI Corps) on 21 May; by 15 June commanded 38th, 16th and 42nd Divisions, plus 74th and 5th Divisions in reserve
 - . XV Corps - In June re-assigned to 11th from 6th Army for the offensive; commanded 50th ID and 20th Hon ID, plus 48th ID in reserve
 - . 74th Hon ID - Arrived in the Adige valley in mid-May; assigned (in reserve) to XIII Corps at the start of June
 - . 16th ID - Arrived at Salurn in May and rested in the Val Cembra; entered the front under XIII Corps at the start of June
 - . 5th ID - Arrived at Sacile at the start of May; marched through Belluno, Feltre and Borgo to Folgaria where it joined XIII Corps (in reserve)
 - . 12th Reit Sch Div - Arrived in mid-May at Toblach; in June was in the AOK's reserves rather than under any Army HQ
 - . 3rd CD - Arrived at Sacile at the end of April and marched at the end of May through Belluno and Feltre to Levico (in 11th Army reserves)
 - . 36th ID - Arrived at Sacile in mid-May; marched through Belluno and Feltre to join 11th Army's reserves (deployed behind VI Corps)
 - . 53rd ID - Arrived at Sacile on 10 June and marched to Fonzaso (in 11th Army sector, but placed directly in Conrad's Army Group reserve)

* FM Borojevic's Army Group *

- . 6th Army
 - . XV Corps (re-assigned in June to 11th Army in Conrad's Group)
 - . 48th ID - Relieved by 50th ID at the start of May;

- moved to Belluno and Feltre in the Corps' reserve
- . 20th Hon ID - The 39th Hon Bde were detached in May to relieve parts of the neighboring 9th ID and were placed under II Corps; here they were attached to 8th CD in June
 - . In reserve - 50th ID (at Avian; at the start of April they moved to Belluno in reserve of the AOK; at the start of May they were back in XV Corps where they relieved 48th ID)
 - . II Corps (by June commanded just one inf div and a cav bde, as noted)
 - . 9th ID - Relieved at the start of June by 8th CD and moved back to Belluno where placed in the AOK reserves
 - . 35th ID - Relieved at the start of June by 8th CD and moved back to Cison di Valmarina where placed in the AOK reserves
 - . 41st Hon ID - Relieved at the end of April by 31st ID and moved back to Vittorio where in June the Div was in the AOK reserves
 - . In reserve - 31st ID (at the end of April relieved 41st Hon ID; in June re-assigned to XXIV Corps)
 - . New arrival - 8th CD (arrived at Udine at end of April; marched in mid-May to Cison di Valmarina; in June relieved 9th and 35th Divisions; 39th Hon Bde (from 20th Div) were attached to the 8th Cavalry at this time)
 - . XXIV Corps
 - . 13th Sch Div
 - . 17th ID
 - . In reserve - 57th ID (at Sacile; in mid-May marched to Codroipo and joined the Isonzo Army reserves)
 - . New arrival - 31st ID (from neighboring I Corps, see above)
 - . New arrivals in 6th Army -
 - . 51st Hon ID - Arrived at Sacile at the start of June (although behind 6th Army, actually placed in the AOK's reserves)
 - . 11th Hon CD - Arrived at Sacile at the end of May and assembled near Cordignano in 6th Army's reserves
 - . Army of the Isonzo
 - . XVI Corps
 - . 33rd ID
 - . 58th ID
 - . In reserve - 46th Sch Div (at Pordenone; still in reserve in June)
 - . New arrival - 201st [ex 1st] Lst Bde (from XXIII Corps, q.v.)
 - . IV Corps

- . 64th Hon ID
- . 29th ID - Relieved by 70th and 14th Divs at end of May; at this point the Corps' border changed and 14th ID placed under neighboring VI Corps; 29th Div was in reserve of IV Corps in June
- . In reserve - 70th Hon ID (at Pasiano; at the end of May relieved parts of 29th ID in the line)
- . VI Corps
 - . 24th ID
 - . 14th ID - In mid-April relieved by 9th CD; the 14th moved to Cinto Caomaggiore; at the end of May relieved half of 29th ID (IV Corps, above), but was itself placed again under VI Corps HQ (now to the right of 24th ID rather than to its left)
 - . Reserves -
 - . 44th Sch Div - At Codroipo; stayed in reserve, and on 8 June marched through S Vito to Motta di Livenza
 - . 9th CD - At Pramaggiore; in mid-April relieved 14th ID
- . XXIII Corps
 - . 12th ID
 - . 10th ID - Most of the Div were relieved at the end of April by 1st CD, but from the end of May all of 10th ID were back at the front
 - . 1st Lst Bde - Re-designated 201st Lst Bde; at the end of May relieved by parts of 10th ID and moved to XVI Corps
 - . In reserve - 1st CD (at Portogruaro; at the end of April temporarily relieved parts of 10th ID; from the end of May the Cav Div held the extreme left wing positions formerly under 1st Lst Bde)
 - . New arrival in the Army - 57th ID (switched from 6th Army; at Villotta, 10 km SW of S Vito)

7. The overall order of battle on 15 June

Commander-in-Chief = Emperor and King Charles

Chief of Staff = GO Freiherr von Arz

Chief of the Operations Office = GM Freih. von Waldstätten

Chief of the Quartermaster Detachment = Col. Ritter von Zeynek

The Southwestern theater of operations

a) FM Freih. von Conrad's Army Group

(C/Staff was FML Richard Müller)

Directly under the Army Group were the HQ of XVIII Corps (GdI

Edler von Weber) without any troops

10th Army

Commander = FM Freiherr von Krobatin
C/Staff = GM Domaschnian

GdI Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group (C/Staff = Col. Buzek)
 . Area I (164th Inf Bde - Col. Freih. von Lempruch) - Bn IV/25;
 k.k. Lst Bns 157, I Tyrol, IV Tyrol; Russ' Hon Half Bn; 164 Bde
 Sturm Half Bn; Mtn AR 12
 . Area II (FML Metzger)
 . 1st ID (FML Metzger)
 . 1 Bde (GM von Budiner) - IR 5 (3), 61 (3); FJB 31
 (FJB 21 detached under Army HQ)
 . 2 Bde (GM Gustav von Hellebronth) - IR 112 (3); FJB
 17, 25; BH FJB 3
 . 1st Sturm Bn; 2nd Sqdn/HHR 10; 1st Comp/SB 1
 . 43 FA Bde (Col. Edler von Lemesic) (The Div's own
 1st FA Bde was detached)
 . 22nd Sch Div (GM Rudolf Müller)
 . 43 Bde (GM Edler von Merten) - SchR 3 (3), 26 (3)
 . 44 Bde (Col. Freih. von Scholten) - SchR 8 (3), 28
 (3)
 . 22nd Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/DR 12, 1st Comp/SB 22
 . 39 Hon FA Bde (Col. Banyai) (The Div's own 22 FA Bde
 was detached)
 . 163rd Inf Bde (GM Freih. von Ellison) - k.k. Lst Bns 152,
 170, 173; Foot Half Regt of Tyrol Mntd Rifles; 163 Bde Sturm
 Half Bn

XX Corps (GdI Edler von Kalser; C/Staff = Col. Freih. von Handel)

. 49th ID (FML Edler von Steinhart)
 . 97 Bde (GM von Krammer) - IR 118 (3); FJB 9, 30
 . 98 Bde (Col. Riedl) - IR 136 (3); BH IR 8 (3); FJB 8
 . 49th Sturm Bn; a zug of 3rd Ma Sqdn/DR 4; 1st Comp/SB 49
 . 49 FA Bde (Col. Wach; minus components listed under Riva
 Sector)
 . Riva Sector (FML Edler von Schiesser; artillery under Col.
 Vavrovsky) - k.k. Lst Bns III & IV/2, 162, 163, 166, 174; Riva
 Sturm Half Bn; FAR 149; one battery each of FAR 49, Hvy FAR 49
 and Mtn Arty Bn 49; 2nd Comp of SB 60

XXI Corps (GdI Freih. von Lütgendorf; C/Staff = Col. Walter
 Slameczka)

. 19th ID (FML von Elmar)
 . 37 Bde (GM Edler von Lunzer) - IR 35 (3), 75 (3)
 . 38 Bde (GM von Greger) - IR 104 (3), 117 (3)

- . 19th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 19
- . 19 FA Bde (Col. Dobringer)
- . 56th Sch Div (FM Edler von Kroupa)
 - . 111 Bde (GM Edler von Maendl) - SchR 36 (3); K-Sch Regt III (3)
 - . 112 Bde (GM Archduke Heinrich Ferdinand) - SchR 37 (3); K-Sch Regt II (3)
 - . 56th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/RS Regt 3, 1st Comp/SB 56
 - . 56 FA Bde (Col. Ziller) with attached FAR 25

XIV (Edelweiss) Corps (GdI Elder von Verdross; C/Staff = Col. Schneller)

- . Kaiser Jaeger Div (GM Prinz zu Schwarzenberg)
 - . 1 KJ Bde (Col. Dr. von Eccher) - KJR 1 (3), 2 (3)
 - . 2 KJ Bde (Col. Julius von Lustig-Presan) - KJR 3 (3), 4 (3)
 - . 8th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn, 1st & 2nd Comps/SB 8
 - . 8 FA Bde (Col. Ludwig Edler von Erler)
- . 159th Inf Bde (Col. Edler von Covin) - k.k. Lst Bn 151; Carinthia Vol Rif Regt (1 bn); Upper Aus, Salzburg, Styria Vol Rif Bns; 159 Bde Sturm Half Bn; a zug of Ma Sqdn/DR 15; 3rd Comp/SB 31; 40 Hon FA Bde (GM Edler von Steiner); Mtn Arty Bn 15

Other units and HQ in 10th Army...

- . Trent Fortress Command
- . Foot - FJB 21; k.k. Lst Bns II Tyrol, 10, 29, 164, 165, 168, 169; High Mtn Comps 13 to 22 and 24 to 32; Mtn Guide Comps 1 to 5 and 8 to 13; SS Groups I to V; indep SS Bns Bregenz, Bozen, Eisacktal, Enneberg, Fassertal, Innsbruck, Meran, Pustertal, Vintschgau; SS Comps Tione, Cavalese II; Veteran "Korps" Riva-Arco
- . MG units - Four indep comps; four indep light platoons
- . Artillery - Mtn AR 1, 2, 6, 14; Heavy Arty Regt 13 (minus TM batties); 59 Mtn Arty Bn. 10 cm can batty - 16th/Hvy AR 11; 15 cm auto can batties - 12th/Hvy AR 9, 12th/Hvy AR 10; 15 cm how batties - 5th, 6th & 13th/Hvy AR 11; 15 cm auto how batty - 3rd/Hvy AR 10; 38 cm how batty - 9th/Hvy AR 6; 42 cm how batty - 9th/Hvy AR 3; 21 cm mor batty - 2nd/Hvy AR 10; 30.5 cm mor batties - 5th & 6th/Hvy AR 1, 5th/Hvy AR 3, 14th/Hvy AR 6; 1st & 2nd/Hvy AR 9; TM batties - 4th/ Hvy AR 4, 3rd/Hvy AR 6; 2nd & 3rd/Hvy AR 8; 1st/Hvy AR 9; 1st, 2nd & 3rd/Hvy AR 14; eight flak batties; 143 fixed guns
- . Air Comps - 17.D, 23.D, 27.D, 54.D, 73.D, 3.J, 10.F, 27.F
- . Technical troops - Sapper Comps 3/8, 2/21, 3/27, 3/31, 3/34, 2/46, 3/58, 2/59

11th Army

Commander = GO Graf Scheuchenstuel

C/Staff = GM Sündermann

- III Corps (GO von Martiny; C/Staff = Col. Freih. von Karg)
- . 28th ID (FML Edler von Krasel)
 - . 55 Bde (GM Rada) - IR 11 (3); BH IR 7 (2)
 - . 56 Bde (GM Eugen Straub) - IR 28 (3), 47 (3)
 - . 28th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/DR 3, 1st Comp/SB 28
 - . (No artillery - 28 FA Bde detached)
 - . 6th CD (FML Herzog von Braganca)
 - . 5 Cav Bde (GM Adler) - DR 6, 8, 11; HR 15
 - . 6th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . 6 K FA Bde (FML Gröschl)
 - . 6th ID (GM Ritter von Schilhawksy)
 - . 11 Bde (Col. Edler von Sparber) - IR 81 (3), 127 (3)
 - . 12 Bde (Col. Schotsch) - IR 17 (3), 27 (3)
 - . 6th Sturm Bn, Ma Sqdn/DR 5, 1st Comp/SB 6
 - . FA Bdes 2 (GM Edler von Rosenzweig), 21 (Col. Mally) and 28 (Col. Freih. von Augustin) (The Div's own 6 FA Bde was detached)
 - . 52nd ID (GM Schamschula)
 - . 103 Bde (Col. Vidossich) - IR 26 (3), BH IR 6 (3)
 - . 104 Bde (Col. Hohenberger) - IR 42 (3), 74 (3)
 - . 52nd Sturm Bn; 3rd Sqdn/Tyrol Mntd Rif Bn; 1st Comp/SB 52
 - . FA Bdes - 52 (Col. Hlubek) and 22 (Col. Rath)
 - . Corps troops - MG SS Bn 1 (attached from 10th Army)

XIII Corps (GdI von Csanady; C/Staff = Col. Csoban)

- . 74th Hon ID (FML Perneczky)
 - . Col. Papp's Bde - k.u. Lst IR 5 (4); k.u. Lst Bn VI/3
 - . GM von Savoly's Bde - Hon IR 306 (3), 307 (3)
 - . 74th Sturm Bn; 5th Sqdn/HR 1, 2nd Sqdn/HHR 4; 3rd Comp/SB 57
 - . (No artillery - 74 Hon FA Bde detached)
- . 5th ID (FML von Felix)
 - . 9 Bde (Col. Ritter von Hiltl) - IR 54 (3), 101 (3)
 - . 10 Bde (GM Demus-Moran) - IR 13 (3), 113 (3)
 - . 5th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 5
 - . (No artillery - FA Bde detached)
- . 38th Hon ID (FML von Molnar)
 - . 75 Hon Bde (Col. Freih. von Than) - Hon IR 21 (3), 22 (3)
 - . 76 Hon Bde (GM von Karleusa) - Hon IR 23 (3), 24 (3)
 - . 38th and 39th Sturm Bns; 6th Sqdn/HHR 4; 1st Comp/SB 38
 - . FA Bdes - 38 Hon (Col. von Lutka), 74 Hon (Col. Schwarz) and 106 (GM Edler von Reutter) (latter = FAR 206 & 306, Hvy FAR 206, and Mtn Arty Bn 206); Hvy FAR 25, Mtn Arty Bn 25
- . 16th ID (FML Fernengel)
 - . 31 Bde (Col. Pedretti) - IR 2 (3), 138 (3)
 - . 32 Bde (Col. Fleischmann) - IR 31 (3), 52 (3)

- . 16th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 16
- . FA Bdes - 16 (Col. Bolland), 5 (Col. Freih. von Wolf-Schneider); indep Hvy FAR 11
- . 42nd Hon ID (FML Ritter von Soretic)
 - . 83 Hon Bde (Col. Minnich) - Hon IR 25 (3), 26 (3)
 - . 84 Hon Bde (Col. Novakovic) - Hon IR 27 (3), 28 (3)
 - . 42nd and 40th Sturm Bns, 4th Sqdn/HHR 10, 1st & 4th Comps/SB 42
 - . FA Bdes - 42 Hon (Col. Gernya) and 36 (GM Freih. von Bibra); indep Hvy FAR 59
- . Corps troops - MG SS Bns 2 and 3 (attached from 10th Army)

VI Corps (GdI Edler von Kletter; C/Staff = Col. von Algya-Pap)

- . 36th ID (FML von Nöhring)¹⁸⁷
 - . 71 Bde (GM Edler von Löw) - IR 78 (3), 116 (3)
 - . 72 Bde (Col. Babic) - IR 16 (3) 53 (3)
 - . 36th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/HHR 10, 1st Comp/SB 36
 - . (No artillery; 36 FA Bde detached)
- . 18th ID (GM von Vidalé)
 - . 35 Bde (Col. Franz) - IR 126 (3); FJB 7, 20, 22
 - . 36 Bde (GM Ritter von Romer) - IR 104 (3), 117 (3)
 - . 18th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/HHR 10, 1st Comp/SB 18
 - . FA Bdes - 18 (Col. Christ) and 6 (Col. Edler von Stering); attached Hvy FAR 72 & Mtn Arty Bn 72
- . Edelweiss Div (FML Edler von Wieden)
 - . 5 Bde (Col. Edler von Mollinary) - IR 14 (3), 107 (3)
 - . 6 Bde (GM Ritter von Wasserthal) - IR 59 (3), 114 (3)
 - . 3rd Sturm Bn; 5th Sqdn/RS Regt 1; 1st Comp/SB 3
 - . FA Bdes - 15 (Col. Junk) and 3 K (Col. Edler von Wurzel) (The Div's own 3 FA Bde detached; 15 FA Bde was minus its Mtn Arty Bn 15)
- . 26th Sch Div (FML Podhajsky)
 - . 51 Sch Bde (Col. Scholze) - SchR 11 (3), 12 (3)
 - . 52 Sch Bde (GM Otto von Richter) - SchR 9 (3), 10 (3)
 - . 26th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/RS Regt 3, 1st Comp/SB 26
 - . 26 FA Bde (Col. Krauth); indep Hvy FAR 45
- . Corps troops - MG SS Bn 4

XXVI Corps (GdI Edler von Horsetzky; C/Staff = Col. Stromfeld)

- . 4th ID (FML von Boog)
 - . 7 Bde (Col. Kliemann) - IR 9 (3), 99 (3)
 - . 8 Bde (Col. Wittmann) - IR 8 (3), 49 (3)
 - . 4th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 4
 - . (No artillery; 4 FA Bde detached)

187 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: 36th ID is listed in VI Corps' reserve, as shown here, in Beilage 11 of the original. However, it appears in 11th Army's reserve in Beilage 18.

- . 27th ID (GM Sallagar)
 - . 53 Bde (GM von Lederer) - IR 25 (3), 34 (3)
 - . 54 Bde (GM von Watterich) - IR 67 (3), 85 (3)
 - . 27th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 27
 - . FA Bdes - 27 (Col. von Seewald) and 4 (Col. Edler von Antony)
- . 32nd ID (FML Edler von Bellmond)
 - . 63 Bde (Col. Tancsos) - IR 70 (3), 123 (3)
 - . 64 Bde (Col. Edler von Zuna) - IR 23 (3), 86 (3)
 - . 32nd Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/HR 11, 1st and 3rd Comps/SB 32
 - . FA Bdes - 32 (Col. Teisinger) and 53 (GM Alois Adler); attached Hvy FAR 54 & Mtn Arty Bn 54

I Corps (GdI Kosak; C/Staff = Col. Kundmann)

- . 60th ID (FML Dr. Freih. von Bardolff)
 - . 119 Bde (GM Panzenböck) - IR 108 (3); FJB 12, 19; BH FJB 4
 - . 120 Bde (Col. Koffron) - IR 105 (3), BH IR 5 (3)
 - . 60th Sturm Bn, ½ 5th Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1st Sqdn/Dalmatia RS Bn; 1st Comp/SB 6
 - . FA Bdes - 60 (Col. Moc; Bde was minus FAR 160), 3 (GM Grandowski)
- . 55th ID (FML von le Beau)
 - . 109 Bde (GM Trimmel) - IR 7 (3), BH IR 2 (3)
 - . 110 Bde (Col. Graf Zedtwitz) - IR 6 (3), BH IR 4 (3)
 - . 55th Sturm Bn, 1st Ma Sqdn/DR 4, 1st Comp/SB 55
 - . FA Bdes - 55 (Col. Gallistel), 1 (Col. Hubischta) and 10 K (Col. Leeder)
- . Corps troops - MG SS Bn 6

XV Corps (GdI Scotti; C/Staff = Col. Ritter von Pohl)

- . 48th ID (GM Edler von Gärtner)
 - . 95 Bde (Col. von Fischer) - IR 79 (3), 120 (3)
 - . 96 Bde (GM Schulhof) - IR 73 (3), 119 (3)
 - . 48th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn, 1st Comp/SB 48
 - . (No artillery; 48 FA Bde detached)
- . 50th ID (FML Gerabek)
 - . 99 Bde (Col. Jungl) - IR 130 (3), 133 (3)
 - . 100 Bde (Col. Koschak) - IR 129 (3), BH IR 1 (3)
 - . 50th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn, 1st Comp/SB 50
 - . FA Bdes - 50 (Col. Edler von Portenschlag) and 62 (Col. Mensi); attached Mtn Arty Bn 9
- . 20th Hon ID (GM von Stadler)
 - . 40 Hon Bde (Col. Dobak) - Hon IR 1 (3), 17 (3)
 - . (39 Hon Bde detached to 8th Cav Div)
 - . 20th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/HR 3, 1st Comp/SB 20
 - . 20 Hon FA Bde (GM von Pohl); attached FAR 160 and Mtn Arty Bn 35

- Reserves (first three in Army reserve, 12th R.S. Div in AOK reserve)
- . 53rd ID (FML Edler von Goldbach)
 - . 105 Bde (GM Edler von Stanoilovic) - IR 82 (3), 131 (3)
 - . 106 Bde (Col. Edler von Brosch) - IR 124 (3), 125 (3)
 - . 53rd Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/Dalmatia RS Bn, 1st Comp/SB 53
 - . (53 FA Bde was detached)
 - . 3rd CD (FML Edler von Kopecek)
 - . 17 Cav Bde (GM Edler von Kirsch) - DR 3, HR 8; UR 4, 7
 - . 3rd K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . Attached HQ of 25 FA Bde plus FAR 125 (the Div's own 3 K FA Bde was detached)
 - . 10th CD (FML von Bauer)
 - . 4 Cav Bde (GM von Horthy) - HR 9, 10, 13; UR 8; Lst HR 1
 - . 10th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . (10 K FA Bde was detached)
 - . 12th Reit Sch Div (GM Edler von Karapancsa)
 - . 25 Reit Sch Bde (Col. Bichlbauer) - RS Regts 2, 4, 5, 6
 - . 12th Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . 12 K FA Bde (Col. Freih. von Majneri)

Other units and HQ in 11th Army...

- . Foot - k.k. Lst Bn 171; Mtn Guide Comps 6 & 7; MG Sharpshooter Bn 5; three indep MG comps; SS Comp Lavarone-Levico; one comp each of the "Austrian Krieger Korps" and the "Deutschmeister Korps"
 - . Artillery - Mtn AR 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 15. 15 cm auto batties - 8th & 16th/Hvy AR 1, 1st & 4th/Hvy AR 2, 8th & 16th/Hvy AR 6; 24 cm can batty - 4th/Hvy AR 1; 15 cm auto how batties - 7th & 15th/Hvy AR 1, 3rd/Hvy AR 2, 11th/Hvy AR 3, 7th & 15th/Hvy AR 6, 7th/Hvy AR 7, 7th & 11th/Hvy AR 9, 11th/Hvy AR 10; 38 cm how batties - 1st/Hvy AR 1, 1st & 2nd/Hvy AR 6; 42 cm how batties - 10th/Hvy AR 3, 9th & 10th/Hvy AR 10; 24 cm mor batties - 11th/Hvy AR 1, 12th/Hvy AR 3; 30.5 cm mor batties - 13th & 14th/Hvy AR 1, 1st & 2nd/Hvy AR 2, 5th, 6th & 13th/Hvy AR 6, 5th & 6th/Hvy AR 7, 5th, 9th & 10th/Hvy AR 9, 13th/Hvy AR 10; TM batties - 2nd & 3rd/Hvy AR 2, 3rd/Hvy AR 4, 2nd/Hvy AR 5, 3rd & 4th/Hvy AR 7, 2nd/Hvy AR 9, 1st/Hvy AR 10, 2nd/Hvy AR 12, 2nd/Hvy AR 13, 4th/Hvy AR 14; four flak batties and platoons; eight fixed batties
 - . Air Comps - 8.D, 16.D, 21.D, 24.D, 31.D, 36.D, 45.D, 48.D, 66.D, 9.J, 14.J, 55.J, 60.J, 1.F, 15.F
 - . Technical troops - Sapper Bn 61; Sapper Comps 2 & 3/1, 3/5, 2 & 3/7, 2/8, 3/15, 2 & 3/22, 3/25, 3/26, 2/27, 2 & 3/28, 2/29, 3/30, 2 & 3/32, 3/33, 2/36, 2 & 3/37, 3/38, 2 & 3/39, 2/40, 2/45, 3/47, 2/49, 2 & 3/50, 2/51, 3/52, 2/53, 2/56, 2 & 3/57, 3/60

b) FM von Boroeric's Army Group

(C/Staff was GM Anton Ritter von Pitreich)

Directly under AG HQ were - Orient "Korps" (Bns IV/103, VI/BH 1, VI/BH 2, VIII/BH 3; Sturm Comp); Air (bomber) Comps 101.G, 102.G, 103.G, 104.G, 105.G; Balloon Comp 9; Sapper Comps 3/2, 2/6, 3/10, 2/19, 2/24

6th Army

Commander = GO Archduke Joseph

C/Staff = FML Freih. von Willerding

II Corps (GdI Rudolf Krauss; C/Staff = Col. Podhajsky)

- . Just 8th Cav Div (GM Edler von Dokonal)
 - . 15 Cav Bde (GM von Brandmayr) - DR 2, 14; UR 11, 12
 - . 8th K Sturm Half Regt; a combined mntd sqdn
 - . FA Bdes - 8 K (GM Baumann), 11 Hon K (Col. Beniczek), 9 (GM Alfred Edler von Filz; Bde was minus Hvy FAR 9 and Mtn Arty Bn 9)
 - . Attached 39 Hon Inf Bde (Col. von Kratochwil) - Hon IR 3 (3), 4 (3)

XXIV Corps (Ludwig Goiginger; C/Staff = Lt Col. Röder)

- . 31st ID (FML Lieb)
 - . 61 Bde (Col. von Kirschhofer) - IR 32 (3), 69 (3)
 - . 62 Bde (GM von Pacor) - IR 44 (3), BH IR 3 (3)
 - . 31st Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/HR 1, 1st Comp/SB 31
 - . FA Bdes - 31 (Col. Edler von Benesch), 35 (GM von Sostaric; Mtn Arty Bn was 35 detached)
- . 13th Sch Div (FML Kindl)
 - . 25 Sch Bde (GM Edler von Vest) - SchR 1 (3), 24 (3)
 - . 26 Sch Bde (GM Korzer) - SchR 14 (3), 25 (3)
 - . 13th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 13
 - . FA Bdes - 13 (Col. Ritter von Bogusz), 37 Hon (GM Seh); attached Hvy FAR 9
- . 17th ID (FML Ströher)
 - . 33 Bde (GM von Soos) - IR 39 (3), 139 (3)
 - . 34 Bde (Col. Ludvig) - IR 43 (3), 46 (3)
 - . 17th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/HR 5, 1st Comp/SB 17
 - . FA Bdes - 17 (Col. Edler von Svoboda), 41 Hon (Col. Capp)

HQ and units in Army reserve (actually the 35th, 41st and 51st Divs were in the AOK's reserves though stationed behind 6th Army)

- . XXII Corps HQ (FZM von Tamasy who was serving as Inspector of March Formations)
- . 11th Hon CD (GM Hegedüs, acting)
 - . 24 Hon Cav Bde (Col. von Virany) - Hon HR 2, 3
 - . Col. Heinlein's Group - Hon HR 5, 9

- . 11th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
- . (No artillery; 11 K FA Bde detached)
- . 35th ID (FML von Podhoranszky)
 - . 69 Bde (Col. Guha) - IR 62 (3), 64 (3)
 - . 70 Bde (GM Funk) - IR 51 (3), 63 (3)
 - . 35th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 35
 - . (35 FA Bde was detached)
- . 41st Hon ID (FML von Schamschula)
 - . 81 Hon Bde (Col. Balassa) - Hon IR 12 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 82 Hon Bde (GM Ritter von Sypniewski) - Hon IR 20 (3), 31 (3)
 - . 41st Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/HHR 4, 1st Comp/SB 41
 - . (41 Hon FA Bde detached)
- . 51st Hon ID (FML von Benke)
 - . 101 Hon Bde (GM von Letay) - Hon IR 301 (3), 302 (3)
 - . 102 Hon Bde (Col. Eölbey-Thyll) - Hon IR 300 (3), 305 (3)
 - . 51st Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/HHR 4, 1st Comp/SB 51
 - . (51 Hon FA Bde detached)

Other units in 6th Army...

- . Foot - High Mtn Comp 12; the Honved Bike Bn; Gendarme Streif Comp 15; one indep MG comp
- . Artillery - 15 cm auto can batties - 8th/Hvy AR 2, 8th & 16th/Hvy AR 3; 15 cm auto how batties - 7th, 11th & 15th/Hvy AR 2, 15th/Hvy AR 10; 38 cm how batties - 9th & 10th/Hvy AR 1; 30.5 cm mor batties - 5th, 6th, 9th, 10th & 14th/Hvy AR 2, 1st/Hvy AR 3; TM batties - 1st/Hvy AR 1, 1st/Hvy AR 2, 3rd/Hvy AR 10; seven flak platoons
- . Air units - Air Comps 2.D, 4.D, 26.D, 28.D, 38.D, 40.D, 52.D, 53.D, 59.D, 65.D, 67.D, 70.D, 30.J, 42.J, 56.J, 68.J, 72.J, 47.F, 57.F. Balloon Comps 4, 5, 7, 12, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25
- . Technical troops - Sapper Comps 2/4, 2 & 3/9, 2/10, 2 & 3/13, 2/14, 2 & 3/17, 2/18, 3/21, 4/22, 3/23, 3/24, 3/29, 2/31, 2 & 3/35, 3/36, 3/43, 3/49, 2/52, 3/53, 2 & 3/54, 3/56, 2/58

Army of the Isonzo

Commander = GO Freih. von Wurm

C/Staff = Col. Edler von Körner

XVI Corps (GdI Kralicek; C/Staff = Col. Graf)

- . 46th Sch Div (FML von Urbanski)
 - . 91 Sch Bde (Col. Marchesani) - SchR 31 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 92 Sch Bde (GM Edler von Kandler) - SchR 13 (3), 15 (3)
 - . 46th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 46
 - . (46 FA Bde was detached)
- . 201st Lst Inf Bde (Col. Freih. von Rast; Bde was serving on lines of communication) - k.k. Lst IR 1 (3), 2 (3); a zug from DR

- 4 (Sturm Half Bn of 201 Bde was detached)
- . 33rd ID (FML von Iwanski)
 - . 65 Bde (GM von Szivo) - IR 83 (3), 106 (3)
 - . 66 Bde (Col. von Magerl) - IR 12 (3), 19 (3)
 - . 33rd and 7th Sturm Bns; 3rd Sqdn/HR 4; 1st Comp/SB 33
 - . FA Bdes - 33 (GM von Scheucher), 7 (Col. von Kaufmann), 46 (Col. Klinger)
 - . 58th ID (FML Freih. von Zeidler)
 - . 115 Bde (GM Prey) - IR 96 (3), 135 (3)
 - . 116 Bde (Col. Edler von Hoffmann) - IR 1 (3); FJB 2, 11, 23
 - . 58th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 58
 - . FA Bdes - 58 (Col. Ritter von Hussarek), 51 Hon (Col. von Mattanovich)

IV Corps (GdK Fürst Schönburg-Hartenstein; C/Staff = Col. Hitzl)

- . 29th ID (FML Steiger)
 - . 57 Bde (GM Majewski) - IR 94 (2), 121 (3)
 - . 58 Bde (GM Novottny) - IR 92 (3), 137 (3)
 - . 29th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1st Comp/SB 29
 - . (29 FA Bde was detached)
- . 64th Hon ID (FML Seide)
 - . 127 Hon Bde (Col. Hajek) - k.u. Lst IR 6 (3), 19 (3)
 - . 128 Hon Bde (Col. Rubint) - k.u. Lst IR 1 (3), 3 (3); k.u. Lst Bn V/4
 - . 64th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/HR 1, 2nd Comp/SB 34
 - . FA Bdes - 64 Hon (GM Edler von Skotak), 57 (Col. Pengov); attached Hvy FAR 255
- . 70th Hon ID (GM von Berzoviczy)
 - . 207 Hon Bde (Col. Guilleaume) - Hon IR 313 (3), 315 (3)
 - . 208 Hon Bde (Col. von Biffi) - Hon IR 33 (3), 314 (3)
 - . 70th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/HHR 4, 2nd Comp/SB 26
 - . FA Bdes - 70 Hon (Col. Rhomberg), 29 (Col. Mazza); attached Mtn Arty Bn 34

VII Corps (GdI Freih. von Schariczer; C/Staff = Col. Panos)

- . 44th Sch Div (FML Schönauer)
 - . 87 Sch Bde (Col. von Janky) - SchR 2 (3), 21 (3)
 - . 88 Sch Bde (GM Kranz) - Mtn SchR 1 (3), 2 (3)
 - . 44th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/DR 10, 1st Comp/SB 44
 - . (44 FA Bde was detached)
- . 14th ID (FML von Szende)
 - . 27 Bde (Col. Graf Beck-Rzikowsky) - IR 71 (3), 72 (3)
 - . 28 Bde (Col. Pollak) - IR 48 (3), 76 (3)
 - . 14th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 14
 - . FA Bdes - 14 (GM Eugen Müller), 44 (GM Edler von Ellenberger)

- . 24th ID (FML Urbarz)
 - . 47 Bde (Col. Skoday) - IR 45 (3), 109 (3)
 - . 48 Bde (Col. Edler von Bischoff) - IR 10 (3), 77 (3)
 - . 24th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/RS Regt 3, 1st Comp/SB 24
 - . FA Bdes - 24 (Col. von Walluscheck), 48 (Col. Menitzky)
- . 9th CD (FML Freih. von Le Gay)
 - . 9 Cav Bde (GM Graf Lubiensky) - DR 1, 14, 13; UR 6
 - . 9th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . FA Bdes - 9 K (Col. Padiaur), 47 (Col. Bruno Veltzé)

(Unlike all other K FA Bdes, 9th Bde had a heavy FAR - Hvy FAR K 9)

XXIII Corps (GdI von Csicsrics; C/Staff = Col. Rychtrmoc)

- . 12th ID (FML von Puchalski)
 - . 23 Bde (Col. Archduke Karl Albrecht) - IR 56 (3), 100 (3)
 - . 24 Bde (Col. von Reindl) - IR 3 (3), 20 (3)
 - . 12th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1st Comp/SB 12
 - . 12 FA Bde (Col. von Haller)
- . 10th ID (FML Ritter von Gologorski)
 - . 19 Bde (GM von Weisz) - IR 15 (3), 55 (3)
 - . 20 Bde (GM von Einem) - IR 21 (3), 98 (3)
 - . 10th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/RS Regt 3, 1st Comp/SB 10
 - . FA Bdes - 10 (Col. von Czapp), 4 K (Col. Bruckner)
- . 1st CD (GM von Habermann)
 - . 7 Cav Bde (GM von Pollet) - HR 5, 12
 - . (Col. von Janky's 6 Cav Bde, with HR 7 and 14, had yet to arrive)
 - . 1st K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . 1 K FA Bde (Col. Ritter von Trezic)
 - . Attached - Sturm Half Bn of 201 Lst Bde

Independent 57th ID (FM Edler von Hrozny) in Army reserves

- . 113 Bde (GM Laxa) - IR 22 (3), 87 (3)
- . 114 Bde (Col. Edler von Hartmann) - IR 57 (3), 122 (3)
- . 57th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 57
- . (57 FA Bde was detached)

Other units and HQ in the Army of the Isonzo...

- . The Trieste Coast Defense Sector
- . Foot - k.k. Lst Bn 40; Bike Bns 1 and 2; eight coast defense comps; three vol Rif Bns (Marburg IV, Laibach VI, Trieste VII); Gendarme Streif Comps 5/1, 5/2, 5/3
- . Artillery - 10 cm can batty - 12th/Hvy AR 11; 15 cm auto can batties - 16th/Hvy AR 2, 4th/Hvy AR 3, 12th & 16th/Hvy AR 7, 15th/Hvy AR 8, 4th, 8th & 14th/Hvy AR 10; 24 cm can batty - 3rd/Hvy AR 1; 35 cm can batty - 12th/Hvy AR 6; 15 cm how batties - 9th, 10th & 11th/Hvy AR 11; 15 cm auto how batties - 3rd/Hvy AR 3, 3rd, 11th and

15th/Hvy AR 7, 7th/Hvy AR 10; 38 cm how batty - 2nd/Hvy AR 1; 42 cm how batties - 13th & 14th/Hvy AR 3, 3rd & 13th/Hvy AR 3, 13th/Hvy AR 8; 30.5 cm mor batties - 2nd, 9th, 10th & 13th/Hvy AR 7, 1st & 5th/Hvy AR 10; TM batties - 2nd & 4th/Hvy AR 1, 1st, 3rd & 4th/Hvy AR 3, 2nd/Hvy AR 4, 4th/Hvy AR 10; twenty six flak batties and platoons, nineteen naval cannon batties, twenty three naval cannon platoons. Air units - Air Comps 12.D, 19.D, 22.D, 32.D, 34.D, 35.D, 37.D, 44.D, 50.D, 58.D, 62.D, 69.D, 71.D, 41.J, 43.J, 51.J, 61.J, 5.F, 46.F, 49.F. Balloon Comps 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27. Technical troops - Sapper Bn 62; Sapper Comps 3/4, 2/5, 2/11, 3/12, 2/14, 3/19, 2 & 3/20, 2/23, 2/30, 3/38, 3/45, 3/51, 3/59

Russo-Romanian Theater of Operations

Army of the East

Commander = GdI Alfred Krauss

C/Staff = GM Belitska

XXV Corps (GdI Freih. von Hofmann; C/Staff = Col. Horvath)

- . 155th Hon ID (FML Ritter von Unschuld)
 - . 129 Hon Bde - Hon IR 309 (3), 310 (3)
 - . 130 Hon Bde - Hon IR 308 (3); k.u. Lst IR 20 (3)
 - . 155th Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/HR 1, 3rd Sqdn/HHR 4, 3rd Comp/SB 16
 - . 155 Hon FA Bde (minus Hon Hvy FAR 255)
- . 54th Sch Div (FML Edler von Severus)
 - . 107 Sch Bde - Sch Regts 19 (3), 35 (3)
 - . 108 Sch Bde - Sch Regts 29 (3), 30 (3)
 - . 54th Sturm Bn, 3rd Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 54
 - . 54 FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 54 and Mtn Arty Bn 54)
- . 30th ID (GM Phleps)
 - . 59 Bde - IR 18 (3), 97 (3)
 - . 60 Bde - FJB 1, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 27
 - . 30th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1st Comp/SB 30
 - . 30 FA Bde

XVII Corps (GdI von Fabini; C/Staff = Col. Ritter Fischer von Lednice)

- . 11th ID (FML Ritter von Metz)
 - . 21 Bde - IR 89 (3), 90 (3)
 - . 22 Bde - IR 58 (3), 115 (3)
 - . 11th Sturm Bn, 2nd Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1st Comp/SB 11
 - . 11 FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 11)
- . 7th CD (FML Graf Marenzi)
 - . Hoyos' Combined Bde - DR 10, 12; UR 2, 3; Inf Bn V/103
 - . 7th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn, 7 K FA Bde

XII Corps (FZM Braun; C/Staff = Col. Edler von Dragoni)

- . 5th Hon CD (GM von Mouillard)
 - . 25 Hon Cav Bde - Hon HR 1, 6, 7, 8
 - . 5th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn, 5 K Hon FA Bde
- . 15th ID (FML von Aust)
 - . 29 Bde - IR 66 (3), 34 (3)
 - . 30 Bde - IR 60 (3), 65 (3)
 - . 15th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 15
 - . (15 FA Bde was detached)
- . 59th ID (FML von Pichler)
 - . 117 Bde - IR 24 (3), FJB 3 (FJB 15 & 26 detached in the interior)
 - . 118 Bde - IR 41 (3), 103 (3)¹⁸⁸
 - . 59th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/HHR 10, 1st Comp/SB 59
 - . 59 FA Bde (minus Hvy FAR 59 and Mtn Arty Bn 59)
- . 34th ID (FML Edler von Luxardo)
 - . 67 Bde - IR 29 (3), 93 (3)
 - . 68 Bde - IR 33 (3); FJB 24
 - . 34th Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/HR 1, 1st Comp/SB 34
 - . 34 FA Bde (minus Mtn Arty Bn 34)

HQ and units in the Army's reserve

- . XI Corps HQ (FZM Edler von Habermann; HQ hadn't yet arrived)
- . 2nd CD (FML Freih. von Abele)
 - . 3 Cav Bde - HR 3, 6, 16; UR 5
 - . 2nd K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn, 2 K FA Bde
- . 145th Inf Bde (GM von Hranilovic) - Bns VI/48, V/76 (also assigned were Bns V/69 and V/103, both detached); Bde's Sturm Half Bn; three platoons of 3rd Sqdn/HHR 10; no artillery
- . Military Governor of Odessa - FML Edler von Böltz

Under other HQ in the East...

1st General Command (GdI von Hadfy; C/Staff = Lt Col. Bartha)

- . 37th Hon ID (FML Haber)
 - . 73 Hon Bde - Hon IR 13 (3), 18 (3)
 - . 74 Hon Bde - Hon IR 14 (3), 15 (3)
 - . 37th Sturm Bn, 5th Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 37
 - . (37 FA Bde was detached)
- . Independent IR # 204
- . Indep Honved Bns - I/311, I/316

4th General Command (FZM Heinrich Goiginger; C/Staff = Col. Glöckner)

188Although IR # 103 was allotted three bns, apparently I Bn (ex I/63) and III Bn (ex III/85) at this point still hadn't joined from their old parent regimental HQ.

- . 2nd ID (FML Ritter von Jemrich)
 - . 3 Bde - IR 110 (3); FJB 4 (FJB 29 detached in interior)
 - . 4 Bde - IR 40 (3), 95 (3)
 - . 2nd Sturm Bn, 8th Sqdn/RS Regt 3, 1st Comp/SB 2
 - . 2 FA Bde was detached
- . 43rd Sch Div (FML von Stöhr)
 - . 85 Sch Bde - Sch Regts 5 (3), 16 (3)
 - . 86 Sch Bde - Just Sch Regt 20 (3) (the 22nd Regt detached to Montenegro)
 - . 43rd Sturm Bn, 6th Sqdn/RS Regt 1, 1st Comp/SB 43
 - . (43 FA Bde was detached)
- . 49th Inf Bde (Col. Küttner) - IR 4 (3), 84 (3)
- . Indep 187th Lst Inf Bde (GM Edler von Mihanovic) - IR 203 (3), k.k. Lst IR 22 (3); Bde Sturm Half Bn (k.k. Lst Bns 24 & 153 also assigned, but detached to the interior)
- . 4th CD (FML Ritter von Berndt)
 - . 21 Cav Bde - DR 5, 9; UR 1, 13
 - . 4th K Sturm Half Regt, a combined mntd sqdn)
 - . (4 K FA Bde was detached)
- . Indep foot - SW Bns 1, 2, 6; k.k. Lst Bns 17, 38, 39, 41, 42, 75, 148, 159; one Streif platoon

Under Mackensen's German Army Group

- . 62nd ID (FML von Brunswik)
 - . 121 Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR 9 (3), 409 (3); k.k. Lst Bn 37
 - . 124 Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR 11 (3), 27 (3)
 - . 62nd Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/HR 11; no sappers
 - . Div's 62 FA Bde was detached; the 72 FA Bde was attached (minus Hvy FAR 72 and Mtn Arty Bn 72)
- . 143rd Inf Bde (GM Edler von Stika) - k.u.k. SW Bns 3, 4, 7; k.k. Lst Bns 23, 44, 150; one platoon of a sqdn from DR 4 (no Sturm troops)
- . 216th Hon Inf Bde (Col. von Paleta) - k.u. Lst IR 17 (3), 29 (3); Bde Sturm Half Bn; 2nd Sqdn/HR 1
- . Smaller indep units - SW (inf) Bns 5, 8; one indep MG comp; Sapper Comp 3/6

k.u.k. "General Government Poland" (GdI Liposcak; C/Staff = Col. Hausner)

- . 106th Lst ID (FML Kratky)
 - . 210 Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR 31 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 211 Lst Bde - k.k. Lst IR 6 (3), 25 (3)
 - . 106th Sturm Bn, Res Sqdn/UR 1, 2nd Comp/SB 16
 - . (106 FA Bde detached)
- . Smaller units - Streif Comps 12 to 23; 3rd Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 7

Balkan Theater of Operations

- a) XIX Corps (GdI Edler von Koennen-Horak; C/Staff = Col. Schneider)
- . 47th ID (FML Ritter von Weiss-Tihanyi)
 - . 93 Bde - Bn III/94; Border Jaeger Bn 1; k.k. Lst Bn 45; k.u. Lst Bns III/29, I/30, I/31
 - . 94 Bde - Bn III/BH IR 7; BH FJB 1 & 2; k.u. Lst Bns IV/4, II/32
 - . 47th Sturm Bn, one zug each from a sqdn of the Dalmatia RS Bn and from 1st Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11; 1st Comp/SB 47
 - . Guns were under "Artillery Command Albania" (the Div's 47 FA Bde was detached)
 - . Group I/XIX (FML Komma)
 - . Foot - Bn II/118; Border Jaeger Bns 2, 3, 4, 5; IV Bn/Sch Regt 33; k.k. Lst IR 23 (2); k.k Lst Bns I/37, 46, 158; k.u. Lst Bn I/9
 - . Also - A zug from a sqdn of DR 5; guns were under "Arty HQ of 220 Inf Bde"
 - . 220th Inf Bde (GM Edler von Lerch) - IR 88 (3); 220 Bde Sturm Half Bn (there was also an Arty HQ, detached as shown above)
 - . Albania Coast Defense Command (FML Haas)
 - . Corps units
 - . Foot - Bns III/SchR 33, II/SchR 34; BH Gendarme Bn; k.k. Lst Bns V/9, IV/16, V/33; k.u. Lst Bns VI & VII/8; Albanian volunteer units
 - . Horse - 2nd Sqdn/Lst Huss Regt 11
 - . Artillery - All of Mtn AR 5 & 13; 1st, 2nd, 4th, & 7th Can Batties plus 9th How Batty/Mtn AR 7; twenty fixed batteries (various calibers), four naval can batties, seven flak batties
 - . Air Comps # 6 and 64 (not specialized)
 - . Sapper Comps 2/5, 3/18, 2/33, 3/40, 2 & 3/41, 2 & 3/44, 2/47, 2 & 3/48, 2/55
- b. "Serbia General Government" (GO Freih. von Rhemen; C/Staff = Col. Kerchnawe)
- . Foot - One gendarme bn, Streif Regt "S", Vol Bn "Mitrovica"; one k.k. and fourteen k.u. Lst Eta Bns
 - . Horse - 6th Sqdn/DR 7, 7th Sqdn/Hon HR 3, 3rd Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11; a zug of 1st Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 12
 - . Artillery - Ten batteries of various calibers
 - . Sapper Comp 4/38
- c. "Montenegro General Government" (GM Graf Clam-Martinic; C/Staff = Lt Col. Sekulich; the HQ was under the commanding general of B.H.D.)

- . 89th Sch Bde (Col. Olbrich) - Sch Regt 33 (3); k.k. Lst IR 51 (3)
- . Col. Freih. von Hospodarz's Group - Bn VII/BH II, Bns I & III/SchR 34, k.k. Lst Bn II/37, k.u. Lst Bn VII/19
- . Indep Foot - Sch Regt 22 (3); k.u. Lst Bn IV/23; three k.k., five and a half k.u. and one BH Lst Eta Bns
- . Horse - Res Sqdn/HR 10; 3/4 of 1st Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11
- . Artillery - 15th (12 cm can) Batty/Hvy AR 11; four batties and five platoons of various calibers; two naval can batties, one naval can platoon; 1st TM Batty/Hvy AR 12; two flak batties

d. "Troops of the Commanding General in B.H.D." (GO Freih. von Sarkotic; C/Staff = Col. Appollonio)

- . 45th Sch Div (FML Wossala)
 - . (89 Bde detached in Montenegro, see above)
 - . 90 Sch Bde - Sch Regts 17 (3), 18 (3)
 - . 45th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/RS Regt 3, 1st Comp/SB 45
 - . 45 FA Bde (minus detached Hvy FAR 45)
- . Coast Command HQ - "North Dalmatia" (FML Freih. von Wucherer), "South Dalmatia" (GM Fürst Welkersheim), "Coast Artillery" (GM Günther), 5th Heavy Arty Bde HQ (Col. Illuscig)
- . Fortress Commands - Sarajevo (FML Haala), Trebinje (FML Kutzinigg), Mostar (FML Edler von Haam), Bileca (Col. von Vorner), Kalinovik (Col. Strain), Avtovac (Lt Col. Czadan-Bujdoso)
- . Indep foot units - Coast Defense Cops I to VII, IX to XI, XIII and XIV; indep MG platoons 1 to 18 and 20 to 70
- . Artillery - All of Heavy AR 5 & 12; 6th (21 cm mor) Batty/Hvy AR 3, 6th (30.5 cm mor) Batty/Hvy AR 10; twenty one coast defense batties; two naval batties; twelve flak batties
- . Sapper Comp 2/42

e) Attached to Scholz's German-Bulgarian Army Group

Border Jaeger Bn 6; 5th & 8th Can Batties plus 6th How Batty/Mtn AR 13; two flak batties; Sapper comps 2/25, 2/48

f) Pola Military Harbor and Fiume Sector (Admiral Fiedler; C/Staff = Col. Freih. von Bienerth; HQ were under Boroevic's Army Group)

- . 80th Hon Bde (Col. Kapustyak, at Fiume) - Hon IR 6 (3), 19 (3)
- . 4th Heavy Arty Bde HQ (FML Edler von Hlavacek; at Pola)
- . Indep foot - Bn IX/BH IR 2; k.k. Lst Bns 160, 161, 167; k.u. Lst Bn V/26 (at Fiume); fifteen coast defense comps, one indep MG comp
- . Artillery - All of Hvy AR 4 and 8; three more batties of various calibers; two naval can batties, one naval can platoon, twelve flak batties

In Turkey - Field How Bns 1 and 2; also three indep batties (one 10 cm can, one 15 cm how and one 24 cm mor)

Units under rear area HQ or civilian control

- a) The Etappen Group Commands
 - . "Belluno Command" - 5th (How) Batty of Hvy FAR 10; six k.k. and two k.u. Lst Eta Bns
 - . "Görz Command" - Two flak batties; Sapper Comps 3/11, 2/43, 3/46; four k.k. and five k.u. Lst Eta Bns
 - b) The Emperor's body guard - Bn V/IR 69
 - c) "Assistenz" troops (maintaining order)
 - . 7th ID (FML Edler von Baumgartner)
 - . 13 Bde - IR 37 (3), 38 (3)
 - . 14 Bde - IR 132 (3) only
 - . 4th Sqdn/HR 4, 1st Comp/SB 7
 - . (7th Sturm Bn and 7 FA Bde were detached)
 - . 21st Sch Div (FML Klein)
 - . 41 Sch Bde - Sch Regts 6 (3), 7 (3)
 - . 42 Sch Bde - Sch Regts 8 (3), 28 (3)
 - . 21st Sturm Bn, 4th Sqdn/DR 7, 1st Comp/SB 21
 - . (21 FA Bde detached)
 - . 25th ID (GM Edler von Wertz)
 - . (49 Bde detached to 4th General Command)
 - . 50 Bde - IR 128 (3); FJB 5, 6, 10
 - . 25th Sturm Bn, 1st Sqdn/DR 15, 1st Comp/SB 25
 - . (25 FA Bde was detached and split up)
 - . 39th Hon ID (FM von Breit)
 - . 77 Hon Bde - Hon IR 9 (3), 11 (3)
 - . 78 Hon Bde - Hon IR 10 (3), 16 (3)
 - . 1st Sqdn/HR 11, 1st Comp/SB 39
 - . (39th Sturm Bn and 39 Hon FA Bde were detached)
 - . 40th Hon ID (FML Edler von Nagy)
 - . 79th Hon Bde - Hon IR 29 (3), 30 (3)
 - . (80th Hon Bde detached to the Fiume Sector, see above)
 - . 5th Sqdn/HR 1; no sappers assigned
 - . (40th Sturm Bn and 40 Hon FA Bde were detached)
 - . Also - k.k. Lst IR 13 (3); FJB 15, 26 & 29; k.k. Lst Bns 24,
- 153

SUMMARY OF UNITS AVAILABLE IN THE SOUTHWESTERN THEATER

- . 10th Army - 108 bns, 1 foot half regt, 5 3/4 mounted sqdns; 1360 guns (1021 light, 247 medium, 22 heavy, 70 flak)

- . 11th Army - 274 bns, 28 foot half regts, 23 mounted sqdns; 2935 guns (2256 light, 527 medium, 46 heavy, 106 flak)
 - . 6th Army - 42 bns, 17 foot half regts, 5 mounted sqdns; 768 guns (556 light 132 medium, 10 heavy, 70 flak)
 - . Isonzo Army - 166 ½ bns, 19 foot half regts, 14 1/4 mounted sqdns; 1770 guns (1302 light, 336 medium, 16 heavy, 116 flak)
 - . AOK reserves - 52 bns, 8 ½ foot half regts, 5 mounted sqdns
- TOTAL = 642 ½ bns, 73 ½ foot half regts, 53 mounted sqdns; 6833 guns (5135 light, 1242 medium, 94 heavy, 362 flak)

8. The revival of Italy

a. Reconstruction of the Army

The Italian Army shrank in size by one half due to its defeat in fall 1917. Only the 1st Army (including III Corps), which held the front between the Stilfserjoch and the Brenta River, was still unscathed; it had about 400,000 men. The remnants of 3rd and 4th Armies - about 300,000 men - gathered in the Mt Grappa sector and on the Piave after suffering heavily under the enormous impact of the retreat. Their units were reduced in size, disorganized, and intermingled. They would have to rest and reorganize before they could again be considered reliable fighting formations. The 2nd Army and XII Corps had degenerated into a disorderly mass of about 300,000 men who'd fled to the rear without weapons and equipment, and then scattered over the entire peninsula. Under such conditions iron determination and very great energy were needed to restore the Army. The high command didn't hesitate to fully disclose to the government the wretched situation, and to point out the shocking shortage of all types of military gear. And the government, fully sharing the concerns of the high command, understood how to demand the necessary sacrifices of the nation and to rally the people for an enormous effort.¹⁸⁹

But the main task wasn't to replace the lost men and equipment, but to dispel the sense of disintegration that had taken hold of the Army and the despondency that had spread as a result of the defeat. Among the methods adopted to awaken the will to resist and to restore confidence in the country's leadership was a propaganda campaign directed verbally and in writing toward the enlisted men and younger officers. The propaganda of the opposing side was relentlessly resisted, and morale was bolstered in a variety of ways. Thus, for example, insurance policies were provided for the front-line troops, and support made available for needy families whose sons had been conscripted; such services were offered not by the local communities, but by the regimental commanders. These and other innovations ensured that close ties were maintained between the troops in the field and their families at home.

189Reggio esercito italiano, Commando supremo - "La battaglia del Piave" (Rome, 1920), pp. 11 ff. Dupont, "La battaglia del Piave" (Rome, 1929), pp. 40 ff.

The many fugitives who'd scattered throughout the Kingdom were apprehended by the Carabinieri and by cavalry; in the process the authorities also found many draft-dodgers who'd managed to avoid detection since the start of the war. All these men were offered pardon before they were imprisoned; the ones who remained recalcitrant were formed into labor detachments which were used to construct the defensive positions now being completed on a grand scale. About 60,000 laborers were sent to France, although this caused some discontent in Italy.¹⁹⁰ Special care was taken to keep agitators from exerting influence on the young men of the classes of 1899 and 1900 who now were being drafted.

Corps VI, XXV, XXVIII and XXX were gathered in the Lonigo area (between Verona and Vicenza) to form a new 2nd Army. Two of these corps (VI and XXV) were already sent at the end of November and start of December to the Mt Grappa-Mt Bertiaga front, which at the time was in grave danger. The II, XII and XIV Corps, which had been reduced to skeletons, were rebuilt south of the Po (near Borgo di S Donino) under the leadership of 5th Army HQ. This Army was largely armed with French rifles and artillery, and received the rest of their equipment in mid-February. The IV, VII and XXIV Corps had been dissolved, and were not re-formed. From personnel not needed by the existing units, March brigades were created in a camp at Castelfranco (northwest of Bologna). The many artillerists who still didn't have guns were sent to a large training camp near Mirandola (also in the Bologna area) where they received new pieces, mostly of French or English origin. Furthermore the entire artillery branch was re-organized.

In total, the re-building process involved

- . 50 infantry brigades with 104 regiments plus 47 independent battalions, 812 machine gun companies and 910 machine pistol sections,
- . 22 field artillery regiments with 188 batteries plus 50 mountain and 60 heavy field batteries,
- . 75 trench mortar sections, 91 siege batteries and 570 flame-thrower sections, and finally
- . 23 sapper battalions and various other technical units.¹⁹¹

This re-organization may be regarded as finished by the end of February, thus in less than four months. Completion of this gigantic project in relative quiet was due in large part to the presence of French and English troops. Italy's allies helped out with generous supplies of weapons, ammunition and military

¹⁹⁰Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie del Piave" (Milan, 1934) p. 52.

¹⁹¹Reggio esercito italiano, "La battaglia del Piave", pp. 12 ff.

equipment of all kinds. But the country's own industries, making an astounding effort, also turned out a large quantity of goods for the war. Only the production of airplanes lagged substantially below the projected level, due to various mistakes. On the other hand a very large number of trucks were finished, so that some of the originally horse-drawn batteries were now motorized. Several figures illustrate the steep rise in the production of artillery. After the collapse in November 1917 the Italian Army had 62 heavy, 1534 medium and 2390 light guns left, a total of 3986 pieces. On 15 April 1918 they already had 104 heavy, 2466 medium and 3301 light guns (for a total of 5871), of which 11.7% were of French and English origin.¹⁹² By 15 June the numbers swelled to 135 heavy, 2922 medium and 3237 light guns, altogether 6294 pieces. The latest increase was due almost entirely to Italy's own efforts, so that the percentage of foreign guns sank to 9.4%. To anticipate, we should note that by 24 October 1918 the total strength of the Italian artillery rose to around 7000 guns; thus within a year they had again reached their original level.¹⁹³

A new organization

In the area of organization, each division was assigned two brigades on a permanent basis, ending years in which the orders of battle were in constant flux. The number of Alpini units was reduced and they were re-allotted among the higher HQ. All foot troops were equipped with heavy automatic weapons on a larger scale than previously. Thus at the start of June each division of 12 battalions had more than 120 heavy and 72 light machine guns. In addition there were very many heavy stationary machine guns at the front, about 50 to 100 for each Army. Thus the Italians had more machine guns than did their opponents.¹⁹⁴ In general the Italians modeled their organization and tactical doctrine on that of France. In particular the Italian artillery general Segre adopted the idea that his gunners should immediately and energetically respond to their opponents' preparatory fire "with destructive and terrible counter-fire." To enhance understanding between the allies, French and Italian general staff officers were attached to each others' high-level

192This percentage doesn't include the artillery units belonging to the French and English formations stationed in Italy.

193Segato, "L'Italia nella guerra mondiale" (Milan, 1927), Vol. II, pp. 621 ff. Tosti, "La guerra Italo-Austriaca 1915-1918" (Milan, 1927), p. 270.

194Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918" (Milan, date not shown), p. 112.

HQ on a rotating basis.¹⁹⁵

The Italians laid particular emphasis on the formation and training of storm battalions. First every corps was assigned one of these battalions, and later a special "Assault Corps" was created. The intelligence service was also carefully rebuilt. This effort received a great boost from the voluntary cooperation of Czecho-Slovak deserters and prisoners of war. A so-called reconnaissance regiment was formed from such people, who were full of fanatic hatred against the Habsburg Monarchy. These traitors tried to facilitate fraternization by shouting over the battle-lines; together with like-minded individuals still in the Aus-Hung. camp they did everything possible to determine all the plans of the k.u.k. command and to pass this information to the Italians.¹⁹⁶ From other Czech prisoners and deserters a Czecho-Slovak Division was created under Italian sponsorship. They were ready to fight by 15 June, although they weren't employed in the battle. Finally, in May the Italians started to send their agents in night-time plane flights to land in the interior of the Monarchy.

The defensive network

Besides rebuilding the Army, the Italian leaders were very active in constructing a solid fortified system along the front and a whole network of technically strengthened positions in the adjacent rear areas. Because there was little room for defense in depth in the mountain sector, even a relatively limited Austrian breakthrough there would be very dangerous. The high command realized that a retreat of just a few kilometers between the Astico and the Piave would demolish the front not only in the mountains but also along the Piave, because the pursuers would be able to cut the communications of a large part of the Italian Army. In the Piave sector, on the other hand, the plains provided room for defense in depth. An Austrian thrust over the Piave wouldn't necessarily have an immediate impact on the mountain front.

Based on these considerations, the Italian Chief of Staff General Diaz decided that the defense of the mountain front should be conducted for as long as possible in the forward zone, while more elastic tactics could be used on the Piave. His views were reflected in guidelines issued by the high command which in turn governed the construction of the entire defensive system and technical installations. It's noteworthy that the pre-war Chief

195French Official History, Vol. VI, Text, p. 120.

196Pettorelli-Lalatta, "I.T.O." (Milan, 1931)

of Staff General Pollio had already discussed in 1911 the importance of having entrenchments on the Piave to supplement the strategic system of fortresses on the border and on the Tagliamento. In his opinion the crossing points over the Piave into the plains should have been guarded by extensive bridgeheads, and a chain of trenches built around the entire areas of the Belluno and Feltre basins. But General Cadorna, who at the time was the commander-designate for 2nd Army, objected to Pollio's plan. He felt that if the troops were forced to retreat from Friauli they would then be obliged to seek shelter behind the Piave river barrier and therefore the fortifications should be built on the western rather than the eastern bank; furthermore the Montello should be built up as a "central strong point", and the Grappa massif should also be fortified. Cadorna's concept lay behind the measures that in fact were adopted during the earlier years of the war.¹⁹⁷ Already during the Aus-Hung. offensive from Tyrol in 1916 Cadorna had some works built on Mt Grappa and plans drawn up for a fortified camp around Treviso. The only project undertaken on the Montello was the construction of positions for batteries so that powerful aartillery groups could deploy facing northwest as well as southeast to dominate the Piave and its crossing points.

This initial construction was very substantially advanced and extended during the winter of 1917-18. A large complex of fortifications, complete with artillery that could fire in many directions, was built on the summit of the Montello (Collesel Val d'Acqua, Point 369). It was supplemented by artillery groups on the flanks. In similar fashion the summit of the Grappa became a strong point. Here artillery were emplaced in bomb-proof caves which were connected underground. Long-range batteries were deployed in protected positions on Mt Tomba, on the mountains by Onigo and especially in the vicinity of Mt Sulder. The forested zone on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau concealed several parallel lines of trenches that had been built close to one another. In the Grappa area the lower summits on the slope had been used to create similar second and third fall-back positions. There were two large defensive systems in the plains. The first zone, about 4 to 5 km deep, consisted of field works along the Piave. It was strengthened by numerous barriers and hidden machine gun nests. Here villages and groups of houses had been built up as a chain of strong points. The second zone consisted of less developed installations that had been built around Treviso and along the Mèolo, Vallio and Sile streams. In this area, which had been turned into a loose net of connected lines, the majority of the reserves were to be stationed, ready to counterattack. Positions

¹⁹⁷Segato, Vol. II, pp. 624 ff.

laying still further to the rear would be used to cover a retreat if it became necessary.¹⁹⁸

b. Objectives of the leadership and deployment of the forces

At the start of 1918 the Italian high command deduced from several indicators, especially from confirmed reports that German divisions were leaving Venetia by train, that there was no need to fear that their opponents would resume the offensive any time soon. Concerns which had still been expressed at Christmas time were thus finally laid to rest, and the high command now revoked all orders which had been issued for a possible retreat to the Mincio. The "Battle of the Three Mountains" - which was what the Italians called the operation they undertook at the end of January on the eastern part of the Sieben Gemeinde plateau - seemed to be a promising sign of recovery. Self-confidence was returning. At the start of February the commander of the 10th French Army, General Fayolle, submitted to General Diaz a proposal for an attack to be directed toward Rovereto, Levico and Primolano; it was to involve the French and English troops stationed in Italy along with a roughly equal number of Italian divisions. Fayolle's suggestion bore a noteworthy resemblance to FM Conrad's estimates, from the other side, of his opponents' capabilities and intentions. The French general pointed out that an offensive over the Piave to recover Friuli was precluded not by any tactical difficulties (which could be overcome), but by the overwhelming danger that would threaten the lengthening northern flank of any advance in the plains as long as the mountain positions remained in Austrian hands. Therefore the thrust would have to be to the north, over the Sieben Gemeinde plateau in the general direction of Trent.¹⁹⁹

The Italian high command agreed with this basic concept, at least regarding the location and objective of the offensive. But they made a major change to the plan, above all to place leadership of the operation in Italian hands. Thus on 1 March the HQ of the "Plateau Command", which had been subordinate to 1st Army, were replaced by a new Army HQ (the 6th). Several days earlier the left wing of 1st Army plus III Corps - that is, the sector of the front between the Stilfserjoch and Lake Garda - had been reinforced and placed under the new 7th Army HQ. General Diaz wanted to have 6th Army deliver the principal assault on the

198Zoli, "La battaglia del Piave" (Rome, 1923), pp. 83 ff.

199French official history, Vol. VI, Text, pp. 124 ff.

plateau with two Italian, one French and one English corps in the first line. Only subsidiary attacks would be launched in other parts of the mountain front.

But these plans never came to fruition because of the French high command, where concerns were increasing about the impending German offensive on the Western front. They preferred to have French and British troops recalled from Italy to France.

Nevertheless General Diaz, in cooperation with the generals of his allies, was continuing to prepare for an attack when an English division was suddenly recalled at the start of March; on 10 March General Fayolle took a train for France, followed several days later by General Plumer, who'd been commanding the English units stationed in Italy. On the other hand, in mid-March the French XII Corps took over the Asiago sector and the British XIV Corps entered the battle lines on their left.

Meanwhile the Italians' 2nd Army HQ, with VIII and XXVII Corps, were inserted into the front between 4th and 3rd Armies; they relieved the five French and English divisions which had been holding Mt Tomba, the area near Cornuda and the Montello. These allied divisions in turn were deployed behind 6th Army (partly in the Verona area), whence they could be quickly brought forward if needed. Then toward the end of March they were recalled to the Western front. Furthermore, in April the II Italian Corps, which had been completely disrupted in fall 1917, were sent to France where they entered the fighting in the Argonne Forest²⁰⁰ with 3 and 8 ID; this was proof that the Italian Army had fully recovered from the effects of the defeat. To replace the units which had gone to France, the main body of 5th Army moved nearer to the front - Corps XII to the heights by Custoza [Custoza], XXII to Vicenza, XXV and XXVI to the area around Padua, and finally 4 CD to Montagnana.

The transfer of eight divisions to the French front was caused by the powerful German offensive in March. This event caused the Italian high command to desist from their plans for an attack, and to become very watchful for the assault which the Aus-Hung. Army was probably preparing. But they were still determined to act vigorously.

The plans described above were developed further. When the time came, the great offensive would begin with the capture of the massifs of Mounts Meletta and Lisser, as well as the capture of the edge of the heights along the Sugana valley. Thus the Italians would first sever their opponents' lines of

200 Oddone, "Storia della guerra d'Italia 1915-1918" (Brescia, 1926), p. 414.

communication running from the Trent area into the Feltre-Belluno basin, separating the k.u.k. forces on the mountain front from those stationed in the plains. For the principal assault over the plateau, in the first line there would be eight divisions (including three English and two French); ten divisions would follow them in the next wave. There would be a secondary assault in the Grappa mountains. Fourteen days would be needed for the preparations.

The inter-allied agreement about the command structure gave General Foch control on 2 May over the Italian Army in addition to the forces on the Western front. Thereupon he demanded that General Diaz should now implement the planned offensive. But the Italian high command weren't ready to strike, since the operation would require the participation of a large part of 5th Army which they wanted to hold back as a strategic reserve. Nevertheless Diaz reported that if possible his attack would take place simultaneously with the thrust which Marshal Foch still wanted to unleash on the Western front in May. At the end of that month the Germans once more broke open a dangerous breach in the Franco-English front in Champagne, thus upsetting all the plans of the enemy coalition.

In these days the Italians received definite intelligence and reports (including from Czech deserters) that an Aus-Hung. offensive over the Piave was imminent. The armies stationed on the mountain front also reported that large forces were assembling in Tyrol and would probably attack soon. The high command determined that a full-scale assault over the Piave was likely. On 28 May they ordered that their own planned offensive over the Sieben Gemeinde plateau should be postponed. They informed General Foch, who understood the reasons behind the decision; however, he insisted that the Italian armies should still be ready to attack when the time was ripe.

On 1 June General Diaz summoned his army commanders to a meeting at his HQ in Abano; he informed them that the Entente's defeats on the Western front were largely due to the fact that the French and English reserves hadn't been deployed in sufficient depth. While preparing for the anticipated Austrian offensive, the army commanders were instructed to take care to avoid this mistake. They were to hold some forces back and not commit the reserves prematurely; reinforcements shouldn't be requested until absolutely necessary. Some of the artillery should also be deployed behind the second or even the third line so that during the fighting they could respond to changes in the situation.

The high command ordered the strategic reserves to deploy based on this principle. Corps from 5th Army were sent behind 3rd Army - XXV and XXVI to the Treviso-Mestre area and XXII to Castelfranco and Marostica. XII Corps stayed near Custoza. XXX Corps of 4th Army moved to the area southwest of Montebelluna behind the Montello army, for which it would provide a reserve. Many railroad trains, with 1800 boxcars, were held ready to quickly move the units. To deceive Austrian intelligence, on 1 June the 5th and 2nd Armies were given new numbers (9 and 8, respectively). Further orders assigned twelve bicycle battalions and the newly-rebuilt 23 ID to 3rd Army, and created a new Assault Corps. The latter consisted of nine storm battalions and three mountain batteries at Mestrino plus the Czecho-Slovakian Division stationed at Orgiano. This corps was placed under 9th Army.

Troop movements based on these final orders were completed on 7 June. Thus on 15 June the order of battle of the defending armies was as follows.

Commander = King Victor Emanuel III
 Chief of Staff = G.Lt Diaz

- . 3rd Army (G.Lt duca d'Aosta) with 8 divs (7 inf, 1 cav), 12 bike bns, 1 indep regt. XXIII Corps (Marine Regt; 4 and 61 ID; twelve bicycle bns), XXVI Corps (25 & 53 ID), XI Corps (45, 31 & 23 ID), 2 CD
 - . 8th Army (G.Lt Pennella) with 6 inf divs. VIII Corps (48 & 58 ID), XXVII Corps (51 & 66 ID), XX Corps (47 & 50 ID)
 - . 4th Army (G.Lt Giardino) with 8 inf divs. I Corps (70 & 24 ID), XVIII Corps (1 & 56 ID), VI Corps (59 & 15 ID), IX Corps (17 & 18 ID)
 - . 6th Army (G.Lt Montuori) with 10 inf divs. XX Corps (2 & 10 ID), XIII Corps (28 & 14 ID), XII French Corps (23 & 24 ID), XIV British Corps (23, 48 & 7 ID); 52 ID (with 3rd Bersaglieri Regt attached)
 - . 1st Army (G.Lt Conte Pecori-Giraldi) with 9 inf divs. X Corps (12, 9 & 32 ID), V Corps (69, 55 & 29 ID), XXIX Corps (34, 26 & 54 ID)
 - . 7th Army (G.Lt Tassoni) with 6 inf divs. XIV Corps (20, 22, 6 and 21 ID), III Corps (5 & 75 ID)
 - . 9th Army (G.Lt Morrone) with 11 divs (10 inf, 1 cav). XXV Corps (7 & 33 ID), XXVI Corps (11 & 13 ID), XXII Corps (57 & 60 ID), Assault Corps (Assault & Czecho-Slovak Divs), XII Corps (27 & 37 ID), 4 CD
 - . Directly under the high command - 1 & 3 CD
- TOTAL STRENGTH = 725 bns, about 100 sqdns, 7550 guns (3486 light,

3540 heavy, 524 flak)

In addition to the ten divisions of the strategic reserve (9th Army), the high command controlled eight more divisions which they'd assigned to various armies, but which couldn't be committed to action without their permission.²⁰¹

Thus the Italian high command had available a total of 56 infantry divisions in upper Italy (50 Italian, 3 English, 2 French and 1 Czecho-Slovakian), plus 4 cavalry divisions. The 7550 guns included about 700 pieces belonging to English and French batteries.²⁰² The enemy's weaponry also included about 2400 trench mortars. The air units had available more than 390 Italian, 76 British and 20 French planes.²⁰³

9. The last days before the offensive

a. Orders for the attack

The bad weather which started on 11 June covered all troop movements with a covering shield. The enemy's disruptive fire, hitherto quite substantial, died down. Therefore the attacking divisions took up their assigned starting points without any noteworthy interference from the Italians. Also Boroevic's Army Group, contrary to expectations, moved the necessary shipping and bridging equipment to the planned crossing points on the Piave in a relatively smooth process.

Army Group Boroevic

Meanwhile the guidelines for carrying out the great operation were also being finalized. On 5 June FM Boroevic ordered that the operation must "break out like a storm [on 15 June], and bring us to the lower Adige in an unbroken advance that will continue by day and night." First the Isonzo Army would break out with their main force in the direction Oderzo-Treviso, advancing between the sea and the line Susegana-Arcade-Postioma-

201 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Here there was an omission in the text.

In the original the paragraph ends with a sentence stating that "These divisions are noted in Beilage 15." However, Beilage 15 as published does not show which of the divisions were the eight units controlled by the Italian high command.

202 Dupont, p. 51

203 Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 68

Istrana-Piombino-Camposampiero while standing guard toward Venice. 6th Army were instructed to suppress the enemy artillery stationed on the Montello and farther south, and to push their strong southern wing past the Montello. The rest of the Army should join the advance as the enemy abandoned their front. While the advance developed, 6th Army's boundary on the left would be the northern end of the Isonzo Army's sector, and on the right the a line running from Valdobbiadene through the town of Pagnano (west of Asolo) to Rossano (southeast of Bassano). Behind this Army were stationed the 9th, 35th, 41st and 51st Divisions (all without artillery) of the AOK's reserves.

Army HQ also gave their two armies a unified plan for the artillery preparation, in which - based on the example of the Germans' recent attack along the Chemin des Dames ridge - poison gas shells would play a major role. Between 2:50 and 4:00 AM all the identified and suspected points where enemy artillery was deployed would be gassed, along with the places where it was sure the reserves were assembled, and the command and observation posts. From 4:00 to 5:00 AM the areas to be assaulted would be softened up, while gas shells rained down on any newly-deployed batteries as well as the enemy anti-aircraft guns. From 5:00 to 6:00 AM gas would be used once more against all artillery known to still be manned, and against certain key points of the defenses. From 6:00 to 7:30 AM conventional shells would be expended to soften up the area where the infantry would advance, culminating in the creation of a destructive wall of fire. At the same time, sudden bursts of gas rounds would strike the area to once more pin down the enemy's batteries, command centers and observation points. Around 7:30 AM the first wave of infantry would penetrate the Italian position on the western bank of the Piave.

HQ of the **Isonzo Army** wished if possible to reach the area around Treviso (bordered by the towns of Postioma, Paese, Quinto de Treviso, Preganziol and Casale) in one bound. For this purpose Corps VII, IV and XVI would attack massed closely together. Each of them deployed two divisions in the front line; the other forces were held back in reserve. After crossing the Piave the attacking group would move to the line Maserada - Villanova - Al Bosco; then each corps, without regard for their neighbors and without waiting for the artillery to come up, should thrust forward as quickly and deeply as possible into the zone where the Italian guns were stationed.

The spearhead of the phalanx directed toward Treviso was IV Corps (64 and 70 Hon ID, 29 ID); they would fight their way through the

part of the Italian second position which jutted forward between Breda di Piave and Pero, making it impossible for their opponents to defend the Treviso bridgehead. To their right was the XVI Corps (33 and 58 ID, 46 Sch Div, k.k. Lst IR 2); this force would advance with their left wing (58 ID) through Vascon, Lancenigo and Ponzano Veneto to Paese, rolling up the part of the Italian second position which faced to the north. 33 ID, the right wing of XVI Corps, would thrust through Maserada and Merlengo, while parts shifted toward Spresiano and Povegliano to support XXIV Corps. VII Corps (14 and 24 ID, 9 CD, 44 Sch Div) were to attack to the left of IV Corps; their objectives were the towns of Casier and Lughignano, our possession of which would prevent the Italians from making a stand on the Sile. XXIII Corps (12 and 10 ID, 1 CD) were assigned a secondary role. They'd divert the enemy with an energetic thrust by the main body along the S Dona - Mèolo - Mestre railroad, preventing them from sending units north to help their comrades farther up the Piave. The Corps' southern wing would capture the Italian bridgehead at Bressanin and open the shipping routes which led through the lagoons toward Venice. 57 ID were in the Army's reserve.

In **6th Army**, which now had just two corps, the XXIV Corps made up the attacking group. Its three divisions (17, 13 and 31) would cross the Piave on a front between Nervesa and Falzè; if possible they'd take the entire Montello on the first day of the offensive and push advance guards forward to the Montebelluna-Treviso railroad. If they didn't get this far, they were to at least reach the deployment area of the enemy artillery and occupy the line S Margherita - Collesel Val d'Acqua Heights (# 369) - Giavera with access to the Susegana bridges. Parts of 17 ID on the left would pivot south toward Arcade and Povegliano, so that in conjunction with XVI Corps they could cut off the enemy units stationed by the Susegana bridges. II Corps (consisting of just 8 CD) were instructed to just hold their positions at first, while carrying out feint attacks and supporting the advance of XXIV Corps with artillery fire. Archduke Joseph held back 11 Hon CD as his own reserve.

Army Group Conrad

FM Conrad, the leader of the Tyrol army group, had kept both his Army commanders informed of the unfolding plans of attack of the AOK. As we have already mentioned, Conrad was firmly convinced that on the entire Southwestern front the sector between the Adige and the Piave was of the most decisive importance.

Therefore he demanded reinforcements for the Army stationed here (the 11th), so that it could either thwart an enemy assault or be

ready for an offensive of its own. Conrad instructed the Army to make preparations for the second eventuality.

Thus on 9 March the HQ of **11th Army** had asked their corps commanders "to report in detail what they would be able to achieve in a large-scale offensive action during the spring." Although, as the order stated, it wasn't possible at this time to know if the Army would receive major reinforcements for an assault with wide-ranging goals, the generals must nevertheless be ready to advance their positions on both sides of the Brenta forward in the direction of Bassano; this operation could lay the foundation for a larger effort in the future. The end of March would be the earliest point at which this "major improvement of the positions" might be attempted. The purpose would be to cut off the Grappa massif. I Corps would start by clearing the enemy out of the arc in the front which bulged ahead toward Mt Pertica, capturing Mt Solarolo, and gaining as much ground as possible past the Col dell'Orso toward the southwest. Immediately afterwards XXVI Corps' western wing would reach the line Col Moschin - Mt Asolone; then their main body, massed tightly together, could thrust along the axis Mt Asolone - Mt Coston into the Colli Vecchi - Mt Meda area. From here parts of the Corps could pivot toward Mt Raniero, which would simultaneously be assaulted from the north.

Thus the attack east of the Brenta, in which "the available artillery were to be carefully employed to the utmost limits of their capability", was to be carried out in three phases. During the third phase, the main attack would commence west of the Brenta. Here the minimum objective was the line Col d'Astiago - Montagna Nuova - Cm. Ecker - Mt Sprung - Mt Kaberlaba. If possible, however, the advance should continue to the line Mt Campolongo - Mt Bertiaga - Mt Cimone - Mt Kaberlaba.

11th Army HQ reckoned that for this "major improvement of the positions" they'd need about nine divisions west of the Brenta and seven more east of the river. Army Group HQ approved the general outline of the plan and on 12 March passed it ahead to the high command as an attachment to Conrad's own concepts. As noted earlier, eleven days later the Group HQ at Bozen received the order to attack from the area between Asiago and the Piave. At the same time the AOK declared "they agreed with the way in which the planned offensive was to be implemented."

And so the decision had been made; as the HQ at Bozen and Levico noted correctly, it was consistent with the outlines they had submitted. On 1 April FM Conrad released basic instructions to

his subordinates, sending a copy along with further suggestions to Baden; at this point the AOK raised several objections, especially to the concept of making the primary effort in the area west of the Brenta. As described earlier, this topic was discussed by Conrad in an audience with the Emperor at Baden. There was another meeting on 20 April, when GM Waldstätten came to Bozen; also in attendance were the Chief of Staff of 11th Army (GM von Sündermann) and the Army's Chief of Artillery (Col. Freih. von Janecka), both of whom spoke in favor of giving priority to the assault west of the Brenta. Only after this meeting were the orders of Army Group HQ finally confirmed by the high command as binding.

This delay had no negative consequences, since during the interval the 11th Army had continued to develop plans based on the original guidelines of 9 March. Thus they were able to issue new, more detailed orders on 26 April (slightly modified on 17 May). At this point the Army commander GO Graf Scheuchenstuel set the objectives for the assault east of the Brenta. Now the attacks by I Corps (60 and 55 ID) and XXVI Corps (27, 32 and 4 ID) were to begin simultaneously. XV Corps (48 ID, 20 Hon ID and 50 ID) of the neighboring army, cooperating with I Corps, would advance their right wing on the Mt Spinuccia ridge while the main body captured Mt Tomba.

There were substantial alterations to the deployment west of the Brenta. Here, where the decisive breakthrough was now expected, XIII Corps were inserted between III and VI Corps to lead the powerful main striking force (38 and 42 Hon ID, which were already at the front near Asiago, plus 74 Hon ID, 5 and 16 ID). III Corps commanded 6, 28 and 52 ID plus 6 CD. VI Corps (18 ID and 26 Sch Div) would also receive the Edelweiss Division and, if necessary, a fourth unit. The Army reserves were 36 ID and 3 and 10 CD. 53 ID, still arriving at Fonzaso after marching on foot, were at the disposal of the Army Group HQ.

11th Army HQ now assigned missions to the individual battle groups based on the goals set by the higher HQ. XIII Corps, the cutting edge of the attacking phalanx, would thrust past Pennar, Mt Sprung, Mt Cimone and Mt Corno; farther west other units would advance past Mga. Fassa to Mt Kaberlaba, while east of the main assault troops would attack from Mt Sisemol past the chapel at Point 1094 along the road toward Mt Mosca. The order stated that "in any event we must strive to reach the southern edge of the woods during the first day of the attack." The left wing of III Corps should advance south energetically past Buco di Cesuna and Mt Lemerle, and over Mt Magnaboschi to the edge of the woods;

then if possible they'd take the last enemy line (Mt Pau - Mt Faraoro) in one bound. VI Corps were to first secure Mt di Val Bella and the Col del Rosso, then deliver their main thrust from Mt di Val Bella over the Cm. Ecker to Mt Bertiaga. The eastern attacking group of this Corps were instructed to meanwhile advance over Mt Melago; later they'd push past the Mtg. Nuova to take Mt Malcoba and pivot toward Col d'Astiago. But the Corps' most important task would be to move their western wing toward Mt Bertiaga, where they could most quickly reach the southern edge of the woods. 11th Army HQ recognized that after the eastern group of VI Corps reached Mt Melago they would encounter difficult conditions and perhaps could be held back somewhat. In general the orders to the Army were noticeably confident that after they reached the edge of the heights they could thrust without pausing into the plains, directing their main effort toward Vicenza.

Instructions for the artillery prescribed the general tasks to be fulfilled by the batteries. The manner in which the guns were actually deployed was left to the discretion of the corps commanders. But the latter were to ensure that the long-range batteries would be placed so that they would be in range of the target sectors of neighboring corps. Field artillery brigades were to be kept together as much as possible rather than intermingled. The mountain artillery battalions from the individual brigades, whose batteries were to accompany the attacking infantry, were placed under the infantry commanders.

FM Conrad's Army Group HQ had issued operational instructions to 10th Army on 1 April, but had to modify the guidelines based on the orders issued by the AOK on 20 April. The original plan for a reinforced group to mount a diversionary assault on both sides of the Adige valley was canceled because there weren't enough divisions available to carry it out. 10th Army received additional units only for the operation in the Tonale sector.

FM Freih. von Krobatin, the Army commander, therefore restricted the mission of XXI Corps in the Adige valley. They were only to harass and pin down the enemy with small-scale thrusts. The Edelweiss Corps would carry out similar tasks, while their artillery provided powerful support for the western wing of 11th Army. XX Corps were also supposed to carry out various diversionary maneuvers. Archduke Peter Ferdinand's group, on the other hand, had a major responsibility; they were to initiate "Operation Avalanche" over the Tonale Pass several days before the start of the main offensive. For this purpose the commander of 1 ID, FML Metzger, was also put in charge of all the troops in

Area II; along with his own Division, these included 22 Sch Div plus GM Ellison's Brigade; the latter would fight as a third brigade of 1 ID and was made up of combat troops from Area II plus FJB 21 and BH FJB 3. Among the goals assigned to FML Metzger by 10th Army HQ, he was told that "To win a complete success, after breaking through at Tonale Pass the 1 ID must reach Edolo in one bound, while 22 Sch Div - following close behind - reaches the Adda valley and Tirano."

The role of the air units

The air units would play an important role in the upcoming offensive. For their operations, the sector behind the enemy front was divided between the two Army Groups along a line running from Quero through Cittadella and Orgiano to Legnago. The lagoons by Venice were the area of responsibility of the naval airmen. Boroevic's Army Group HQ told their two armies to plan the long-distance reconnaissance and ground support missions of their air companies. The bomber units were placed directly under Boroevic's HQ. Before daybreak on 15 June they were supposed to bomb the enemy's main air fields at Trevignano (5 km south of Montebelluna) and Marcon (10 km northeast of Mestre). Around 7:30 AM they would help the infantry of the Isonzo Army penetrate the enemy positions between the towns of Cadelu and Ponte di Piave. Finally, in the evening of 15 June these units were also supposed to bomb the Italian high command's HQ at Abano Bagni (8 km southwest of Padua), and on the morning of the next day they'd strike at Mogliano, the HQ of 3rd Italian Army.

Conrad's Army Group HQ would support the operation at Tonale Pass with 19 reconnaissance and 15 fighter planes. For the attack by 11th Army on 15 June they'd commit (not counting XV Corps) 62 planes to support the artillery and infantry, 10 for long-distance reconnaissance, and 40 fighters. In total, on 15 June the two Army Groups would employ around 280 planes.

The Aus-Hung. commanders had an almost completely accurate picture of the dispositions of the Italian, English and French units. Without exception, they'd identified all the enemy divisions stationed at the front; they also had rather exact knowledge of the deployment of their opponents' strategic reserves. The intelligence estimates were inaccurate in only two details -

- . they showed that the Italian XXIV Corps were stationed between Mogliano and Mestre, whereas this was the location of XXV Corps, and
- . they located the XXV Corps by Padua and Lonigo, where in fact

the Assault Corps were stationed.

The Italian Army, plus the French and English reinforcements, had a total of 725 battalions, about 100 squadrons, 7550 guns and 524 planes. This force was attacked by the Aus-Hung. Southwestern front with 642 ½ battalions, about 8700 MG, 73 ½ half regiments of cavalry, 53 squadrons, 6833 guns and 280 airplanes.

b. The battle at the Tonale Pass

Originally the operation over the Tonale Pass was intended to have wide-ranging goals, but during the preparations its importance shrank because of many unfavorable circumstances until it was to be just a limited thrust. The first problem was that the planned commitment of a third division had to be canceled. Then the hoped-for reinforcement of the Stilfserjoch sector (Area I) with an infantry brigade was also scrapped, so this sector wouldn't be able to support the Tonale assault with a secondary thrust as had been intended. Finally the number of trench mortars and heavy guns available for the Tonale sector was also substantially scaled back.

The planning

The commander of 1 ID, FML Metzger, was named leader of the operation. He intended to facilitate the main assault on the Tonale Pass itself by first capturing the border crest (Castellaccio - P. del Lagoscuro - Pisgana) farther south. But, as we have already related, the Italians struck first in this area, on 25 May. Instead of improving their jumping-off points, the troops here found themselves in a much more unfavorable situation due to the loss of the C. Presena and the Monticello ridge. This unexpected setback had considerable ramifications. FM Conrad's Army Group HQ sent a wire to the commander of 10th Army: "The misfortune near the Tonale Pass has not only greatly marred the prospects for our own actions, but also given the enemy - emboldened by their success - an opportunity to themselves attack on a larger scale. Therefore I order that, in addition to FML Metzger's original assignment, he should also be responsible for checking and decisively defeating any eventual enemy offensive." In this order the Field Marshal also stated that "we should open the general attack at the Tonale Pass with all the units assigned to Operation Avalanche even if it's not possible to first dislodge the enemy troops who've now penetrated our lines." At the same time he instructed that the entire 22 Sch Div should be placed under FML Metzger's authority. The

liaison officer sent by the high command to 10th Army HQ reported, "Whether it will now be possible to carry out Operation Avalanche as planned is dependent on the enemy's counter moves. If, as seems rather probable, the Italians bring up stronger forces here, heavy and prolonged fighting will develop [at the Tonale Pass]. But then [Metzger's] group will have fulfilled at least part of their task by drawing as many units as possible to this area and tying them down." In fact the enemy did bring forward more units to reinforce their 5 ID; they intended to exploit their earlier victory by resuming the offensive on 16 June with 23 battalions and very strong artillery (about 250 guns, including eight 28 cm howitzers, fourteen 26 cm mortars and thirty-six 21 cm mortars). With this second thrust they intended to take the summit north of the Tonale road.²⁰⁴

Thus both sides were simultaneously preparing to attack, while time was running out for the Aus-Hung. troops. In FM Conrad's original concept, he had correctly noted that the constantly changing weather in the high mountains made it desirable to carry out the Tonale operation "independently" of the larger offensive by 11th Army, "as soon as the snow and winter conditions relent." Now the attack at the Pass would have to take place, at the latest, two days before 11th Army's offensive.

The unsuccessful counterattacks which the Austrians attempted at the end of May, immediately after the enemy thrust in the Presena area, had amply proven that operations in this area required thorough but time-consuming preparations. A new assault had been planned to recover the lost positions on the Monticello, by Castellaccio and next to the C. Presena; FML Metzger now ordered that this attack wasn't to take place until the day before the Tonale offensive, which was scheduled for 13 June. Thus the two operations would be almost simultaneous, which was a drawback because of the demands on the supporting artillery.

The thrust by Ellison's Brigade, to be carried out mainly by high mountain and mountain guide companies, would also involve a group from the neighboring sector of 49 ID. The main assault along the Tonale road would take place over the almost flat and treeless high ground leading to the Pass. It would be led by GM von Budiner with his 1 Inf Bde (IR 5 and 61) plus Feldjaeger Battalions 21 and 31, two high mountain companies, and parts of the divisional Sturm Battalion. This group were instructed to make their main effort north of the road, bursting through the Italians' first, second and third positions "in one bound", capturing the enemy artillery and reaching their objective for

²⁰⁴Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 138 ff.

the first day, Ponte di Legno. GM von Hellebronth's 2 Inf Bde (IR 112, FJB 17 and 25, BH FJB 3) were held behind 1 Inf Bde, ready to make a follow-up thrust. When ordered to do so, 22 Sch Div were to come up from the Vermiglio valley to deliver the final blow by penetrating into the Val Tellina (valley of the Adda).

The gunners were given assignments consistent with the missions of the infantry battle groups. The field artillery consisted of 43 FA Bde, 39 Hon FA Bde and Heavy FAR 40. Also available were Mtn AR 1 and 12, Hvy AR 13, two 15 cm auto howitzers, and two 30 cm mortars, plus one 24 cm and one 21 cm mortar.

The implementation

In the last days before the attack, visibility was quite restricted due to the weather. The artillery bombardment was thus very difficult. A heavy storm developed in the night of 11-12 June, with rain and snow. The attacking troops of Ellison's Brigade couldn't reach their jumping-off points. The guns opened fire as planned at dawn, but soon had to cease fire because all observation was impossible. The storm continued until evening, and it was recognized that because of the danger of avalanches Ellison's operation could only be carried out on a very limited scale on the next day. But the bad weather also restricted the activity of the enemy troops holding the position on the summit. Therefore FML Metzger decided to reinforce the force at the Pass. He ordered 2 Inf Bde to deploy directly south of the road, behind 1 Inf Bde, and to break through the enemy fortifications simultaneously with the latter.

But in the night of 12-13 June unforeseen difficulties affected the preparations of the troops. Some of the attacking infantry groups still weren't in position when the artillery began the preparatory fire. From the outset the cooperation of the two arms was faulty. Repeatedly the batteries were instructed to shift their targets forward or back without coordinating the changes with the foot soldiers. Meanwhile the Italians, who'd already been alerted the day before, were ready to defend their bomb-proof strong points which were well protected with barbed wire (one of them, significantly, had been dubbed "The Porcupine"), and pounded the attackers with heavy fire.²⁰⁵ Thus only IR # 61 were able to penetrate part of the enemy first line (including The Porcupine), while IR # 5 on the road stayed pinned down in front of the barbed wire barriers. The latter unit failed to attack with sufficient *elan*; a substantial number of soldiers of Romanian nationality had left the front line without authorization, in some cases by pretending to be wounded.²⁰⁶ South of the road the 2 Inf Bde had also been able to gain only a very limited amount of ground by noon; because the Italian crossfire was especially effective here GM Hellebronth had been forced to repeat the assault after renewed artillery preparation. On the other hand, up on the Monticello ridge two well led and aggressive high mountain companies were able to recover the most important strong point, Peak 2591 (which had been in enemy hands since the end of May) and held onto it despite strong counterattacks.²⁰⁷ Meanwhile Budiner's 1st Bde were able only with difficulty to maintain themselves in the line they'd won because the Italians were striking back with many guns, trench mortars and machine guns. In the evening they finally had to pull back.

FML Metzger had intended to renew the assault the next day by committing fresh units, but now he recognized that success against such strong defenses, which our artillery couldn't neutralize, would only be gained with very heavy casualties. Based on his reports, 10th Army HQ ordered that 22 Sch Div

205Patroni, pp. 171 ff.

206TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Prior to the war, almost 40% of the personnel in the 5th Regiment were Romanian; by 1918 this contingent diminished to 19%. To fairly evaluate the performance of the troops in 1 ID in this action it must be borne in mind that in the most successful unit, the 61st Regiment, Romanians made up about 39% of the rank and file (a percentage that hadn't changed much during the war).

207As a reward for this accomplishment, Lieutenant Peter Scheider of K-SchR III, commanding the 17th High Mountain Comp, won the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

shouldn't enter the fray. Thus the operation at the Tonale Pass, which was supposed to win significant ground and pin down strong enemy forces, had already failed on the first day. This misfortune was a bad omen for the impending offensive, as was the sinking of the 20,000 ton dreadnought *Szent Istvan*, which was torpedoed on 11 June by an Italian motorboat 75 km southeast of Pola.²⁰⁸

c. The final order unleashes the main assault

In the opinion of the high-level HQ in Venetia, the rain which was coming down since 11 June and the resultant rise in the level of the Piave placed implementation of the offensive seriously in question. Therefore in the afternoon of the 13th FM Boroevic sent a wire to Baden: "Both Armies report that the weather - rain and fog - makes bombardment with gas shells ineffective at this time and in the immediate future. HQ of the Isonzo Army states that the level of the Piave is already high, and if it continues to rise as expected it will threaten the planned operation, especially in IV Corps' sector. We therefore suggest that the start of the offensive should be postponed for at least three days."

The k.u.k. AOK responded on the same day: "Because of the situation of 11th Army and the action which has already begun at the Tonale Pass, the AOK isn't considering any postponement of the start date for the offensive. The final decision will be made by 6:00 PM on 14 June." This message was sent by GM Waldstätten because the Emperor - along with former commander-in-chief FM Archduke Friedrich and the Chief of the General Staff - had already traveled to Tyrol on the 11th; the Imperial train had stopped at the small Schnalstal station (between Meran and Glurns). GM Waldstätten reported what he had done to GO Arz and FM Conrad with attached notes: "The AOK is of the opinion that even if high water in the Piave makes it impossible to attack on the 15th - so that the offensive here is postponed for two or three days - the assault by 11th Army should still take place on 15 June." Finally he reported to the Imperial train that five General Staff officers had returned from the front where they'd visited Corps VII, IV, XVI, XV, I, XXVI, VI, XIII and III, and indicated that "the troops unanimously don't want the operation postponed. Reports from all five gentlemen are favorable - there is general confidence and everything is ready. The small amount

208Kriegsarchiv (Marine-archiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918" (Vienna, 1933), pp. 555 ff.

of supplies still lacking isn't significant enough to justify changing the date of the offensive."

The report on the spirit of the troops was completely accurate. The regiments would attack gladly and with complete confidence. The men felt they were superior to the Italians and hoped to repeat the brilliant victory they'd won in autumn 1917. But also it can't be denied that the poorly fed and insufficiently clad soldiers eagerly anticipated that they would once more satisfy their hunger with rations captured from the enemy and seize fresh equipment and clothes as they had the year before.

In contrast to the confidence in victory among the troops, concern existed in many of the higher HQ, where the officers were aware of the weakness of the impending offensive. Even the Chief of the General Staff, when questioned by his associates on the eve of the attack, didn't sound very hopeful about its prospects of success.²⁰⁹

Meanwhile GM Waldstätten with a small part of the Operations Office traveled to Belluno, so he'd be closer at hand to direct the necessary activities during the next few days. He arrived in the town in the afternoon of the 14th. The remaining parts of the high command stayed at Baden. Thus its various components were located at three widely-separated points.

On the 13th FM Conrad had wired the HQ at Udine that the 11th Army would be fully deployed for the offensive during the night of 13-14 June, so it would no longer be possible to postpone his operation. Since the stocks of rations on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau were very limited, it wasn't feasible to keep the units assembled in this narrow area in supply for any length of time. The rain stopped around noon on the 13th, so FM Boroevic asked both his Armies to report around 5:00 PM on the 14th whether they'd be able to attack on the 15th now that the weather was improving.

On the 14th there was a beautiful blue sky over the plains of Venetia. Promptly at 5:00 PM the 6th Army reported "Can carry out the attack." The Isonzo Army stated that "The offensive will be very difficult and time-consuming, but is feasible. We are still concerned about the possible effect of ground fog on the gas bombardment. The waters of the Piave are high and rising. Preparations to attack are complete." Therefore at 5:15 FM

²⁰⁹Based on information provided by the government minister Glaise-Horstenau, who at the time was part of the Imperial entourage as a General Staff Major with the AOK.

Boroevic ordered, "The operation will start as planned tonight and in the morning." These instructions were simultaneously reported to the high command.

Around 7:00 PM the Emperor called FM Boroevic personally to the phone and asked "How will it go tomorrow? I'm leaving it to your judgment and responsibility to determine whether the operation can proceed." The Field Marshal responded, "As I reported, tomorrow we will attack as ordered by the AOK, since Conrad's Army Group have told us they can no longer postpone the start of the offensive. Our own preparations have progressed so far that I can no longer be responsible for further delay, especially since the level of the Piave is nearly normal." The Emperor concluded this important conversation with the words "Thank you, we are in agreement. Good-bye!"

Hereafter destiny took its course.

B. The June Battle in Venetia

1. The first day of battle (15 June)

a. The battle on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau

11th Army's battlefield between the Astico and the Piave was split into two distinct parts by the Brenta ravine. West of the Brenta the attack would be delivered from the open Asiago plateau through a forested zone which covered the high ground which rises to the south of the basin and includes many mountains. On this terrain, already difficult to cross, the enemy had been digging entrenchments for years. A brigade commander reported later regarding the strength of these fortifications: "The forested area into which XIII Corps delivered the main blow was protected by a fortified zone rather than by continuous lines. Concrete machine gun nests - sited to protect each other's flanks - and caverns with entrances 15 meters deep were carefully camouflaged with moss until they were invisible. The entire woods, including these works, were divided into segments by lines of barbed wire."

In June 1916 the Aus-Hung. offensive had ground to a halt in front of this forest zone, even though the already badly-shaken

enemy had little artillery and the fortifications were still almost non-existent. At that time we had been content to carry out a systematic assault, as prescribed by the prevalent tactical doctrine, to wrest one mountain peak after another from the enemy. But now, after the brilliant successes won in fall 1917 at Flitsch and Karfreit and more recently by the Germans on the Western front, the old doctrine had been abandoned. It was expected that the troops could overrun the strong defenses with one powerful onslaught.

But not all of the commanders shared these hopes, because the possibilities for providing the infantry with substantial artillery support were limited. From the heights north of the basin, where the majority of our batteries deployed, we could clearly observe the enemy units stationed on the edge of the forest and several of their advanced strong points. But even with the help of survey teams and aerial observers it wasn't possible to gain sufficient information about units, artillery in particular, stationed within the forest. Thus by the end of May the locations of just 580 guns had been determined, even though from intelligence sources it was known for sure that the enemy had at least 1000 guns available. In fact, in the Sieben Gemeinde area the Entente forces had 616 light, 651 medium and 47 heavy guns.²¹⁰ Our own artillery consisted of 1220 light, 341 medium and 28 heavy guns.

Thus from the start the demand that the enemy artillery should be neutralized prior to our infantry assault couldn't be met (at least to the desired extent), even by expending many rounds of gas shells. The enemy, on the other hand, were able to substantially interfere with our artillery preparations by employing numerous long-range cannon and their superior observation planes. Between 1 and 15 June at least 135 of our guns were damaged or completely destroyed. In just three days (5 to 7 June) of very heavy disruptive enemy fire, directed mainly against VI Corps, 41 motor vehicles under this command alone were put out of action. (11th Army had a total of 77 auto columns.) When it started to rain on 12 June and visibility declined it became easier to move troops forward; on the other hand, some batteries which now arrived for the first time in their positions were unable to reliably calculate their ranges.

Objectives of the individual corps and divisions

When the corps commanders implemented their orders from 11th Army HQ, they wanted to avoid setting too-ambitious goals and making

210Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 174 ff.

premature assaults. Their guidelines to the divisional commanders were that the southern edge of the forest should be reached as quickly as possible; each division would advance energetically to achieve this goal within their own sectors without worrying about the progress of their neighbors.

GdI von Csanady, commanding **XIII Corps** which deployed in the middle of the Sieben Gemeinde battlefield, ordered FML von Molnar's 38 Hon ID to strike with a strong right wing; linked with III Corps, they were supposed to capture Mt Kaberlaba and then send a strong force over Mounts Kako and Raitertal to Mt Cavalletto. FML Fernengel's 16 ID would break through the enemy position near Pennar, take Mt Sprung, and then thrust along the Granezza d'Asiago past Mounts Cimone and Corno to the southern edge of the wooded zone. FML Ritter von Soretic's 42 Hon ID should quickly advance their strong right wing through Turcio along the Granezza di Gallio and past Mt Mosca; their weaker left wing would cooperate with VI Corps and aim for Mt Nasa, afterwards capturing Mt Rossignolo. Furthermore GdI Csanady intended, based on instructions from Army HQ, to have an "exploitation division" follow each of the three divisions listed above. After the foremost enemy position was conquered the second wave forces could quickly enter the fighting as needed; as this happened they would come under the authority of the first-line division commanders without regard to rank or seniority. But this plan of attack was altered at the end of May based on the latest lessons learned by the German high command. Two divisions stationed in the second line (FML von Felix's 5 ID and FML von Perneczky's 74 Hon ID) were still placed under XIII Corps HQ, but FML Nöhring's 36 ID would be held back as a reserve of 11th Army.

XIII Corps HQ gave authority over the attacking artillery to GM Edler von Reutter (the commander of 106 FA Bde), but each divisional commander was responsible for directing the guns of his own assigned artillery. Units available to the Corps were Field Artillery Brigades 5, 16, 36, 38, 42, 74 and 106, Heavy Field Artillery Regiments 11, 25 and 59, and Mountain AR 11. Attached from the Army artillery were three 15 cm auto cannon, four 15 cm auto howitzers, six 30.5 cm mortars and one 42 cm howitzer.

The task of the artillery was "to first thoroughly gas the enemy batteries and then to destroy the defensive installations of the first enemy position (as far as the forest), and especially at the points to be penetrated." After the infantry broke into the foremost enemy line the batteries assigned to support them would

advance immediately; all other batteries, staying in place, would continue to back up the ongoing advance. The planners didn't underestimate the difficulty of coordinating the two arms; the infantry were warned that after they crossed the first mountain peaks they could only count on "restricted" artillery support. Observers would be able to direct effective fire into just some isolated parts of the terrain. The divisions would therefore have to strive to bring as much artillery forward as quickly as they could to achieve a breakthrough "if this hadn't already been accomplished by the impetuous onslaught of the infantry alone."

The plans of **III Corps** were also ambitious. Their commander GO von Martiny intended "to break through the enemy lines in the direction of Mounts Cengio, Pau and Sunio," thus protecting the western wing of XIII Corps and simultaneously forcing the retreat of the Italians opposite the Edelweiss Corps by threatening their flank. "Both tasks," the Corps' orders stated, "can be carried out only by the quickest possible movement and by promptly reaching the line Schio-Thiene." Thus GM Schamschula's 52 ID "will break through relentlessly in their sector through the woods toward the south and attack the enemy position between Mounts Faraoro and Brusabo as early as possible." GM Ritter von Schilhawsky's 6 ID, reinforced by 5 Cav Bde, were to thrust past the enemy lines as far as Mt Pau, mop up the Fondi plateau, and also advance to the edge of the high ground west of the Val Canaglia. On the other hand, the 6 CD of FML Dom Miguel (the Duke of Braganza) would at first stay in place, since an attack along the Astico valley seemed completely impossible. FML Edler von Krasel's 28 ID, in the Corps' reserve, would "follow close behind the attacking divisions."

Instructions to the artillery were similar to those issued by XIII Corps. Here also the unit orders of battle were to be maintained as much as possible while the batteries were grouped for their various roles (infantry support, suppression of enemy artillery, and long range fire). Similar measures were taken to ensure that the batteries providing direct fire for the infantry could move quickly. Available to III Corps were Field Artillery Brigades 2, 21, 22, 28 and 52, FAR 6 K, Mtn AR 10, and four 15 cm auto cannon, four 30.5 cm mortars, two 24 cm mortars and two 38 cm howitzers.

The **VI Corps** would enter the battle east of XIII Corps; they'd try to reach their first objective, the line Mt Rossignolo - Mt Frolla - Il Cogolino - Mt Cama "by exerting all their strength in an advance by day and night so they'd win their goal, at the latest, on the second day of the assault." The Corps' commander

GdI Kletter understood from his own experience the difficulty of directing an operation on this terrain; in his first proposals to 11th Army HQ he'd stated that expectations for a quick advance shouldn't be exaggerated. It would be relatively easy to secure the nearest mountain heights (the Cm. Ecker and Mt Melago) thanks to systematic artillery support; afterwards he'd try his best to reach the southern edge of the forest, but the remainder of the attack wouldn't be simple. The southern and eastern slopes of these heights are quite steep and traversed by lines of rock; it would be very hard to descend 300 meters into the Val Chiama, and then even harder to climb up again from the valley onto the next heights (Mt Bertiaga and the Mtg. Nuova). The attack against the latter summit "can't be effectively supported" by the majority of the artillery. Only if the enemy's main body were completely worn down during the defense of the forward position (due to a decisive victory in the first assault) would it be possible to pursue them to Mt Bertiaga and the Mtg. Nuova and beyond.

Based on these considerations and the orders of Army HQ, VI Corps deployed their three divisions next to each other so they could advance as follows:

- . GM von Vidale's 18 ID - over Mt di Val Bella toward the Cm. Ecker,
- . FML Edler von Wieden's Edelweiss Division - over the Col del Rosso toward Mt Melago, and
- . FML Podhajsky's 26 Sch Div - over the Col d'Echele toward the Col di Aresi and then on to the Mtg. Nuova and Col Termine Rotto.

And all three divisions were also instructed that as soon as enemy resistance slackened they were to initiate a pursuit.

In this Corps also the artillery were directed to aid the infantry attack according to a careful schedule. The Corps had available Field Artillery Brigades 6, 15, 18 and 26, FAR 3 K, Mtn AR 4 and Heavy FAR 45 plus four 15 cm auto howitzers, four 24 cm mortars, seven 30.5 cm mortars and two 42 cm howitzers.

The enemy's counter-preparations

Opposite our troops on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau the enemy stood their ground on the edge of the forest of the Asiago basin, holding defensive positions which by any standards were excellent. On the Assa ravine between the Astico and the Val Ghelpach the 12th Division held the right wing of the 1st Italian Army. This unit wasn't directly effected by our attack, but about 100 of their guns intervened in the defensive fighting by their neighbors to the right. These neighbors were the British

XIV Corps (under the HQ of G.Lt Montuori of the 6th Italian Army); with the 23 and 48 ID they held the sector between Cesuna and Mt Kaberlaba (inclusive), a front of about 5 km. Behind their right wing the British 7 ID stood in reserve. Here for the first time in the history of the Aus-Hung. regiments they would engage in grim battle with English troops. East of the British the French XII Corps were holding the part of the forest that jutted forward near the S Sisto chapel, the strong point at Pennar, and the edge of the woods north of the Cm. Ecker; their front was 4 km long. At the start of June the 24 ID, which hitherto had been stationed behind the 23 ID, had just been inserted into the line on the right of the 23rd. The sector east of the Frenchmen, on Mt di Val Bella and stretching over the Col del Rosso to the rock wall formed by the Frenzella ravine, was held by the Italian XIII Corps. Along this front, about 5 km wide, 14 ID were stationed on the left and 28 ID on the right. The right wing of 6th Army was the XX Italian Corps (10 and 2 ID), which in their positions among the rocks were blocking the lower Frenzella ravine, the Val Vecchia and the Brenta valley. Behind XIII Corps the Alpini of the 52nd Division were stationed as 6th Army's reserve. The artillery were unusually strong.

This combined Entente force had been built up so strongly because the Italians intended to start their own offensive over the plateau. Preparations had been under way for weeks, and at the start of June the 18th of the month was designated the date on which the attack would begin. But when 6th Army HQ received intelligence that their opponents were also gearing up to strike, they postponed their own assault; the batteries that had already moved forward and deployed for an offensive operation were pulled back and the plans for the bombardment revised for a defensive action. Anyway, the opinions of the artillery commanders of the three allied nations varied to such an extent that the highest command HQ had to be called upon to force them to follow a common course. A result of this agreement was the heavy disruptive fire that our troops had to endure in the first ten days of June. The Italians and their allies furthermore laid particular importance on the timely employment of so-called "preparatory counter-fire", which was supposed to destroy the opposing troops assembled in the foremost trenches, eliminate their observation posts, and suppress their artillery. As we will narrate, the Aus-Hung. troops did suffer substantial casualties from this fire.

The artillery duel

In the night of 14-15 June, after the last arrangements were

complete, the regiments of eight divisions stemming from all the kingdoms and lands of the multi-national Danube Monarchy were deployed on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau in a continuous, nearly straight line and ready to attack. FM Conrad's summons to the troops was now issued. It stated: "Through all the storms of winter, while displaying true devotion to duty and manly perseverance, you've gazed upon the sunny plains of Italy. The moment you've desired is now here....The well-being, future and honor of our great, ancient and beloved common fatherland is now in your hands....With firm confidence I summon you - Now Forward!"

Opposite the attacking phalanx seven English, French and Italian divisions lay in wait. They were well-informed about their opponents' intentions. Already around 11:00 PM on 14 June the first salvos from their batteries flew over their lines into the Aus-Hung. trenches. Therefore we must concede that many Italian historical works are substantially correct when they state that the so-called Battle of the Piave started with their "preparatory counter-fire." But it isn't true that this fire shook up the Aus-Hung. troops in the forward trenches or caused them to panic.²¹¹ A few shirkers did desert during the night, and IR 138 (of 16 ID) were temporarily dispersed during their approach march. But based on morning reports from the subordinate commanders, 11th Army HQ noted merely that "several sudden and powerful bursts of enemy artillery fire struck the rear areas of XIII Corps and some of the positions of I Corps" but that in general "the moderate disruptive fire was of normal intensity."

Around 3:00 AM the Aus-Hung. artillery started their own fearful symphony, firing simultaneously per the orders which 11th Army HQ had issued to all the corps. An hour later the enemy counter-bombardment began. Dust and smoke swirled over the landscape. Visibility began to improve around 6:00 AM. Now the artillery battle, which both sides waged with enormous expenditure of ammunition, reached its greatest intensity. Opinions varied regarding the effectiveness of our artillery. III Corps were satisfied; the enemy batteries seemed to have been damaged and their fire slackened. XIII Corps believed that the bombardment of Mounts Kaberlaba and Sprung was too feeble, while enemy fire was strong against the Aus-Hung. positions at Canove and on Mt Sisemol. VI Corps had the impression that the enemy on Mt di Val Bella and on the Col del Rosso had been destroyed by our precise and powerful fire, but that the Italian artillery had fired copiously and with considerable effect on the Corps' own communications and rear positions.

²¹¹Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 193

In an overall report issued after the battle, 11th Army HQ stated that the course and duration of the artillery preparation had been suitable. The guns had drawn the enemy's fire upon themselves, and thus the casualties suffered by the infantry in the jumping-off points had been acceptable. The destructive fire had also been effective.

The attack as observed from 11th Army HQ

Around 7:00 AM the infantry moved forward along the entire front on the plateau. The artillery fire died down. Since protracted fog limited visibility and many wire communication lines had been broken, it was soon impossible to observe or analyze the course of the battle. Until 9:00 AM the HQ of 11th Army had the impression that "It's going well." XIII Corps had captured the first enemy line and continued to advance, while VI Corps had taken and gone past Mt di Val Bella, the Col del Rosso and the Col d'Ecchele. In III Corps' sector white signal rockets were seen above the northern slope of Mt Lemerle, a sign that here the infantry had penetrated the forest. Confidence was still high in the next hour, although it became known that the advance was slowing down. Based on some still very unclear reports, GO Scheuchenstuel believed that "after repelling fierce enemy counterattacks in the areas held by the English and French, we've reached the line Cesuna - northwest corner of Mt Lemerle - Mga. Fassa - Turcio - Cm Ecker - Mt Melago - northern foot of the Col di Aresi." Among other items, VI Corps reported they had suffered substantial casualties. The cloud cover, which was almost complete during the morning, combined with the fog and dust which spread over the battlefield to restrict the activity of the air companies. Furthermore, the superior strength of the enemy squadrons was making itself felt.

The picture suddenly changed in the afternoon. One piece of bad news arrived after the other, and by evening Army HQ had to report that under powerful counterattacks the 52 ID were pushed back to their starting points, whereupon GO Martiny also withdrew 6 ID and sent 28 ID to reinforce both of the other divisions. Under XIII Corps the 38 Hon ID and probably also 16 ID had been defeated, while the eastern wing of 42 Hon ID were still holding onto Mt Nasa. GdI Csanady had placed 74 Hon ID under the HQ of 38 Hon ID and brought 5 ID forward to the area around Gallo. The situation was better for VI Corps, whose 18 ID had captured the Cm. Ecker and repulsed all counterattacks, while the Edelweiss Division held firmly to Mt Melago. But on the Corps' eastern wing, where 26 Sch Div had advanced past the Col d'Ecchele, they

had later been forced back to these heights. Under the circumstances, Army HQ found themselves forced to take a brigade of 36 ID from their reserves and to place it under VI Corps "to defend the ground that has been won", while also moving 3 CD and 10 CD forward (to the Mga. Pusterle - Vezzena and Mt Rover - Carbonare areas, respectively). At the same time GO Scheuchenstuel reported to Army Group HQ that he intended "for the time being to hold the line Mt Melago - Cm. Ecker, linking it with the front of XIII Corps through Point 1226 and the chapel at Point 1094."

No consideration was given to renewing the attack. During the night the lower-level commanders reported that the condition of the troops who'd been engaged during the setback seemed questionable. Curiously, neither officers nor men were yet aware of the extent of the defeat. They finally realized what had happened during submission of the reports which the high command requested concerning the causes of the misfortune.²¹²

The actions of III and XIII Corps

A report prepared on 18 June provides some insight into the course of the fighting by III and XIII Corps. All the divisions penetrated the first enemy line with great *elan*. The artillery preparation for the assault on the first position had been effective almost everywhere. Only northwest of a group of houses by Mt Kaberlaba were the left wing of 52 ID and the right of 38 Hon ID unable to push into the enemy positions, since here the very strong barriers hadn't been destroyed and the French 23rd Division defended themselves stubbornly. But the enemy artillery hadn't been suppressed, and were already firing heavily. The attacks which followed against the fortifications farther to the

212 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: I found the narrative description of the actual assault, continuing for the next couple pages, to be quite scanty and inconclusive (especially after the detailed description of the preparations for the assault). Such was also the reaction of the authors of the British Official History (in the volume "Italy 1915-1919", published in London in 1949; see pp. 219-220). They noted correctly that the "very erroneous accounts indicate the confusion on the Austrian side and in some measure the magnitude of the defeat." However, the English also had their own agenda - to explain why the Austrians at first were relatively successful against them while being more quickly defeated by the neighboring French. The British historians tried to do so by disparaging the quality of the k.u.k. troops who attacked the French XII Corps.

rear were shattered, because most of the barriers were undamaged. There were also many hidden machine gun nests which remained intact despite the heavy bombardment which had just ended. 52 ID and the eastern wing of 6 ID at first achieved noteworthy success. According to an English report, "here the Austrian attack was very determined, penetrating one kilometer into our [British] front along a line one mile [1524 meters] wide."²¹³ Per an account by a combatant (the commander of a machine gun company in BH IR # 6), this attack penetrated the enemy's second line, which could only be wrested from the English in hard fighting. After a brief pause, the k.u.k. troops advanced still further past some abandoned artillery positions. Now they encountered numerous concealed outposts, out of which the defenders fired with automatic rifles from all sides. To suppress them cost much time and bloodshed, and the attackers used up their hand grenades.²¹⁴

But this success was of short duration. The regiments, which had become intermingled during the actions in the forest, were soon subjected to heavy counterattacks. The first enemy assaults were repulsed by 6 and 52 ID, as well as by 38 Hon ID and 16 ID. But between 2:00 and 3:00 PM the English and French, after very effective preparation by their still strong and plentiful artillery, mounted a more powerful assault. According to the very inadequate reports it appears that the first troops to fall back were in 16 ID (composed of Magyars and Romanians) and in the Gitschin (north Bohemian) IR 74 of 52 ID. Shoulder to shoulder with the Graz IR 27 (of 6 ID), the 74th had fought well in the initial advance, but around noon apparently had already been checked and fell into panic. The Hungarian IR 26, engaged on the left wing of 52 ID, had also fallen back at noon, causing the neighboring troops of 38 Hon ID to withdraw with them. But in the opinion of III Corps HQ the first unit to retreat was Hon IR "Maros-Vasarhely" # 22. Analysis of the discrepancies indicates that the first confirmed withdrawal wasn't an actual retreat. IR 28 (of 28 ID) had been moving up to the front in reserve behind the junction of the 6th and 52nd Divisions; they were too close behind the front line units and at a badly-chosen time were ordered back toward the rear.²¹⁵ Although in the morning 16 ID

213 Rolleston, "Our Artillery in Italy" (in the Journal of the [English Royal] Artillery, July 1921)

214 "Der 15. Juni 1918 bei Asiago" (in the Österr. Wehrzeitung for 1929, Issue 24)

215 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Although not explicitly, the text seems to be speculating that the movement of IR 28 toward the rear at this critical point, though in accordance with orders,

had quickly overcome the French strong point near Pennar and reached S Sisto, in the afternoon they retreated; they were soon followed by 38 Hon ID, which had advanced as far as the Mga. Fassa.

On the eastern wing of XIII Corps the Croatian-Slavonian 42 Hon ID stormed forward in the morning with exemplary dash. In their first onslaught they captured the trenches by the chapel at Point 1094, from which the French had apparently been driven by our preparatory bombardment.²¹⁶ During the morning the Domobranzen made six attempts to break through the enemy's main fortified zone, but made little progress because the earlier artillery fire had been insufficient to reduce the enemy's power of resistance. The French, deployed here in depth, were even able to provide help to their neighbors, the Italians who'd fallen back to the Cm. Ecker.

The actions of VI Corps

Here, on the western wing of the Aus-Hung. VI Corps, the 18 ID - which had already distinguished themselves on this battlefield in December - advanced against the Italians with irresistible determination. The gallant and very well-trained battalions of this Division quickly overwhelmed the enemy on Mt di Val Bella and pushed further ahead without pausing. They thrust through the second Italian line (about 1 km south of the mountain), then with an envelopment attack conquered the forward works on the Costa lunga. Here also they took prisoner almost the entire garrison before advancing into the trenches on the Cm. Ecker. It cannot be determined whether they did in fact capture (or even reach) the hotly-contested summit itself, as was claimed by Division HQ. At 10:35 AM the commander of XIII Italian Corps informed the French of the fall of the Costa lunga and asked for French troops to help hold the Cm. Ecker. Thereupon a French battalion stationed in the vicinity intervened immediately on the Italians' left wing, followed by two more battalions which supported their allies and secured the threatened area.

Next to 18 ID were engaged the Edelweiss Division, which had just arrived at the front at the start of June after several months of "Assistenz" service in the interior. The divisional battle

caused uncertainty and panic among the other units in the vicinity.

²¹⁶Berthemet, "Les troupes francaises en Italie pendant la Grande guerre" (in Revue militaire francaise, 1922 edition, p. 34). Allegedly the advanced position by the chapel had been evacuated "according to plan" during the bombardment.

report states that "The troops came forward from the training grounds," so they had no opportunity to learn about the latest mountain warfare tactics. 5 Inf Bde (with Upper Austrian IR 14 and Salzburg IR 59) attacked on a front just 1200 meters wide, while 6 Inf Bde were initially in the Corps' reserve in the Frenzella ravine. In the morning hours the regiments already suffered substantial casualties under the lively counter-fire of the Italian artillery. The bombardment came mainly from a group of batteries stationed on the Col d'Astiago, which could have been the strongest in the entire area of the plateau.²¹⁷ Nevertheless the storm troop patrols and first waves of the Edelweiss Division moved forward around 8:00 AM and soon took the fortifications of the Col del Rosso, which had been garrisoned by two Italian battalions. But apparently the following waves of troops weren't able to follow the leading detachments because of the onset of a new round of shells from the enemy guns. As the battle groups sprang forward they "were simply shot to pieces." Meanwhile the storm companies initiated the pursuit; the companies from IR 59 may have penetrated the second enemy line on Mt Melago. Finally after several hours the destructive enemy fire diminished somewhat and the main bodies of the regiments - already reduced by losses - resumed their advance; they nearly reached the above-mentioned second line, but were unable to overcome stubborn Italian resistance. IR 59 were ordered by Division HQ to storm Mt Melago at 2:50 PM after renewed artillery preparation, but couldn't comply. Division HQ reported later that in any event the artillery barrage wasn't strong enough to encourage the infantry to attack. Furthermore, around this time the roles of the attackers and defenders were reversed; by 5:00 PM the Salzburgers had to repulse two enemy assaults.²¹⁸ The foremost group of IR 14 were also unable to push ahead. At noon the divisional HQ had still intended to thrust over Mt Melago and widen the area under attack, for which purpose they received from VI Corps HQ permission to commit 6 Inf Bde (IR 107 and 114), but in the afternoon they were disappointed by the failure of 5 Inf Bde's attack. Then around 6:00 PM they received reports that on the left the 26 Sch Div had fallen back over the Col d'Ecchelle. Therefore they ordered 6 Inf Bde to assist their neighbors and if necessary to once more attack the Col d'Ecchelle, possession of which was necessary to ensure that the line we'd reached by Mt Melago could be held.

The reports that 26 Sch Div had been defeated were later proven

217Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 177

218Hoen, "Geschichte des salzburgisch-oberösterreichischen k.u.k. Infanterie Regimentes Erzherzog Rainer Nr. 59 für den Zeitraum des Weltkrieges 1914-1918" (Salzburg, 1931), p. 689

to be incorrect. This Bohemian division had been stationed in the Foza sector for months. On the 15th they held back SchR Leitmeritz # 9 to guard the numerous batteries deployed on the mountain spurs of Alessi, Sasso Rosso and S Francesco; SchR Gitschin # 11 and Caslau # 12 mounted the assault, with Regt Jungbunzlau # 10 in reserve. During the overnight bombardment and the enemy's "preparatory counter-fire" the troops suffered such heavy casualties that at 6:30 AM one of the regimental commanders reported the attack would be very difficult to implement without the immediate arrival of reinforcements. Realization that our own artillery wasn't able to silence the enemy batteries damped the confidence of commanders and troops. Nevertheless the Schützen stormed gallantly forward, quickly overwhelmed the Italian battalion that was defending the Col d'Ecchele, and continued their advance without pausing. At 9:00 AM the 12th Regt broke into the second position near Sasso, supported (contrary to the orders of divisional HQ) by parts of 10th Regt. On the other hand, the main body of the 11th Regt, unable to move quickly enough through the enemy barrage, were lagging behind. At 4:00 PM the 11th received an order to pull back to the protection of the trenches where they'd started. Reports about this development set off an unfortunate chain of events, largely due to the fact that all of the telephone connections had been broken, and created a distorted picture of the situation. In reality, at 7:00 that evening the 12th Regt and parts of the 10th were still within the second enemy line near Sasso, while divisional HQ erroneously believed that their troops "were hardly able to hold onto their own positions." As noted above, this error caused the Edelweiss Division to take precautionary measures. It also forced VI Corps HQ to give command over all the intermingled troops of the two divisions in the Mt Melago - Col d'Ecchele area to FML Wieden. Meanwhile night descended on the battlefield.

Thus on the entire Sieben Gemeinde plateau only VI Corps and the eastern wing of XIII Corps had been able to hold onto the (rather limited) ground they'd conquered in the first day of the offensive. Under the circumstances, the next task was to ensure that this new line could be retained. 11th Army HQ issued the necessary orders during the night and expressed the opinion that at some later time the attack could continue - although only in the area directly adjoining both sides of the Brenta. This was because on the eastern bank of the river, and to a limited extent on the western bank, initial successes had been achieved that could be exploited with a further advance.

b. The attack in the Grappa area

As we indicated above, the battlefield east of the Brenta was quite different from that west of the river. The shape of the mountains varied, and here the upper parts of the high ground, especially of the small plateaus southwest of the Grappa summit, were mostly either barren or covered with pastures. Only on the slopes of the adjacent valleys were there some more or less continuous coniferous woods. Therefore it was possible to observe the terrain where the offensive would unfold and to pinpoint the enemy fortifications. This simplified the tasks of the infantry commanders, the artillery observers and the persons responsible for coordinating the two arms. On the other hand, here it was difficult to bring the artillery into position because there weren't any suitable roads leading into the area. The guns had to deploy at a relatively great distance from their targets. This problem had already influenced 11th Army's choice of the sector where the main effort would be made. The lessons of the December fighting in this area had anyway demonstrated that the Italians had constructed a firm and extended bastion northeast of the Grappa summit; it extended past the Col dell'Orso and Mt Spinuccia, and to Mt Pallone. Therefore 11th Army HQ now laid less emphasis on taking this bulwark than on the success of the attack by Mt Asalone and the Col Moschin, where they would seek a major success in cooperation with the decisive operation going on west of the Brenta.

Objectives of the individual corps and divisions

GdI Edler von Horsetzky, the leader of the **XXVI Corps** deployed in the Asalone-Moschin sector, was well aware of the importance attached to his operation. He correctly evaluated the favorable circumstances of his situation, but didn't overlook the fact that the open terrain also provided good visibility for the enemy's artillery. In particular, their guns dug right into the rocks of the Grappa massif would have to be neutralized if possible, for which purpose he had available only two really suitable guns, so-called "loophole destruction cannon." About half of the Corps' artillery (4 and 27 FA Bdes plus Heavy FAR 72) had to deploy within the neighboring sector west of the Brenta ravine, on the mountain spurs of Alessi and Col Tonder. The 32 FA Bde, Heavy FAR 54 and Mountain Artillery Regiments 3 and 8 were stationed in the Corps' own area. The heaviest guns - four 15 cm auto howitzers, two 15 cm auto cannon, one 24 cm cannon, one 24 cm mortar, eight 30.5cm mortars and one 38 cm howitzer - would have to fire from the depths of the Brenta ravine.

This Corps paid very careful attention to cooperation between the artillery and infantry. But here also a point would be reached at which the infantry would have to move beyond the accompanying barrage and strike out on their own. At most they could still be supported by the light mobile batteries, which for this purpose were held in readiness at protected points directly behind the foremost trenches. In this terrain it would be impossible to quickly bring forward the medium artillery.

In planning the attack GdI Horsetzky followed the instructions of his Army HQ, according to which the Corps were apparently first supposed to move their front forward to the line Col Moschin - Mt Asolone. Then, with most of the main body held tightly together, they'd advance to the line Mt Meda - Colli Vecchi. Both of the front-line divisions would attack simultaneously. GM Sallagar's 27 ID would make their main effort along the axis Ca d'Anna - Point 1337 - Mt Raniero, thus cutting off the Col Moschin. A group in the valley (a reinforced battalion) would stand ready to immediately thrust against the enemy in the Brenta valley as soon as the latter began to waver. The main body of FML Edler von Bellmond's 32 ID were to "thrust along the western slopes of the main Mt Asolone - Mt Coston ridge" while a smaller detachment "advanced on the ridge itself and rolled up the switch positions running off the southwest." And a group of picked storm troops were instructed "to thrust without pausing to capture Mt Coston and the artillery there as soon as possible." Corps HQ furthermore demanded that after the first penetration into the enemy positions the attack was to continue without a break. Therefore special detachments should be on hand so they could "immediately thrust forward without worrying about the mop-up actions still proceeding in the trenches and shell-holes." It was expected that the neighboring I Corps would send a battle group from Mt Pertica toward the C. Val di Milin and the C. Cancell'alto, thus facilitating the attack by 32 ID. Initially GdI Horsetzky held FML von Boog's 4 ID in readiness near Arsie as the Corps' reserve.

Considerable thought was devoted to the operations of **I Corps** (now led by GdI Kosak) and of **XV Corps**, which from 1 June was placed under 11th Army HQ "for tactical and operational purposes." The commander of XV Corps, GdI Scotti, would lead both formations to ensure they acted together. The area to be attacked included the above-mentioned Italian "bastion" northeast of Mt Grappa; this was a peculiar, horseshoe-shaped position; on the map it appeared that attackers could easily just cut off the fortifications by pushing back the two sides of the horseshoe. But in reality an assault on the eastern wing of the bastion was

precluded by the steepness of the mountain slope. The ground on the western wing, constructed over the Col dell'Orso, was known to be less steep, but it could be climbed only if the Italian artillery, trench mortars and machine guns on the Grappa summit were first neutralized. The most promising point to attack, as in December, seemed to be along the ridge that climbs from Mt Spinuccia to Heights 1509 (between Mounts Meate and Pallone); simultaneously, the Col dell'Orso and Mt Solarolo could be enveloped from the north and west and captured. The first task (to attack on the ridge) was assigned to FML Gerabek's 50 ID of XV Corps; the second would be carried out by FML von le Beau's 55 ID of I Corps. Both divisions prepared for the upcoming offensive with great intensity. On 6 June a storm detachment from 50 ID made a spirited thrust near Mt Spinuccia and captured an important outlying trench. 60 ID of I Corps, now led by FML Freih. von Bardolff, were prepared to attack the center of the Grappa massif as soon as either the Col dell'Orso was captured on their left or Mt Coston was taken on their right. Until then the 60th Division would support their neighbors with artillery while undertaking a "large-scale storm troop operation" to accompany the attack by 32 ID. The commander of 32 ID in fact wanted his neighbors to use a large battle group rather than just storm troops, for which purpose XXVI Corps HQ asked GdI Scotti to take the necessary measures. But Scotti responded, significantly, that the task "could also be achieved with a limited force, as is now the rule."

The eastern wing of Scotti's corps-group was held by GM von Stadler's 20 Hon ID. At the time when XV Corps were still commanded by 6th Army HQ, this Honved Division had been instructed to attack simultaneously with their neighbors and to capture Mt Tomba. But their assignment was altered when it was realized that there wouldn't be enough artillery available for this operation, since the batteries of II Corps - originally slated to support their attack - would be firing instead against the Montello. Now the Hungarians would just be ready to join the general offensive on the second day, when they'd attack toward Mt Tomba (assuming that 50 ID captured Mt Pallone on the first day). But GM Stadler was also instructed to be ready to strike on the 15th in case 50 ID reached their goal more quickly than expected. Although there was little likelihood that the enemy would quickly give up the Grappa massif, the possibility wasn't completely neglected; thus the attacking divisions had contingency plans which envisioned their advance far beyond the mountains and deep into the plains. 48 ID, in GdI Scotti's reserves, were stationed northeast of Feltre. He intended to deploy them on the eastern wing at the appropriate time.

The assets of XV Corps, particularly the artillery and ammunition, left much to be desired. For "logistical purposes" the Corps was still part of 6th Army, which neglected them. Shortly before the battle, on 4 June, GdI Scotti observed bitterly that "XV Corps are given tasks by their tactical leaders [11th Army] for which their logistical leaders [6th Army] either refuse to provide or limit the necessary means." He went on to state that "Although I by no means want to be counted among the 'obedient soldiers' who pass off responsibility to others, now I reluctantly must ask that the limitations on my authority be recognized or I will ask to be removed from command. Today, on 4 June, I in fact still don't know if the corps will ever - even on the day of the attack - have the necessary gas shells and thus whether it will be able to carry out its assignment."

Deployment of the artillery for the attack was quite difficult and time-consuming for both I and XV Corps. Even after, with great exertion, the guns were stationed in the desired positions on the heights, hundreds and hundreds of bearers had to carry the ammunition up on their backs. The funicular rail lines which had just been completed in the last few weeks proved to be inadequate. Most of the medium guns and all of the heavy guns had to be dragged into the valleys, which here were very deep. In many ways the usefulness of the artillery was limited by these inescapable conditions. Together, the two corps had at their disposal the Field Artillery Brigades 1, 3, 20, 50, 55, 60 and 62, Mtn AR 9, and Mtn Artillery Battalions 9, 35 and 72 plus eight 15 cm auto howitzers and eight 30.5 cm mortars. Because of the difficulties noted above, GdI Scotti's group HQ were finally also allotted FA Bde 10 K and FAR # 160, along with some gas shells.

Counter-preparations of the 4th Italian Army

The Aus-Hung. troops between the Brenta and the Piave were opposed by G.Lt Giardino's 4th Italian Army. IX Corps held the sector from the edge of the Brenta ravine to Point 1461 (east of Mt Asolone) with 18 ID; they held 17 ID in reserve. In the network of positions around the Grappa summit and at the heart of this bulwark VI Corps were stationed with 15 and 59 ID; they had one brigade in reserve. The bastion from Croce dei Lebbi over Mt Solarolo to Mt Pallone - frequently mentioned above - was held by XVIII Corps (56 and 1 ID). Near the Osteria Monfenera their lines linked up with those of I Corps, whose position ran along the Tomba ridge and reached to Pederobba; they had 70 ID at the front with 24 ID in reserve.

Back in April, G.Lt Giardino had been instructed to take part with his Army's left wing in the planned offensive by 6th Army. Therefore he prepared for an operation in the Mt Asolone area plus a thrust in the neighborhood of Mt Solarolo. 6th Army had intended to begin the operation on 4 June, but due to intelligence from a variety of sources indicating that an Austrian assault was imminent, the Italian offensive was postponed. For the time being 4th Army were also supposed to stay on the defensive, although they didn't completely abandon plans for their own attack (now scheduled for 18 June). Anticipating this operation, a brigade of 59 ID tried to storm Mt Pertica on 8 June. Twice they assaulted the trenches that were gallantly defended by the Pressburg FJB 19, but were soon repulsed.

From the start of June, the Italian intelligence service claimed several times that they could determine the precise date when the Austrian attack would start; first they predicted it would happen on the 6th, and then on the 11th. The troops were placed in the highest state of readiness during these days and nights, while the artillery laid down continuous and heavy disruptive fire. But each time nothing happened, and the Army commander had to soothe the nerves of his men with encouraging words after they were subjected to this tension.²¹⁹ Late in the evening of 14 June reports were once more received from the neighboring army on the left, as well as from the high command, that the enemy offensive would start on the 15th with an artillery bombardment around 3:00 AM. Because of their previous experience, 4th Army received this intelligence with some skepticism. During the night they carried out their scheduled rotation of troops in the line, while their

²¹⁹Giardino, "Rievocazioni e riflessioni di guerra" (Milan, date unknown), Vol. II

artillery was no more active than usual.

The sudden start of the preparatory fire by the Aus-Hung. batteries at 3:00 AM shook the Italians awake, and their own guns began a thunderous reply around 4:00 AM. A heavy rain of steel descended on the attackers' approach routes, assembly points and foremost positions. Our own guns were able merely to temporarily check the enemy guns, which had numerical superiority. According to Italian reports the fire of the Aus-Hung. artillery was neither accurate nor systematic. The hopes which we'd placed in the effectiveness of the gas shells proved to be misplaced, at least on the battlefield between the Brenta and the Piave. Meanwhile the k.u.k. infantry suffered casualties as they stood by in their insufficiently protected trenches and other fortifications, awaiting the moment to attack. Thick fog lay on the mountains. It hindered the artillery observers, but made it easier for the foot soldiers to advance over terrain which here offered no cover.

Actions of the k.u.k. 27th Division

Under XXVI Corps the 27 ID attacked between the eastern edge of the Brenta ravine and the S Lorenzo valley with the reinforced 54 Inf Bde (IR 85 and 67 plus Battalion III/34); 53 Inf Bde were in reserve with IR 25 and half of Battalion II/34. The remainder of IR 34 (I Bn and half of II) were stationed in the depths of the Brenta ravine, near S Marino.²²⁰ The upper Hungarian Regiments 85 and 67 (the latter with just two battalions) stormed forward at 7:40 AM. In ten minutes the 85th captured the Ca d'Anna strong-point along with most of its garrison, then pushed on. The rolling barrage moved ahead of them, but because of poor visibility the artillery commanders could only stick to the pre-arranged schedule as the guns extended their range. The troops broke through the Italians' well-developed network of positions; they suffered casualties while capturing numerous machine gun nests which had survived the destructive artillery fire. To the left of IR 85 the 67th Regiment inched forward somewhat toward the channel of the S Lorenzo brook, where they came under intense artillery fire. Their left wing remained pinned down in front of the trenches at Point 1173, which were stubbornly defended by the enemy. The only parts of the Regiment which made progress were those moving along the higher ground, adjacent to the 85th.

Already around 9:00 AM the storm troops and first attacking waves

²²⁰The following narrative of 27 ID's attack is based in part on a study which FML Sallagar, who commanded the Division at the time, later submitted to the Military Archives.

of IR 85 reached the Italians' main line of resistance and took the bulwarks on the Col del Fenilon and the Col del Fagheron. At the same time strong patrols were sent over the Col Raniero toward the Col del Gallo. As planned, one battalion pivoted toward the Col Moschin to cut off its garrison. But this brilliantly-led battalion of the 85th weren't content with this achievement; they stormed the important Col Moschin position itself, on which they captured many machine guns plus two mountain batteries. Thus in less than two hours the leading group of 27 ID had broken through four strongly-fortified lines and knocked the equivalent of more than two enemy regiments out of the fight. The Italian generals became worried. The news that the Hungarians had captured the Col Moschin, which arrived around 10:00 AM, compelled the HQ of XX Corps (commanding the troops in the Brenta valley) to order a partial retreat. The group of our 27 ID in the valley pursued the enemy to Rivalta and sent patrols ahead toward Valstagna.

HQ of 4th Italian Army urgently requested from their high command the right to commit XXII Corps, standing ready near Castelfranco. If permissible, they wanted to have the Corps occupy the fortified line Bassano-Mussolente-Asolo, while all of its artillery and one division deployed opposite the so-called "mouth of the Val Santa Felicita." The high command concurred and furthermore intended to have the Assault Corps moved to 4th Army by truck. But this plan was later abandoned because, as we'll relate below, a critical situation had also developed on the lower Piave.²²¹ The Italian generals were living through some anxious hours. To stem their opponents' tide on the Army's left wing only two fresh infantry battalions and one storm battalion were available next to the battlefield. In the plains near Bassano there was still a full regiment, but their approach march, in which they'd have to climb 1000 meters, would take several hours. The dark mood at the Italian HQ was finally dispelled in the afternoon when it was demonstrated that the impetus of the Hungarians was exhausted.

In fact the foremost k.u.k. troops had stayed on the Col del Fagheron. Their ranks had been thinned, and they were running out of ammunition for their rifles. They were anxiously awaiting reinforcements, which didn't arrive. The 54th Brigade's reserves didn't get their orders to move forward until around 10:00 AM and then suffered heavy casualties as they passed through steady crossfire from the Italian batteries deployed in the C. Miglio - Ost. il Lepre area. 27th ID's reserve (IR # 25) also moved up but were completely dispersed by the murderous rain of shells;

221Giardino, Vol. II, p 314

parts of this Regiment, "in error wandered leaderless into the enemy's artillery fire east of the C. Miglio." Despite a self-sacrificing effort, in which many officers in particular were killed or wounded, the confusion couldn't be mastered so that the advance could resume. Thus the assault by 27 ID, begun with such great energy, came to a halt. The forward groups on the Col del Fenilon and Col del Fagheron found that they were isolated, and in the afternoon had to repulse enemy counter-thrusts.

The commander of 54th Inf Bde, GM von Watterich, came up to the Ca d'Anna at 5:00 PM; on his way he encountered some troops drifting to the rear whom he ordered to halt on this high ground and to build a battle line. At 6:00 PM two battalion commanders from IR 85 made their way back to the brigadier and reported that the last rifle cartridges had been expended; the troops had been forced to abandon the Col del Fagheron, while those on the Col Moschin were defending themselves with stones. The other remnants of their battalions had withdrawn to the C. Miglio. In this time of apparent crisis, Watterich demanded that the artillery should immediately lay down a barrage south of the C. Miglio. The batteries did comply by bombarding the target area, but also struck the Ca d'Anna. Thus the confusion increased. Reports which reached the divisional and corps HQ in these tragic hours were therefore contradictory and confusing; the result was that no one knew the actual situation. In particular, it now seemed impossible that our own men were still holding onto the Col Moschin and Col del Fenilon. In fact, however, some gallant troops from IR 85 and also from IR 67 were still stationed there. Finally at 11:00 the Italians were able to recover the Col del Fenilon. In the morning of 16 June a reinforced enemy storm battalion, after powerful artillery preparation, attacked the Col Moschin where at 7:00 AM they overwhelmed the remnants of the Marmaros Sziget IR 85. About 25 officers and 225 men were taken prisoner.²²²

Actions of the 32nd Division

The attack of 32 ID was also very promising at the outset but ended on a sour note. This Division had deployed its brigades next to each other. At their starting points the troops suffered substantial losses from the Italians' counter-preparatory bombardment, but weren't prevented from advancing with determination at the appointed hour. The Zambor IR # 23 attacked east from Mt Asolone, first storming strong points 1490 and 1503 on the western wing of the Italian VI Corps; then parts of the unit pushed on to Mt Coston, which they took around 3:00 PM in a

222Giardino, Vol. II, p. 348

bitter struggle. They captured 1500 men along the way, also seizing a field battery (on Point 1503) and knocking out three more batteries near Mt Coston.²²³ This Regiment's right wing advanced in coordination with IR 86 into the first enemy position on the southern slope of Mt Asolone²²⁴; slowly they fought their way up to the second position with hand grenades and flame throwers. On the right wing of 32 ID the IR 123 plus I Battalion of IR 70 overcame Italian resistance in the morning, bringing in more than 1000 prisoners. According to a report from the commander of the 123rd, a storm detachment reached the Ost. la Cibera - on the so-called "Cadorna Road" - at 1:00 PM. Thus the attack by 32 ID was going well.

Already at 11:00 AM the divisional commander FML von Bellmond had sent his reserves (II and III Battalions of IR 70) to climb Mt Asolone and reinforce IR 23. The battalions didn't reach the summit until after 3:00 PM. Bellmond wanted to bring up IR 99 to attack Mt Rivon, but this Regiment belonged to 4 ID in XXVI Corps' reserves. Corps HQ had already put that Division in motion - three regiments were going to the sector of the Col della Beretta and one (the 99th) into the Val Cesilla; they began to descend from Cismon at noon. Reckoning that these units couldn't assemble on the high ground until evening, GdI Horsetzky intended to commit 4 ID the next day to exploit the initial success. Now (also around noon) FML Bellmond reported that he had already used up all his reserves and again asked to be given a regiment from 4 ID. Corps HQ granted his request only to the extent that once IR 99 arrived at the source of the Cesilla valley they would come under the authority of 32 ID.

Reports arriving at Corps HQ after 1:00 PM had a gloomy tinge. The attacks of both the 27 and 32 ID had stalled. The regiments of the 32nd - recruited on the plains of Hungary - were suffering casualties. The enemy's strong artillery fire burdened the exhausted troops and ripped great holes in their ranks. Lively counterattacks started around 4:00 PM and caused the Division's center to waver. IR 86 was the first to be pushed back, whereupon IR 123 also had to give up part of the ground gained in their initial success. Since all communications were cut, reports were unreliable; they exaggerated the significance of the setback. Divisional HQ, which had already twice renewed their request for reinforcements, finally reported at 6:30 PM that due to holes in the front and the lack of reserves "even Mt Asolone

²²³Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 227

²²⁴When the operation started the Hungarians held only the northern slope and summit of Mt Asolone, while the Italians were entrenched in the area immediately south of the peak.

[could] no longer be held with certainty" if the enemy attacked.

The thought that this important bulwark might be lost had a jolting effect. Now Corps HQ immediately placed IR 9 (which had arrived on the Col della Berretta) at the disposal of 32 ID. At the same time they ordered IR 99 to leave just one battalion in the Cesilla valley, while the other two climbed up to the Berretta. These two battalions plus IR 8 (which had marched to the Col Caprile) and IR 49 (assembled near the Col Bonato) were supposed to remain available to Corps HQ as an undivided force. But the situation developed otherwise. At 7:40 PM the 27 ID suddenly reported that the enemy had seized the Ca d'Anna and were still advancing; divisional HQ were obliged to deploy all available parts of IR 8 just to hold the old position where the attack had started. The plans of Corps HQ were crossed up. Out of the 4 ID they were left with just IR 49. But even this unit was no longer intact, since 32 ID - believing that their neighbors on the right "had been thrown back past their old positions" - laid claim to the leading battalion of the 49th so it could support the Division's right wing.

"The most depressing aspect of these events - at least insofar as they referred to the enemy's actions - was that they existed only in the imagination of the persons making the reports. The Italians had neither attacked Mt Asolone nor re-occupied the Ca d'Anna. On the morning of the next day there were no enemy troops in sight within 1½ to 2 km of our front. It was as if an evil spirit had unleashed a nightmare of confusion upon us."²²⁵

Thus Corps HQ had been deceived into believing that a mighty counterattack was unfolding that evening, endangering not only all the progress made during the day but also our possession of the original front. At this time parts of 27 and 32 ID were still within the enemy's first position and at one location (Point 1503) were even in the second position. It was true that the Italians had recovered Mt Coston.

Actions of GdI Scotti's group

The offensive by GdI Scotti's group developed with less internal friction. On the western wing of I Corps, the 60 ID started their storm troop operation against the Pertica ridge early in the morning. At the same time another assault group thrust ahead to the ridge known as the C. Tasson (after the name of the

225This is an excerpt from remembrances submitted to the military archives by GdI Horsetzky, who at the time was commanding XXVI Corps.

adjacent hamlet). Soon thereafter the divisional commander, contrary to his original intention, sent his entire unit into the attack, because fog over the entire area would cover the approach and onslaught of his troops. Storm detachments and other parts of 119 Inf Bde forced a path through the strong barriers on the Pertica ridge, overwhelmed the enemy despite fierce resistance, and captured many prisoners plus several trench mortars. On the Tasson ridge the bold storm companies were followed by parts of 120 Inf Bde which drove three battalions of the 59 Italian ID from the field; the enemy sought shelter in the higher trenches that ringed the Grappa summit. But the nearby batteries of this principal Italian bulwark were spewing fire and preventing the gallant attackers from advancing any further. Detachments of 60 ID which were supposed to attack the southern part of the Col dell'Orso ridge never left the forest, since the assistance they expected from 55 ID, coming from the north, didn't materialize.

This other Division of I Corps had attacked, per GdI Scotti's order, in coordination with 50 ID of XV Corps; the target of 55 ID was the center of XVIII Italian Corps, where the line jutted forward ahead of the rest of the enemy front. After hard fighting, BH IR # 4 managed to capture all of Mt Solarolo plus the important Point 1676 (north of the Col dell'Orso). But they were prevented from advancing along the narrow ridge which leads to the latter summit, and from capturing the enemy's strong main trench. The Carinthian IR 7 and parts of the south Hungarian IR 6 conquered the Valderoa Heights. But here they remained because of the situation under 50 ID, their neighbors to the east. At first the 50 ID sent just BH IR 1 and IR 133 into action against Mt Spinuccia; these units were able to penetrate the first enemy line, but could only advance slowly on the northern slope of Mt Meata. Since the conditions under which 20 Hon ID were supposed to attack hadn't been met, the Honved were restricted to diversionary maneuvers, with which they did pin down the reserves of I Italian Corps (whose 24 ID occupied the position south of Mt Tomba by Possagno and Asolo).

Thus miserably bad luck - and perhaps also some individual mistakes - had ruined the brilliant start of XXVI Corps' operation while the attack by GdI Scotti's group had failed because they couldn't overcome both the difficult terrain and stubborn enemy resistance.

In summary, the principal offensive by 11th Army on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau as well as the secondary attack between the Brenta and the Piave had both been shattered. Spirits were low at Army HQ in the night of 15-16 June when they demanded that

their subordinate commanders should "prepare to resist stubbornly so that we can hold our old positions and the areas where our assault has won some success."

c. The k.u.k. XXIV Corps digs in on the Montello

In the area about to be attacked by FML Ludwig Goiginger's XXIV Corps, the Piave cuts through the last offshoots of the mountains in a valley 750 to 1500 meters wide. The river is full of islands and shoals of broken rock, which change shape every time the water reaches a high level. Here the Montello - an elevation 12 km long and 6 km wide - rises to the west of the Piave; on its eastern side it slopes down to the river with steep cliffs that at points are up to 50 meters high. The upper portion of the Montello is composed of chalky rock, with little water; observing the area is difficult because of the broken rocks, a covering of shrubs, and groups of trees. Accurate orientation is possible only thanks to the numerous lanes, running in a north-south direction. There was an embankment on the western shore of the Piave which ran from Nervesa - at the edge of the Montello - to a point below the Susegana bridges; it rose to a height of about 4 meters above the water, making it impossible for troops to land from pontoons. East of the Piave rises the hilly terrain of the Colfosco, which in places was thickly wooded; its southwest slope, cut by deep ravines, falls 15 to 20 meters down to the river.

At the place where the crossing was planned, the river had several arms, two to three meters deep. The total width was 320 meters near Falzè, 250 meters near Villa Jacur and Nervesa; the current was running at around 3 meters per second. There were no points at which the river could be forded in its entirety.²²⁶

The artillery of 6th Army began to fire at 3:00 AM. According to the orders of Army Group HQ, the infantry assault on the Italian positions, which included numerous machine gun nests plus barbed wire barriers reaching into the water, was supposed to follow at 7:40. A suggestion by FM Goiginger that the crossing should start earlier, under cover of darkness, had been turned down. But since complete surprise would be impossible after the artillery preparation started, FML Goiginger instructed each division in his corps to select one brigade to begin the operation at 5:30 AM. They would be followed in each division by one regiment in divisional reserve and one in corps reserve.

226 Rendulic, "Die Montello Schlacht (Juni 1918)" in Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1927 edition; pp 385 ff.)

After the position on the western bank was taken, each regiment would construct a plank bridge and each division a larger military bridge so that the rest of the infantry could cross over, as well as the artillery in stages. Meanwhile the attack on the second and third enemy positions would continue, protected by a rolling barrage. At least the long-range guns plus the light batteries accompanying the infantry would be able to also participate in the fighting at the fourth position. Ground-support planes would support the attacking groups, while fighters thwarted the enemy's aerial observation.

GM Rudolf Krauss' II Corps were assigned a purely defensive role. They were supposed to suppress the Italian batteries stationed between the Collesel Val d'Acqua and the Curogna brook, and to support the advance of the right wing of XXIV Corps along the northern slope of the Montello with artillery fire. Otherwise II Corps would be ready to cross the Piave if the enemy began to break up their front by Vidor.

The initial onslaught

Thick fog lay over the Piave at sunrise on 15 June; along with dust from the artillery fire and an artificial smokescreen (which was especially strong in the sector of 13 Sch Div) it filled the entire valley up to the higher ground beyond its banks. Although artillery observation was therefore difficult, the river crossing by the infantry was facilitated. At first the enemy made hardly any response to our fire. The Italians had apparently learned from deserters that there were plans to cross the river, and a few days earlier had carried out an artillery exercise in the northeastern part of the Montello. They had concluded that a crossing here was impossible, and so were taken by surprise when the assault did begin.²²⁷ Although our gas shells contained only tear gas, they did force both the Italian infantry and gunners to wear masks. The enemy artillery fire didn't start until almost 5:00 AM, although the trench mortars and machine guns along the bank had already been active since our bombardment began.

FML Lieb's 31 ID intended to attack on both sides of Falzè at three points. The first pontoons and barges of the initial wave (troops from Infantry Regiments 44 and 69) had already cast off from the northern bank at 5:10 AM to limit damage from enemy artillery fire. The foremost detachments sprang with such energy into their vessels that several actually sank from over-crowding. When they reached the southern bank the first companies stormed the Italian outposts along the river, which were in the hands of

²²⁷Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 256

the gallant Magyars by 6:15. But as Italian artillery fire intensified, the shipment of more troops over the river was feasible only from the area east of Falzè. Enemy gunfire also hindered construction of a military bridge.

FML Kindl's 13 Sch Div crossed the Piave between the mouth of the Soligo and the Mercadelli ravine. Schützen Regiments 24 and 25, in the front line, began their operation at 5:00 AM. They were well supported by machine guns stationed forward on the Soligo island. Like their Hungarian comrades, the brave Lower Austrians and south Moravians of 13 Sch Div stormed the steep edge of the Montello somewhat ahead of schedule. Despite the enemy bombardment they were immediately able to start building firm communications over the river, which were completed around 1:00 PM.

FML Ströher led the troops of his 17 ID over the river between the Mercadelli ravine and Nervesa. The initial wave, which would cross at two points, was the 33 Inf Bde (IR 39 and 46 reinforced with a battalion from IR 43) along with light batteries. The pontoons entered the water at 5:40 AM. After overwhelming Italian sentries stationed on the sand banks, the first troops soon landed on the western shore. Here also the reason for the early start was concern over fire from enemy machine guns along the river bank, and from artillery stationed in the area southwest and south of Nervesa; the latter still sank many pontoons. By 7:15 the Italian position along the western shore of the Piave was in the hands of the Hungarian battalions. But construction of a military bridge failed due to continuous and heavy Italian fire, expertly directed from the air, and due also to the fact that the sapper company weren't skilled in working in water. The following waves of troops therefore had to be diverted to 13 Sch Div's crossing point farther north.

The northeastern part of the Montello and the adjacent sector of the river stretching southeast to Palazzon were defended by VIII Italian Corps (58 and 48 ID). The defenders of the forward position had been rotated in the night of 14-15 June, which increased the confusion caused by the attack. On the western part of the Montello were stationed 51 ID of XXVII Corps, whose 66 ID guarded the river farther west as far as Pederobba. XXX Corps (47 and 50 ID) were in 8th Army's reserve.

The parts of Goiginger's Corps which had already crossed the Piave paused to complete their deployment for a renewed assault, then stormed ahead; with effective help from ground-support

planes they were able to capture the second and third lines of the first Italian position relatively quickly. The enemy were finished off with daggers, hand grenades and flame throwers. The attackers also seized numerous batteries, despite resistance from the brave Italian artillerists. Several of the guns were immediately turned against the enemy. This was all the more necessary because the planned barrage, which was supposed to open the way for the infantry, failed to materialize. By 10:00 AM, IR 44 and 69 of 31 ID were standing on the Collesel di Sota; somewhat further ahead, Schützen Regiments 24 and 25 had taken the Collesel di Zorle while the 39th and 46th Infantry had captured the Collesel d.l. Madonna and the northern edge of Nervesa. By 2:00 PM the 13 Sch Div had even broken into the part of the second Italian position which jutted forward north of Giavera.

Meanwhile several heavy batteries moved forward closer to the river, and infantry plus some guns crossed to the other side. By 2:40 PM all of 13 Sch Div's infantry plus their attached light batteries were on the western bank. The military bridge of 13 Sch Div was also being used by Infantry Regiments 32 and BH 3, as well as by the rest of IR 44 from 31 ID, since it wasn't possible for them to cross south of Falzè under continuous heavy fire from the Italian batteries on the western part of the Montello, near Cornuda, and on Mt Sulder; the artillery of the k.u.k. II Corps hadn't been able to fully silence these guns. And starting at 2:00 PM the bridge of 13 Sch Div was the target of enemy air units which struck in rotation. Our own anti-aircraft artillery and machine guns were completely unsuccessful in countering this assault, as were our fighter planes. Therefore the crossing by the parts of 13 Sch Div's artillery which were ready to move²²⁸ - as well as of the infantry of 31 ID still on the eastern bank (about four battalions) - had to be postponed until after darkness fell. By evening the 17 ID had been able to ship over just seven battalions.

Consolidating and guarding the bridgehead

In the afternoon, HQ of XXIV Corps learned from aerial scouts that since 8:00 AM two long enemy columns had been on the march from Treviso - one to Villorba and one to Postioma; another column was on the way from Mestre to Treviso. Therefore measures were needed to respond to the immediate arrival of Italian reinforcements. FML Goiginger was obliged to ask that 11 Hon CD,

228Most of the field artillery brigades had been divided into two parts - one of which was equipped for movement and another, farther back, which was almost immobile.

stationed at Scomigo (south of Vittorio) in the Army's reserve, should move to Falzè so he could use it if necessary. Also he wanted his Corps to advance as quickly as possible so that before the enemy reserves arrived he could secure a sector suitable for continuing the offensive. Because of the delays in crossing the river caused by artillery fire, and because Italian resistance stiffened around noon, a general attack wouldn't take place until 6:00 PM. 17 ID would advance to the stretch of rail line south of Nervesa and to Giavera, 13 Sch Div to a line running from there past Point 175 to Busa di Castel sottera, and 31 ID nearly up to the Collesel Val d'Acqua heights; then on the morning of the 16th the operation would continue against the third Italian position.

In the first onslaught of XXIV Corps the Italian 58 ID had been completely defeated; the adjacent flanks of 51 and 48 ID seemed to be greatly threatened. There was serious danger of a breakthrough. But now the counter-measures of the commander of 8th Italian Army, G.Lt Pennella, began to take effect. He'd ordered 47 ID of XXX Corps to occupy the rear position near Venegazzu and sent reinforcements to the hard-pressed VIII Corps; the latter units (one Bersaglieri and one cavalry regiment, the storm detachment of XXVII Corps and several armored cars) would plug the gap that had opened between 51 ID and the remnants of 58 ID. The troops who were still holding their ground were supposed to advance against the wing of the Austro-Hungarians who'd penetrated the Montello and push them back.²²⁹ A brigade from 50 ID (which was still in reserve) was placed at the disposal of XXVII Corps.

The counterattack by the Italian reserves began around 3:30 PM, at which time a heavy thunderstorm broke out. The left wing of 13 Sch Div, where all of the Division's and some of the Corps' reserves had been deployed, were forced to abandon the heights by the Giavera church to the enemy and pulled back to Busa d. Rane.²³⁰ Thus only a very small part of the assault which XXIV Corps HQ had planned for 6:00 PM could be implemented, since 33 Inf Bde of 17 ID were also unable to advance past the edge of the heights. But 31 ID, whose storm troops thrust deep into the sector of 51 Italian ID, were able to gain ground up to Agostini, Busa d. radice, and Point 226. Their success was in part due to the fact that 51 Italian ID had been ordered to evacuate the river bank and withdraw into the second position.

Archduke Joseph, who had observed the river crossing by XXIV

²²⁹Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 263 ff.

²³⁰Dupont, p. 111

Corps from early morning until almost 1:00 PM from Mt Moncader (Point 470) in II Corps' sector²³¹, had a right to be satisfied with his success. All of the enemy's first position and parts of the second had been captured, along with 4100 prisoners and around 70 guns. Almost three-quarters of the infantry of the three attacking divisions were already on the western bank, along with several mountain batteries; the rest of the Corps were supposed to follow them during the night. But a breakthrough past the enemy front hadn't been achieved, and it was anticipated that fresh Italian forces would be encountered as the fighting around the Montello continued.

Because of the very smooth start of the operation, in the morning the HQ of 6th Army had already asked to be allotted two divisions from the strategic reserve; in the afternoon the AOK told them to take a division of their choice. The Archduke selected 41 Hon ID, which first moved forward into the area Conegliano-Pianale-Barriera and then was assigned to XXIV Corps. At 8:20 PM this Corps received an order to thrust on 16 June as far as the western edge of the Montello and to the Montebelluna-Treviso railroad. 41 Hon ID were to be employed on XXIV Corps' southern wing.

The issue of maintaining links between the two banks of the Piave was critical. The only completed military bridge (near Villa Jacur) was ripped apart at 4:30 PM by a pontoon floating downstream. Due to enemy artillery fire and to continuous air attacks (which could be countered to just a limited extent by our insufficient aerial defenses), the bridge couldn't be restored until 3:30 AM on the 16th. The loss of river-crossing equipment by 17 and 31 ID had been extraordinarily high, and the sappers had suffered very heavy casualties. Requests for more bridging gear and technical companies could be granted only to a minimal extent because of the lack of reserves.

d. The Isonzo Army crosses the Piave

The Isonzo Army were supposed to cross the Piave between Cimadolmo and S Dona and then advance to the Treviso area. Their artillery preparation began simultaneously with that of 6th Army. All three corps of the attacking group were scheduled to penetrate the enemy's foremost line at 7:30 AM. XXIII Corps, with the mission of diverting Italian forces, would decide on their own when to start operating. To be nearer to the scene of

²³¹Archduke Joseph, Vol. VI, p. 410

action, FM Boroevic came to Oderzo; starting at 3:00 AM he witnessed the raging battle from the town's church tower. GO von Wurm, commanding the Isonzo Army, also moved forward, with a small staff, from S Vito to the village of Spinè next to Oderzo.

Opposing the Isonzo Army was the 3rd Italian Army, led by the Duke of Aosta. It consisted of XXIII Corps (4 and 61 ID), XXVIII Corps (25 ID backed up by 53 ID), and XI Corps (31 and 45 ID, backed up by 23 ID) plus 2 CD. Besides 23 and 53 ID, the Army's reserve units included twelve bicycle battalions, three corps storm detachments, one infantry and one trench mortar regiment. Thus the Italians had just five divisions in the first line, holding 55 km of the river bank. Behind 3rd Army, but under the control of the high command, were the XXV and XXVI Corps of 9th Army. The 3rd Army were aware of the impending offensive. Back on 23 May a lieutenant of Czech nationality had deserted and reported that the k.u.k. XXIII Corps were about to attack. Hussars captured near Bressanin on 26 May asserted that the assault wouldn't take place prior to 5 June. Several soldiers who deserted on 14 June indicated that the offensive would start the next day. The Italians had taken all necessary defensive measures, including preparations to withstand poison gas; nevertheless they were somewhat skeptical about the reports, since there had been so many false alarms and since they knew crossing the Piave would be such a difficult task for their foes.²³² The hurricane of fire which erupted at 3:00 AM on the 15th wiped away their lingering doubts.

On this day thick fog covered the lower course of the Piave, just as in the other sectors. Later there were light clouds in the sky. The weather grew sultry in the afternoon, and rain started in the evening.

Operations of XVI Corps

GdI Kralicek's XVI Corps made up the northern wing of the Isonzo Army. They were scheduled to cross the river from the southern part of Papadopoli Island and the smaller islands lying between it and the right bank (between the lines Salettuol-Maserada and Zonta-Metrinar). The first echelon, from FML Freih. von Zeidler's 58 ID, were the 116 Inf Bde (IR # 1 and FJB 2, 11, 23; reinforced by six companies from Storm Battalions 58 and 7, Bn III/103 from 59 ID, and seven accompanying batteries). They'd attempt to cross at three points. To their right, IR 106 from 33 ID (temporarily attached to 58 ID) would come over the river along with parts of Storm Battalions 33 and 7 plus ten mountain

232Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 266 ff.

batteries. Then military bridges would be erected at Salettuol and Onesti, and 115 Inf Bde would follow 116 Bde.

The first task of the reinforced 58 ID was to capture the position on the embankment between Maserada and I Ronci; here the infantry would still be supported by our artillery stationed on the left bank. After crossing the river, two battalions of IR 106 would roll up the enemy lines along the bank toward the northwest; the third battalion would cover the main body of 33 ID as they came over the river. Under the 33rd, the objective of 66 Inf Bde was Postioma; the other parts of the Division would capture Visnadello and then pivot toward Povegliano and Spresiano, where in cooperation with 17 ID they'd cut off the enemy stationed by the Susegana bridges. GdI Kralicek planned to have 46 Sch Div cross the Piave behind 58 ID and then to insert it into line between this unit and 33 ID. In the next stage the 58 ID and 46 Sch Div would capture the part of the fortified camp of Treviso which lay between Aperie and Vascon. Once this had been accomplished, the next goal of 58 ID would be the stretch of the Treviso-Montebelluna railroad between Monigo and Castagnole; 46 Sch Div would keep pace to their right. The eastern bank of the Piave between the Army's border and Cimadolmo was guarded by k.k. Lst IR 2 from 201 Lst Inf Bde. Lst IR 1 of this Brigade was detached to serve on the lines of communication.

The troops who were going to cross the river were able to make their preparations without enemy interference. When our artillery fire began the enemy was at first almost silent, but after 4:00 AM the thunder of the Italian batteries quickly mounted and by 7:00 AM was louder than ours.

As ordered by XVI Corps HQ, the first barges were steered forward at 6:45 AM. Soon complaints were heard that our artillery was firing too short, and that the undamaged Italian machine guns were in action. Because of heavy casualties the column on the left (Battalion III/103) soon had to cancel their crossing attempt. On the other hand, in the middle and right-hand columns of 58 ID the first assault troops from Storm Battalion 58, Jaeger Battalions 2 and 11, and the Kaiser IR # 1 reached the western bank. Here they encountered enemy units which were almost completely intact. Nonetheless some stout-hearted groups advanced into the third Italian line, where they held on for five long hours.

Meanwhile the situation of the attackers on the river deteriorated very quickly. The pontoons of the following detachments were sunk by flanking fire, or destroyed as they were

dragged over the small islands. A plank bridge was constructed with great effort, but after just 20 minutes it was blown up by the accurate Italian artillery. The assault troops on the western bank, fighting with the courage of desperation, finally had to yield to strong counterattacks. Only small remnants of these heroic detachments managed to swim back to Papadopoli Island, taking about two dozen prisoners with them.

All of the vessels of the west Hungarian IR 106 had been destroyed or damaged by 6:45 AM. However, the majority of the Regiment (all but four companies) were able to ford the river just east of Salettuol. Immediately after crossing, the gallant troops spread out upstream and attacked toward Maserada. This success was reported by carrier pigeon to XVI Corps HQ, which instructed 115 Inf Bde - originally scheduled to follow the Jaeger Battalions over the river - to follow IR 106 instead. Due to the losses among the infantry, sappers and equipment, plans for having 116 Inf Bde renew their crossing attempt were abandoned at 11:00 AM.

But in the first hours of the afternoon the situation of IR 106 became very critical; completely isolated and without artillery support, they were engaged against the 31 Italian ID. Greatly weakened by casualties, and almost out of ammunition, the Regiment fell back to the bank of the river, which meanwhile was rising again, and crossed to Papadopoli island by two fords. 115 Inf Bde, which meanwhile had arrived on the island, were told not to attempt a crossing; the enemy's accurate artillery barrage made any movement impossible. FML Zeidler now wanted to make any new attempt conditional on progress by the neighboring groups; his decision was approved by Army HQ, despite the opinion of XVI Corps HQ which wanted to keep attacking. The commander of 33 ID, FML von Iwanski, had also suggested that the operation shouldn't be repeated until he had sufficient gas shells and then only in conjunction with a thrust to the south by XXIV Corps.

Thus despite the troops' courage and spirit of self-sacrifice the assault by XVI Corps had completely failed. In the opinion of Corps HQ the reason for the setback was that "the artillery preparation didn't last long enough to damage the obstacles." According to prisoners, our artillery fire had in fact been poorly directed and caused the Italians hardly any casualties. The clouds of tear gas produced by the shells had been so small that the enemy never had to put their masks on. 58 ID had lost 66 officers and 1849 men (dead, wounded and missing). IR 106 of 33 ID lost around 1200 men; IR 83, which had stayed on Papadopoli Island, also suffered casualties due to artillery fire.

Only outposts were left on the island during the night of 15-16 June. Most of 116 Inf Bde assembled in Tempio, and most of 115 Bde in Rai and Suglianì. 33 ID occupied the position on the river bank between Zandonadi and Cimadolmo with 66 Inf Bde, while 65 Bde spent the night at Tezze. 46 Sch Div had never left their camps.

IV Corps

GdK Schönburg's IV Corps was to be the spearhead of the group attacking toward Treviso. They had their two Honved divisions (64 and 70) in the first line. 29 ID were in the Corps' reserve. The attack was to develop in the area between the southern border of XVI Corps and the line S Bartolomeo - S Martino - S Trovaso. A line running from C Angeli to the fork in the railroad east of Treviso divided the sectors of the two attacking divisions, which were supposed to secure the islands lying in front of them before 7:30 AM, the time when they were scheduled to penetrate the enemy's position on the river bank.

The commander of 64 Hon ID, FML Seide, placed k.u. Landsturm Regiments 19, 3 and 1 in the forward line, holding Lst IR 6 and Lst Bn V/4 in reserve. They were to cross the river at four points, after which two military bridges would be set up. GM von Berzeviczy's 70 Hon ID were deployed in greater depth. Initially just two regiments - Hon IR 314 and 315 - would cross the Piave at five points, and one bridge would be erected. Here, as under 64 Hon ID, the main effort was being made on the left, so Hon IR 33 and then Hon IR 313 were lined up behind the left wing and would follow them. The immediate task of both Honved divisions was to capture the first Italian position. After the units were brought back into order and reserves arrived, the Hungarians - covered by a wall of fire from our guns - would burst through the area where the enemy artillery were deployed. If possible, they were to conquer the foremost part of the Treviso fortifications on the first day; 64 Hon ID would take Breda di Piave and 70 Hon ID Pero.

Just as was the case in XVI Corps' sector, the Italian artillery opposite IV Corps at first didn't respond to our preparatory fire. But from 5:00 AM the enemy laid down a barrage in front of their first position. Meanwhile the foremost attacking troops had occupied the various islands and prepared to embark over the western arm of the river. When the attack opened the right wings of both divisions were unsuccessful. Lst IR 19 and Hon IR 314 suffered such heavy casualties that they had to abandon their

attempt. On the other hand, the 128 and 207 Hon Inf Bdes came over the Piave, drove back the inner wings of the 31 and 45 Italian ID, and captured the first defensive line. Now under 64 Hon ID the 127 Inf Bde followed the 128th over the river, while the second line was being captured east of Cadelu. Similarly the 70 Hon ID thrust into the second row of Italian trenches near S Bartolomeo. On their left they linked up with the troops of VII Corps who'd also come over the river.

Late in the afternoon the enemy, reinforced by a brigade from 23 ID, counterattacked; the second brigade of this Division occupied the Treviso fortifications. The Italian assault struck the inner wings of the two Honved divisions, which only had about half their infantry and none of their artillery on the western bank. Under enemy pressure the left wing of 64 Hon ID fell back to the river. Thus they lost their connection with 70 Hon ID. The situation of the troops from the 70th who were fighting in Saletto remained unclear overnight. Ceaseless Italian artillery fire and bombing raids by enemy planes hindered the movement of reinforcements to the western bank. The bridges leading to the island were also bombarded. Losses among the technical troops and their pioneer equipment were very high.

GdK Schönburg, who'd come forward to the Piave, had been severely wounded early in the morning. FML Seide, the leader of 64 Hon ID, temporarily took his place, handing control of his own Division over to the former commander of 65 Inf Bde, GM Ritter von Szivo. Based on accurate information about the situation as of 6:00 PM, the new Corps commander ordered that on 16 June the first task was merely to secure the Piavesella sector; for this purpose 70 Hon ID would start by clearing the enemy out of the Saletto area.

VII Corps

Working with IV Corps, the VII Corps were supposed to break through the enemy positions and reach the Sile between Casier and Lughignano as quickly as possible. 14 and 24 ID plus 9 CD were in the first line; 44 Sch Div were the Corps' reserves. The attack involved overcoming the barrier of the river at five points. Four military bridges and numerous smaller bridges were to be erected.

Per the orders of GdI Freih. von Schariczer, the Corps commander, the line from Villanova through Al Bosco to the southern edge of Zenson was to be secured in the first bound. After the units were put in order and the light batteries brought up, the thrust

would continue so that the line S Biagio di Callalta - L'Isolella - C Brisotto - Campolongo would be reached on the first day of the offensive. 14 and 24 ID were to deliver the main assault. 9 CD were instructed to cross the Piave behind 24 ID, except for a screen of outposts to be left behind on the eastern bank; while the first two regiments (DR 1 and 13) crossed they would be temporarily attached to 24 ID. As the operation proceeded 9 CD would guard the Corps' left flank.

The main force of VII Corps' thrust would strike the southern wing of 45 Italian ID (under XI Corps). The enemy's 25 ID were stationed opposite our 9 CD. Behind 25 ID the 53 ID stood ready to join the fight.

FML von Szende's 14 ID crossed over in two brigade groups, holding back four battalions as a divisional reserve. The attackers' artillery fire, to which the enemy were already responding at 4:00 AM, wasn't as effective as desired; many Italian machine guns in undetected positions were left untouched, and inflicted substantial casualties on the northern group (27 Inf Bde) while they were still coming over the islands. Thus only three battalions from this Brigade were able to reach the western bank, where they established a foothold within the enemy's position on the causeway, linked up with 70 Hon ID. On the left wing the 28 Inf Bde wrestled with even greater difficulties as they advanced. Just two and a half of their battalions reached the western bank, where they set up a bridgehead in the narrow area between the railroad causeway and S Andrea di Barbarana. The crossing by the center of 14 ID was completely unsuccessful. Only some patrols were able to swim across and take over the area between the two principal groups on the western bank. Because so many pontoons had been lost and the Italian fire remained heavy, there was no attempt to construct a bridge.

FML Urbarz's 24 ID and FML Freih. von Le Gay's 9 CD were considerably more successful, even though within the northern group of the former Division just six companies from IR 45 were able to establish themselves on the western bank (between S Andrea and La Fossa). Farther south, on both sides of Salgareda, the entire 47 Inf Bde (IR 109 and 77) had crossed over by 10:00 AM with very light casualties. One and a half regiments of 9 CD were also able to get past the river by the same hour. Then an attack was launched which drove back the inner wings of the Italian 45 and 25 ID past the road on the causeway leading northwest from Zenson, and destroyed the left wing of 25 ID.²³³

233Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 271

53 ID from the reserves of XXVIII Italian Corps and the 81st IR from the Army's reserves had occupied the defenses in the rear between Pero, Monastier and Mèolo; later the two brigades of 53 ID were split up and attached to 25 and 45 ID.²³⁴ Counterattacks by enemy battle groups, now reinforced by small parts of the reserves, led only to more casualties. FML Urbarz's group took 58 officers and 2351 men as prisoners. By 6:00 PM two more battalions from 48 Inf Bde and one and a half more regiments of 9 CD had also crossed to the western bank, and it was now possible to set up a military bridge.

To reinforce the units engaged on the western bank, GdI Schariczer sent three battalions from 14 ID toward Salgareda, but on the 15th they only reached Ponte di Piave. Furthermore, at 9:00 PM the 87 Sch Bde of 44 Sch Div marched off to join Urbarz's group; on the next day there were to deploy between the inner wings of 4 and 24 ID. 88 Sch Bde were ordered to assemble before dawn on 16 June near S Nicolo and Candole as the Corps' reserve.

XXIII Corps

The XXIII Corps were even more successful than VII Corps, although they had been assigned a secondary role (to pin down enemy reserves with a thrust along the S Dona - Mèolo - Mestre railroad). For this purpose the Corps commander GdI von Csicsrics instructed FML Ritter von Gologorski's 10 ID to cross the Piave between S Dona and the point where the Piave vecchio²³⁵ branches off; then they would advance to the road leading from Croce through Sperandio to Dubois. IR 20, on the southern wing of 12 ID, would join this operation and after crossing the river were to roll up the Italian position on the bank as far as Fossalta di Piave; this would enable the rest of 12 ID to also reach the opposite bank. After the bridgehead was secured, two military bridges would be set up (upstream and downstream of S Dona). The next goal of 10 ID would be the Mèolo brook; FML von Puchalski's 12 ID would advance toward Pralongo and Losson, covering the right flank.²³⁶

234Ministero della guerra, "Brigate di fanteria" (Rome, 1928 and 1929) - Vol. VII, p. 145 and Vol. VIII, p. 209

235The Piave vecchio ("old Piave") had formerly been the principal arm of the river but now was a minor branch.

236TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The author of this volume, though careful to note that most deserters were of Slavic nationality, failed to also mention that the vast majority of the infantry in XXIII Corps, the most successful k.u.k. command on 15 June, were Slavs. Czechs were the largest component of IR # 3, 21,

HR # 5 from GM von Habermann's 1 CD were scheduled to cross the Piave near Testadura at the same time as 10 ID. Then they would advance through Paludello toward Capo Sile, forcing the enemy to evacuate their bridgehead at Bressanin and later also to leave the coastal sector between Cavazuccherina and Cortellazzo. Success here would in addition make it possible for vessels to sail out of the Revèdoli Canal. The k.u.k. XXIII Corps were opposed by the Italian XXIII Corps, composed of 61 and 4 ID plus Finance Guard and marine units.

According to prisoners taken later, our artillery fire was very accurate and effective; the enemy guns at first made no response, and then fired so weakly that the first waves of the attacking Infantry Regiments (# 20, 55 and 21), well covered by the fog, were easily able to cross the river. They also quickly passed through the Italian barriers, mostly destroyed by our trench mortars, and after tossing a few hand grenades had taken the forward trenches. The enemy, although they had been warned by deserters and placed on high alert, were surprised by the quick advance; some of them - thrown into confusion by the bursting gas shells - surrendered after offering little resistance.

and 98. Poles were predominant in IR # 20 (most of the other troops were Ruthenes), 56 and 100 (in the latter the Czechs were the second largest contingent). Units with a Ruthene majority and Polish minority were IR # 15 and 55. Most of the remaining troops were German, but except for IR # 98 (where they constituted a third of the personnel) they were greatly outnumbered by the Slavs.

Afterwards the Italian 61 ID also offered just feeble resistance to the continuing advance by Csicsrics' Corps. At 8:30 AM the enemy were already stating over the radio (without encoding the message) "We are beaten!" Two and a half hours later IR # 20 occupied the strong point near the rail and road junction 2½ km northwest of the village of S Dona. 10 ID, whose IR 15 and 98 had also crossed to the western bank, by 11:00 advanced past the canal flowing to Cento from the northwest. In the process many Italian batteries fell into the hands of our victoriously advancing troops. Reserves (six bicycle battalions plus the storm troops of XXIII Corps) hastily came forward to support the badly-battered left wing of the enemy's 61 ID.

To avoid the weak artillery fire falling on the main body of 12 ID still standing on the eastern bank, IR # 3 began to cross the river near Mussetta at 11:00 AM. This operation was also successful. By 6:00 PM the 24 Inf Bde of 12 ID reached Fossalta di Piave, which IR 3 secured after see-saw fighting, and C Silvestri. Under 10 ID the 19 Inf Bde took Croce and I Casoni while 20 Inf Bde were hanging back somewhat on the left. 23 Inf Bde, still in reserve, had moved up to the Piave but couldn't cross yet because heavy long-range fire and air attacks were greatly hampering construction of bridges.

HR # 5 had been able to get over the river. In the afternoon they advanced to La Castaldia, whereupon that evening the enemy evacuated their bridgehead at Bressanin (from which they had attempted to sortie early in the morning). The Bressanin position was then occupied by HR # 2.

Thus on the first day of the battle the k.u.k. XXIII Corps had scored the greatest success within the Isonzo Army. They had penetrated the enemy positions to a depth of as much as 4 km on a front of 8 km, capturing several thousand prisoners²³⁷, 37 guns and an ample amount of military equipment. But they hadn't been able to construct a bridge, or to establish contact on the western bank with the neighboring VII Corps.

Just like 6th Army, the Army of the Isonzo had won a significant initial success on 15 June, although not as planned (since the main assault from Oderzo toward Treviso had stalled). IV Corps, which was supposed to be the spearhead, had barely been able to set up a foothold on the western bank. The crossing by their

23712 ID sent 33 captured officers and 1223 men back over the river. There are no precise figures for prisoners taken by 10 ID and 1 CD, although 10 ID did report they'd taken 37 guns and an intact mortar battery.

neighbors to the north, XVI Corps, had failed completely. But VII and especially XXIII Corps had gained substantial ground. Thus the main effort of the Isonzo Army was shifting to the south. Despite the inadequate communications over the Piave - in the entire sector only the one military bridge built by 24 ID was in place - the offensive could continue with some hope for victory.

e. Measures of the higher-level HQ on 15 June

The AOK and FM Conrad's Army Group

On 15 June the high-ranking k.u.k. commanders awaited news from the front with burning impatience. The reports arriving at Levico and Bozen were all favorable until 1:00 PM, but the picture darkened somewhat during the afternoon. When Emperor Charles visited the HQ of Conrad's Army Group around 5:30 the Field Marshal reported that the latest information indicated that after an initial success the subsequent fighting was difficult but not without promise.²³⁸

After darkness fell the various HQ in south Tyrol learned of the misfortune which had befallen 11th Army. The danger seemed great that the Army might even be forced to retreat past their starting points under heavy enemy counterattacks. Therefore FM Conrad ordered 53 ID, which per instructions of 14 June were supposed to move to Pergine and Levico, to instead assemble near Arsie and Arten. 22 Sch Div, apparently no longer needed in the Tonale area, would move by regiments on the 16th to Trent using the rail line in the Nons valley. Because of the setback to 11th Army FM Conrad asked at 9:00 PM to be given the two divisions of the strategic reserve stationed by Belluno and Vittorio.

At the same time GM Waldstätten was being informed by the Chief of Staff of 11th Army that because of the enemy counterattack all of the ground gained in the morning had now been lost except for the Cm. Ecker and Mt Melago. Waldstätten brought Conrad's request to the Imperial train, but suggested that the Army Group should be ordered "to hold their current line using the forces already available." The decision as to whether and how the offensive could resume would be made the next day. Based on the current situation, Waldstätten believed that a decisive success

238Based on a letter from Capt. Werkmann, at the time part of the Emperor's entourage, to the Military Archive (Reichenau, 14 December 1936).

could be won only by exploiting the gains won by 6th Army on the Montello. That Army should therefore be advised that due to the setback to 11th Army they should "on the one hand reliably secure the II Montello front toward the west while gaining ground toward the southeast so as to aid the further efforts of the Isonzo Army to cross the Piave." Therefore the AOK reserves should be held ready for this sector.

News of the defeat of 11th Army had a crushing effect on GO Arz. He was also convinced that it would be pointless to repeat the attack now that the troops were worn down, had suffered heavy losses, and lacked ammunition. He approved Waldstätten's suggestions and had them issued as orders. Then he discussed the situation with the Emperor, whose reaction to the crisis which had suddenly developed was to contact FM Boroëvic by teleprinter. He informed his paladin in Venetia, "11th Army is being thrown back. Hold your positions. I ask you this in the name of the Monarchy." FM Boroëvic replied, "We will do whatever is possible." Stating "Of this I am convinced", the Supreme Warlord closed this memorable conversation.

The cry for help from the Emperor, who certainly was in the best position to recognize the needs of his realm, illuminated the military and political situation in a flash. It was not just a question of enduring the raging battle, but of the very existence of the Monarchy. Therefore the AOK also asked the War Ministry whether they would be able - since for the moment there was no unrest in the interior - to send forward 25 ID and one of the Honvéd divisions that were on Assistenz service.

It would later be demonstrated that such an extremely pessimistic analysis was hardly justified by the facts; the gloomy evaluation of the situation, particularly in 11th Army's sector, was based on a tragic series of errors and misunderstandings as well as some false reports. In reality the "old positions" of 11th Army were never endangered at any point along the front. But the setback to III Corps and particularly to XIII Corps, whose success had been anticipated with the greatest confidence, was by any measure a justification for disappointment. Meanwhile the other corps were still holding onto the majority of the areas they'd conquered within the enemy lines. Based on an objective evaluation, it must be stated that the enemy were hardly in a position to carry out a large-scale counterattack; they'd lost about 11,000 prisoners to the attackers and no doubt many more of their troops had been killed or wounded.

Therefore many of the lower-level HQ were surprised by the order

which 11th Army's leader issued at 9:45 PM, stating that "I expect all commanders to exert the greatest energy in this critical situation....and to intervene with a strong hand....to retain our current positions." This was true in particular on the Army's eastern wing. Here Generals Kosak and Scotti had already ordered, with complete confidence, that the attack should resume on 16 June; now they had to rescind their instructions. The only measure they'd still implement was GdI Scotti's order that 96 Inf Bde of 48 ID should move forward to Seren, joining I Corps. XXVI Corps HQ, on the other hand, weren't accurately informed of the situation and had even asked Army HQ for reinforcements. They were assigned IR 82 from 53 ID, which during the night were still marching forward to Cismon. The simultaneous transfer of the Army's reserves to the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, as planned in the afternoon, was already proceeding.

FM Boroevic's Army Group

Although FM Boroevic's forces would now be bearing the entire burden of the offensive, he didn't believe he needed to issue any new orders during this eventful night. Both his armies were instructed to carry out their original assignments as they saw fit within their own sectors.

Based on the order just issued directly by the AOK, the HQ of 6th Army felt that they should abandon their plan for capturing the western edge of the Montello.²³⁹ Thus at first the XXIV Corps should strive only to occupy a line reaching from S Margherita over the Collesel Val d'Acqua and heights 314 and 175, then through Giavera and S Mauro to the Susegana bridges. For this purpose as many batteries as possible should be moved to the western bank of the Piave. Strong forces would be held ready behind the front; this economical use of reserves, based on the ideas of FM Boroevic, extended to the plans for 41 Hon ID, which was not yet to be committed to the attack.

The commander of the Isonzo Army intended to start by exploiting the success won on his southern wing. For this purpose he placed additional units under XXIII Corps - 57 ID (hitherto in the Army's reserve), 48 FA Bde (attached until now to 24 ID) and

²³⁹In a letter to the Military Archive dated 14 May 1937, GM Waldstätten asserted that it was never the intention of the AOK that 6th Army HQ should abstain from taking the western edge of the Montello; if all the high ground wasn't secure, there wouldn't be enough room to carry out the supporting thrust from there toward the southeast.

Bicycle Battalion # 2 - which would reach the Mèolo Brook and thrust with their right wing to Monastier. VIII Corps should attack toward S Biaggio to give IV Corps some breathing space. The latter Corps were instructed to at least hold onto the western bank of the Piave if unable to gain further ground by an advance of their own. XVI Corps wouldn't repeat their crossing attempt, but would support the advance of Goiginger's XXIV Corps with artillery and stand ready to thrust ahead in case the enemy fell back under Goiginger's pressure.

The enemy HQ

The Italian generals were placed in a tense position by the offensive which had broken out in the entire area between Asiago and the Adriatic Sea. To parry the various assaults and to seal off the penetrations by their opponents they initiated counter-measures which we have already described. Since G.Lt Diaz was ill, on 15 June the high command were led by his deputy G.Lt Badoglio. They didn't want the reserves used up too hastily, and waited for the situation at the front to clear up before trying to divine the Austro-Hungarians' intentions.

The first news, which arrived at Commando supremo in Abano between 10:00 and 11:00 AM, was negative. 6th and 4th Armies reported that their opponents had penetrated the positions on the mountain front. Soon thereafter 8th Army announced that the Austrians had already occupied half of the Montello. Therefore the Italian high command ordered XXII Corps to occupy the defensive installations between Bassano and Asolo, and even sent the Assault Division to march toward Rosa so they could intervene in case the enemy descended into the plains near Bassano. To back up 8th Army the 47 ID of XXX Corps took up a position near Venegazzu. Also, 8th Army were reinforced by 13 ID (from XXVI Corps); one brigade of this unit had already moved by truck to Giavera on the 15th and the other would follow on the 16th. 3rd Army, which had reported the progress of the Austrians who'd broken the line on the lower Piave, were assigned 33 ID (from XXV Corps) which would occupy the trenches on the Vallio. Finally, other units would head for the lower course of the Piave on June 16th - 11 ID from XXVI Corps, 7 ID from XXV Corps, and 4 CD.

Since there were no tidings of danger from the Adige valley or the western front of Tyrol, the Italian high command had no reservations about shifting XII Corps of 9th Army (stationed at Villafranca) toward the east; the troops boarded trains that would take them to the stations of Treviso and Camposampiero. Furthermore the 1st and 7th Armies were to make reserves available

and ready to move where needed. To be ready for anything, the Commando supremo also took measures to deploy guns in the fortifications on the lower Bacchiglione, at Padua, and in the area between that city and the lagoons.

By evening the high command had the impression that the danger from the north had disappeared, since the Aus-Hung. forces in that area seemed to have already dissipated their strength. The situation on the Piave was more menacing, but sufficient reserves were on hand to master the crisis here also. 8th Army ordered that a counterattack with the forces already on hand would begin on 16 June. Under 3rd Army the fighting would be joined by 33 ID (already assigned to the Army) plus 11th and 7th Infantry Divisions (being shifted toward the Piave) and 4 CD. It was planned to replace these units within the strategic reserve with XII Corps plus forces drawn from 1st and 7th Armies. Furthermore the measures already mentioned would be implemented to ensure the security of the defensive installations in the rear (on the line Bassano-Asolo-Venegazzu), which would be linked with the entrenched camp of Treviso and positions stretching south to the lagoons.²⁴⁰

2. The offensive continues on the Piave (16-18 June)

a. The fighting on 16 June

6th Army

Under 6th Army, FML Goiginger originally planned to have his forces on the Montello renew their attack as early as dawn on 16 June, despite objections by his subordinates to this bold idea. But meanwhile the new order from the AOK arrived during the night, stating that the main tasks of 6th Army now were:

- . to first bring the remaining troops of XXIV Corps on the eastern bank over to the western shore, and
- . then to have the united force advance southeast to support the Isonzo Army.

But efforts to establish firm communications over the Piave were under an unlucky star. During the night a new attempt by 31 ID to set up a bridge near Falzè failed. The combat troops who'd been left east of the river on the 15th had already been re-

240Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", pp. 46 ff. Baj-Maccario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 281 ff. Dupont, pp. 128 ff.

directed to the military bridge at Villa Jacur. But this bridge, which had been repaired during the night, was hit by an enemy bomb at 10:00 AM on the 16th and traffic was interrupted. Throughout the day attempts to improve the bridge were hindered by continuous enemy artillery fire, directed from the air. In similar fashion the Italians also interfered with renewed attempts to ferry soldiers over the river; their task was greatly facilitated by the narrowness of the area where the crossing was taking place. In particular the Italian batteries stationed south of Vidor and southwest of Nervesa were uncomfortably effective. Although all batteries of 6th Army that were in range attempted to suppress the enemy fire, they enjoyed very limited success. The military bridge of 17 ID was almost finished during the night of 15-16 June but just before it became operational it was destroyed by a drifting pontoon. The exhausted sappers weren't able to restore it by dawn, so the incomplete bridge was dismantled and the parts used to help ferry men over the river.²⁴¹

During 16 June the 31st Division were able to bring the rest of their infantry to the western bank, along with two mountain batteries. The destruction of 13 Sch Div's bridge at Villa Jacur forced another postponement to the movement of their mobile artillery over the river. 17 ID received as reinforcements two battalions of IR 43, the Honved Bicycle Battalion and four infantry-support batteries. A series of unfortunate circumstances delayed the shipment over the river of the Division's fourth regiment (IR 139) until after midnight.

Finally, on the 16th the Hon HR 9 and parts of Hon HR 11 (from 11 Hon CD) reached the western bank; they were attached to 31 ID as a group under Col. Heinlein. Only a completely insufficient supply of ammunition and rations could be brought over the river for the three divisions. Both shortages were a burden to the troops, who'd been able to capture only small quantities of food from the enemy. Attempts to build bridges were resumed in the night of 16-17 June. Rain again began to fall on the 16th and became quite heavy, greatly swelling the waters of the Piave. This was another severe hindrance to the construction effort and to the boats crossing the stream.

It was very much to the advantage of XXIV Corps that the enemy didn't attempt any large-scale counterattack on the 16th. During the night of 15-16 June the 17 ID, after repelling several Italian thrusts, were even able to improve their position on the edge of the heights northwest of Nervesa; at noon the often-distinguished Szeged IR 46 established themselves firmly in the town itself. In the afternoon the Italian 13 ID plus storm

²⁴¹Rendulic, "Montelloschlacht", p. 404

detachments of XXVI Corps assaulted 13 Sch Div, whose left wing had to be extended because the right wing of 17 ID were hanging back; the enemy were easily defeated. The Italian 50 ID (of XXX Corps, but attached to XXVII Corps) received a similarly bloody reception when they attacked the Hungarian 31 ID.²⁴² IR 69 of the latter Division struck back on their own initiative at 7:00 PM; they were joined on the left by SchR 24 and on the right by IR 32. According to a report from HQ of 31 ID, these troops temporarily even occupied the Collesel Val d'Acqua Heights, but all the ground gained was lost again during the night. In two days of fighting our XXIV Corps had brought back 194 officers and 1600 men as prisoners, including 2 officers and 146 men of the Czecho-Slovakian Legion.

Of 6th Army's units still on the eastern bank of the Piave, the main body of 11 Hon CD were stationed by Barbisano while 41 Hon ID reached the Ruggio valley west of Susegana. Army HQ believed they would need two bridges to bring these troops over the river. The bridge near Villa Jacur couldn't be used by artillery because of the steepness of the western bank, so the second one would have to be set up farther south. But it seemed that this would only be feasible after the Italian artillery were knocked out. After long negotiations, in which Boroevic's Army Group HQ and even the AOK became involved, this task was assigned to 16 batteries of XVI Corps under the HQ of 7 FA Bde. 6th Army HQ also sought to organize protection for the bridges from air attacks; for this purpose all divisions of XXIV Corps were to provide machine gun companies, while anti-aircraft batteries were placed under XXIV and II Corps.

The Army of the Isonzo

Regardless of the events taking place elsewhere along the front, the Isonzo Army were continuing their attacks. XVI Corps were no longer participating. Under IV Corps the 64 Hon ID brought almost all their infantry plus a mountain battery to the west bank of the river and at 2:00 PM started to advance, sending four battalions northwest toward Folina and four more straight west toward Cadelu. In the evening Folina was wrested from the 31 Italian ID, which left 11 officers and 686 men as prisoners in the hands of the Hungarian Landsturm units. But the enemy were able to hold onto Cadelu. 70 Hon ID, after difficult fighting against the 45 Italian ID, took the village of Saletto along with 700 more prisoners.

242Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", p. 49. Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 299.

In the night and at dawn the VII Corps repulsed several thrusts by the enemy 45 ID, which had been reinforced by a brigade from 23 ID plus three bicycle battalions. Just one more battalion of 14 ID was able to reach the western bank during the night, but all of 9 CD's cavalry rifle units except for one half-regiment had completed the crossing. 87 Sch Bde were also supposed to cross the bridge that night so that they could thrust ahead, together with the inner wings of the 14th and 24th Divisions, to a line running from Villanova through Al Bosco to the southern edge of Zenson. But due to strong Italian artillery fire the Brigade didn't reach the western bank until around 6:30 AM. Because of the same problem the battalions of 14 ID which were still on the eastern bank weren't able to start over the river until later in the morning of the 16th. Since 87 Sch Bde was exhausted, and since it was known that XXIII Corps didn't intend to attack until the 17th (after the arrival of 57 ID), GdI Schariczer also postponed his major assault until that day. On the 16th the troops would merely advance to a line between S Andrea and the fork in the road at C. Nini, or if possible as far as the Can. Zero. 9 CD were instructed to capture a strong point just west of Zenson.

The thrust by 87 Sch Bde, along with the battalions of 14 ID already on the western bank, started around noon; it gained only a little ground. After fighting which surged back and forth, by evening the attackers had secured the line Fagare - La Fossa; thus the front of VII Corps' center was consolidated. South of La Fossa the 24 ID and 9 CD had to endure strong counterattacks by the Italian XXVIII Corps (reinforced by parts of 33 ID and four bicycle battalions).²⁴³ Therefore 9 CD also postponed their own assault until 17 June. 88 Sch Bde, in the Corps' reserves, came up to Candole and S Nicolo.

Under the k.u.k. XXIII Corps the tireless sappers had worked through the night, and completed the military bridge at S Dona around 5:30 AM. Now 10 FA Bde began to cross the river. But the foremost battery suffered substantial losses from Italian artillery fire, so parts of the Brigade were diverted on a detour through La Chiavica to the locks near Testadura, where a bridge was being restored. Meanwhile at 9:45 AM the bridge at S Dona was destroyed by a bomb during an Italian air raid. Until it could be restored, three ferries were set up near Code to carry some of the traffic.

In the morning the southern wing of the reinforced XXIII Italian Corps assaulted the two regiments of 12 ID already on the western

243Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 301

bank; they had to fall back before the larger enemy force to Fossalta, C Silvestria and the rail and road junction 1 km farther southeast. Since the Italians had destroyed the plank bridge constructed by 12 ID, the next two infantry regiments (# 56 and 100) had to cross over on barges. Meanwhile, however, 10 ID were already making progress that morning, and captured the farmstead of La Casinelle. In the afternoon, after powerful artillery preparation, both infantry divisions of Csicsrics' Corps thrust forward. With great *elan* they mopped up many Italian pockets of resistance and drove ahead past the road which led from Fossalta through Capo d'Argine to C Rigati. The southern wing of 10 ID took C Corazze. South of the impassable Palude del Sile the 1 CD secured the village of Capo Sile and sent detachments along the Taglio del Sile causeway. In two days of fighting the k.u.k. XXIII Corps had captured 123 officers and 4494 men plus 50 guns and an armored train.

57 ID, which had been placed under GdI Csicsrics, in the evening reached Guajane and Grassaga in the rear of 12 ID. In addition, GO Wurm sent XXIII Corps several heavy batteries from IV Corps and 46 Sch Div from XVI Corps; the latter Division would first move to Cessalto and Chiarano.

b. Decisions and troop movements on 16 June

Simultaneous with the raging actions on the Piave, on 16 June there was lively traffic on the wires connecting the high-level k.u.k. HQ, which gradually were drawing the necessary conclusions from the altered situation caused by 11th Army's misfortune. Since the AOK weren't inclined to completely abandon the offensive, FM Boroevic outlined what he considered the only possible method by which the battle could have a successful outcome. The bridgeheads which had been captured on 15 June - on the Montello and west of S Dona - should first be systematically expanded so that they could be reliably defended. Then, after careful preparations which would probably take several weeks, a new and decisive stroke should be delivered against the enemy.

Based on this concept, at 10:50 AM on the 16th the Field Marshal ordered both his armies to hold onto the ground they'd won regardless of casualties "so that when we initiate the decisive thrust planned for this front it won't be necessary to once again force our way over the Piave." In connection with this order, at 11:30 Boroevic sent a message to the AOK: "According to reports from 11th Army, not only their eastern wing but also the main body have pulled back. As I have been saying for months, victory

on the Tyrolean front cannot be won directly, but only from the Piave. But under the current conditions my Army Group is too weak for this task. Therefore the operation must be prepared anew. I have told my armies that their principal task now is to be ready to defend the areas they've captured against very strong counterattacks, thus avoiding the need to cross the Piave - and incur needless casualties - in the future. I'm returning to Udine, where it will be easier to direct upcoming developments."

But the leading personalities of the AOK at Belluno and on the Emperor's train weren't willing yet to agree to all of FM Boroevic's conclusions. GM Waldstätten, in a wire to GO Arz, did state that in his opinion "nothing can be accomplished soon on the plateau." On the other hand, based on lessons learned on the 15th, "a thrust should be methodically prepared and then carried out east of the Brenta, which apparently would be the easiest [area to assault]." But consistently with Boroevic's ideas, he also suggested that the latter's Army Group should be reinforced by seven divisions from 11th Army, which thus would be left with just fourteen (not counting XV Corps). Since his staff at Belluno meanwhile learned that the Italians' XII Corps and 22 ID had left the Tyrolean front (and that thus there was no concern about an attack against our 10th Army), GM Waldstätten furthermore stated that 22 Sch Div should immediately be shifted to Boroevic's Army Group.

Thereafter the Emperor had a long telephone conversation with GM Waldstätten, based on which he issued a general order at 12:10 PM:

". Army Group FM von Conrad - 10th and 11th Armies should first ensure that their fronts are strongly held. 11th Army HQ will carefully prepare for a renewed assault from the sector of XXVI Corps. The neighboring VI and I Corps should join this assault. Effective at midnight (16-17 June) the XV Corps will once more belong to 6th Army. An implementing order will be sent out this evening. 48 ID, as the AOK's reserve, will move to the Feltre area; 11th Army is responsible for supplying them.

. Army Group FM Boroevic - The 6th and Isonzo Armies will continue to attack systematically in the general direction of Treviso. The AOK's reserves, which for now aren't needed in the area of Army Group Conrad, will deploy in the Venetian plains under the orders of FM von Boroevic's HQ at points from which they can quickly cross the Piave when needed. For this purpose Army Group HQ will issue instructions directly to 9 ID, 35 ID and 12 Reit Sch Div, reporting their intended use to the AOK."

But this order caused misgivings at Boroevic's HQ in Udine, where the setback to 11th Army had made a strong impression. The concerns are evident in the answering message which FM Boroevic sent to the AOK immediately after his return to Udine:

"To immediately continue the offensive toward Treviso would be extremely inadvisable because of the size of the opposing forces and other problems. Prior to receiving your order I had instructed my armies to retain the ground they'd won, regardless of the price, so we can avoid having to cross the Piave again. We can create bridgeheads for the next offensive on the Montello and on the southern wing of the Isonzo Army while waiting for everything to be in place which we'll need for the attack. At this time neither I nor the army commanders have any reserves, and the AOK has just one infantry and one cavalry division (not counting 51 Hon ID)²⁴⁴. We lack medium artillery, ammunition, automotive columns and bridging material. We can succeed in the end only if my requests [for more equipment], which will follow, can be met and we have enough time to organize the assault. I cannot advise too strongly against attacking with insufficient and under-supplied forces."

Thereafter the Emperor requested further clarification from FM Boroevic. He asked whether the bridgeheads established thus far on the western bank of the Piave would provide enough room to maneuver during the planned offensive. If they would have to be extended and then defended, he wanted to know if this could be accomplished with the units now on hand (including the AOK's reserves). For the new offensive seven divisions could be brought from Tyrol, but the deployment would take at least four weeks.

FM Boroevic was fully aware that the full burden now lay upon his Army Group and that he'd bear responsibility for all that would follow. He replied around midnight that the bridgeheads that had been won could be extended and "very probably" held by the units he now had plus the strategic reserves. But he noted that the new offensive couldn't be launched from these bridgeheads alone and that a reinforcement of seven divisions²⁴⁵ would be the bare minimum needed; furthermore, the Tyrolean front couldn't remain

²⁴⁴Here FM Boroevic was in error, since his figures are one infantry division too low. (The 51st Division was excluded from the count since it wasn't ready for combat, as noted below.)

²⁴⁵Shortly before, GM Waldstätten had mentioned nine divisions in a phone conversation with FM Boroevic.

entirely inactive. On the other hand, the Field Marshal felt that he wouldn't require such a long period (four weeks) to prepare, since all of the divisions didn't have to be present as of the first day of the attack. His more urgent needs were for artillery, ammunition, automotive columns, rations, airplanes and military bridging equipment.

Of the strategic reserves placed at his disposal, FM Boroevic meanwhile had moved 35 ID to Collalbrigo and Barriera (west and southwest of Conegliano) and 9 ID to Vittorio, Sarmede, Colle Umberto and Cozzuolo. The former division was assigned to 6th Army. Furthermore he'd initiated the transfer by rail of 12 Reit Sch Div from Toblach to the area west of Sacile. 51 Hon ID, which wasn't ready for battle, would remain in Sacile and its vicinity. At noon the Field Marshal had already approved 6th Army HQ's plan to enlarge their bridgehead by committing 41 Hon ID and (as noted earlier) their request to have XVI Corps provide artillery support.

On the 16th the AOK informed Conrad's Army Group HQ that 48 ID, though considered a strategic reserve unit, could stay with 11th Army. However, the 60 ID (which was considerably under strength) should move to Belluno as a reserve of the AOK. At midnight (16-17 June) the XV Corps would once more be subordinate to 6th Army, along with the temporarily attached Field Artillery Regiments # 60 and # 10 K.

Meanwhile GM Waldstätten's hitherto gloomy mood had changed, and he took a more optimistic view of the situation. This was due to conversations with the Chiefs of Staff of 11th Army and of XXVI Corps, as well as to the worried tone of the Italian press reports and the large number of prisoners taken by 11th Army. Waldstätten expressed his new viewpoint in a wire to GO Arz which he sent at 1:00 AM on the 17th. He now no longer believed that only Boroevic's Army Group could attack, and that 11th Army could do nothing further on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau. He was positive that a thrust by XXVI Corps - reinforced perhaps by 22 Sch Div and 53 ID - was feasible provided that it was carefully prepared but still "carried out as soon as possible."

But although time was pressing, no definite position was taken on the Imperial train regarding the suggestions by FM Boroevic and GM Waldstätten.

The Italian high command recognized after two days of fighting that their opponents were still slowly advancing on the Piave front, but were no longer a menace on the mountain front. This

provided them an opportunity to throw all available reserves toward the Piave and thus prevent any further progress by Boroevic. A large-scale counterattack would be carried out in the most sensitive sector as soon as the Aus-Hung. troops appeared to be tiring. The King himself visited the commanders of 8th, 4th and 6th Armies for consultations. Then the high command placed the new divisions which had already arrived (the 7th and 11th) under 3rd Army, along with the Assault Division (which had come by truck to Vallio). 8th Army was strengthened with artillery. Finally the 1st Army sent a brigade from 32 ID to Lancenigo (6 km north of Treviso) while 7th Army sent an Alpini group from 75 ID into the Judicarien sector.²⁴⁶

c. The Isonzo Army on 17 and 18 June

Operations on 7 June

The battle continued on 17 June amid heavy rainstorms, which raised the level of the Piave by 70 more centimeters and increased the speed of the current to almost 4 meters per second. The assignment of the Isonzo Army was to link up the fronts of XXIII and VII Corps and then to create a position along the Mèolo to cover the deployment of the artillery. The first objective was an intermediate line from Malipiero through the villages of Saceroti, Peloso, Guarnieri and Guarnieri, and the Bosco Nini. On the opposing side the Duke of Aosta, commanding 3rd Italian Army planned to take advantage of the peculiar situation on the Aus-Hung. southern wing. He intended to cut off the parts of our XXIII Corps which had advanced far ahead of the main body by attacking with the Assault Division and a brigade from 7 ID toward Fossalta and Capo d'Argine, while his XXIII and XXVIII Corps conducted local thrusts.²⁴⁷ But before the Duke could implement this plan the Isonzo Army had renewed their offensive.

Under the k.u.k. XXIII Corps FML Edler von Hrozny's 57 ID had been inserted on the northern wing; at 10:00 AM they would attack north of the road running from Fossalta through Pralongo to Fornaci, in the direction of Monastier. As they made progress, they were to be joined by the 12th and 10th Divisions. VII Corps had promised to help by attacking from Zenson at 1:00 PM. The foremost brigade of 46 Sch Div, now joining XXIII Corps, were scheduled to start crossing the Piave at noon to reinforce 10 ID;

246Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", p. 50. Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 302 ff.

247Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", p. 51

the other brigade of the 46th would stay by Buodo and Turchetto in the Corps' reserve. But on the morning of the 17th evidence seemed to indicate that the enemy were retreating; therefore GdI Csicsrics ordered that all three of the infantry divisions at the front should strike simultaneously at 10:00 AM.

The evaluation of the enemy's intentions proved to be incorrect. When 57 and 12 ID moved forward after a short artillery bombardment, they encountered stubborn resistance everywhere in heavily-cultivated terrain full of Italian machine gun nests, where visibility was limited. Considerable time elapsed before the often-distinguished south Styrian IR 87 and the gallant Dalmatians of the new IR 122 were able to clear out the troops from 25 Italian ID and the Bersaglieri cyclists who'd entrenched at the bend in the Piave by Lampol. The 87th didn't reach Campolongo until almost evening. On the other hand IR 22 (also of 57 ID) and 12 ID encountered less resistance; driving bicycle battalions, assault parties and trench mortar units before them, they reached the Palombo brook.

During the night the 10 ID had to endure strong enemy artillery fire and repulse numerous counterattacks. After a carefully-prepared bombardment they finally launched their own assault at 2:30 PM. 19 Inf Bde, stationed directly south of the railroad, advanced almost to Ancilotto, defeating Italian cyclists and parts of the badly damaged 61 ID. On their left the 20 Inf Bde were standing guard toward the south and hanging back considerably; their progress in the flooded fields was limited. Just the artillery and trench mortars of 1 CD were engaged. In the evening XXIII Corps were still 2 to 3 km distant from all of their objectives except the area by Ancilotto which had been reached on the southern wing.

For VII Corps the night of 16-17 June was full of combat. 24 ID had to repel five Italian assaults after midnight. 9 CD, to which Mtn SchR of 44 Sch Div had been attached, also had to defeat numerous enemy thrusts. Early on the 16th the gallant Upper Austrian DR 4 stormed a strongly constructed outpost south of Zenson, which had been blocking progress toward the south. Now FML Urbarz's group HQ ordered the left wing of 9 CD to roll up the Italian position on the embankment as far as Campolongo and establish contact with 57 ID; the Division's right wing were to advance to Guarnieri and the Bosco Nini. 24 ID and 87 Sch Bde (their neighbors to the north) were instructed to reach the Can. Zero and link up with 14 ID.

After mopping up at Lampol, 9 CD brought their last squadrons

from the eastern to the western bank. Now the fresh Galician UR 6 rushed forward to Villa Premuda, thrust the wavering enemy back over the Palombo brook and even crossed that stream; however, strong counterattack forced the Uhlans to eventually pull back to the western side. On their right the DR 13 made a similar advance, as did DR 4 on the 9th Cav Division's left wing. Two battalions of Mtn SchR 2 reinforced the Division's front. Around midnight the 4th Dragoons along with parts of IR 87 expelled the enemy from Campolongo village and linked up the front of their respective corps.

24 ID thrust into the Bosco Nini, opposed by the inner wings of the Italian XXVIII and XI Corps. After fighting which surged back and forth the Division held the northern and eastern edge of these woods, having taken 1000 prisoners and 5 guns. Patrols moved ahead to the western fringe of the trees. When 87 Sch Bde advanced they were opposed not by the burnt-out 45 Italian ID, but by the fresh 11 ID²⁴⁸; after initially driving back and pursuing the enemy, the Schützen finally had to pull back to Al Bosco and behind the Can. Zero. To ensure that Urbarz's group could hold their front, VII Corps HQ assigned him the last regiment of 44 Sch Div (Mtn SchR 1), which crossed the Piave on the military bridge at Salgareda.

14 ID were only supposed to stand their ground on the 17th; they repulsed many heavy counterattacks. On their left wing the 48th IR fought their way over the Can Zero and made close contact with Urbarz's group.

Thus on the 17th the VII Corps had attained their objectives on the southern wing and had even surpassed them in the center (by Al Bosco). In this successful fighting they also took 89 officers and 2932 men as prisoners.

IV Corps, still just to the west of the Piave, would first strive to drive out the enemy entrenched on the bank between the 70th and 64th Divisions and to create a common front between them. Then they'd advance in cooperation with 14 ID to the line Villanova - Le Crosere - Candelu - Folina. But IV Corps were also scheduled to transfer 29 ID (with their artillery) to VII Corps and 57 FA Bde to join their parent Division in XXIII Corps; to take advantage of the firepower of the 29th and 57th Artillery Brigades they'd have to carry out their assault by 18 June at the latest.

Meanwhile the right wing of 70 Hon ID had already stormed Saletto

248Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 311

at 9:00 AM on the 17th, after which the two divisions linked up at Sette casoni. But the Italians still held an outpost in a nearby farmstead. Around 5:00 PM the XI Italian Corps, reinforced with a brigade of 32 ID (from 1st Army) which had been brought to Cadelu by truck, counterattacked and pressed back both wings of 64 Hon ID somewhat. Thus the newly-established connection with 70 Hon ID was again lost. At midnight the enemy once more assaulted 64 Hon ID, this time in the center, but suffered a bloody defeat; the Italians left 13 officers and 550 men in the hands of the Hungarian Landsturm.

Continuing efforts to bridge the Piave

On 17 June the XVI Corps made preparations to have a battalion cross the river from Papadopoli Island toward Onesti that night so that a military bridge could be set up. Farther downstream IV Corps had built several bridges over the various arms of the Piave. VII Corps had two military bridges (at S Andrea and Salgareda) plus makeshift crossing points at S Bartolomeo and Salgareda, and north of Zenson. XXIII Corps were sending traffic over two plank bridges at S Osvaldo and the military bridge which had been rebuilt at S Dona.

But during the night of 17-18 June and the following day the high waters inflicted grievous damage to the crossing points of the Isonzo Army. Wreckage from the destroyed bridges of 6th Army, propelled by the swift current, ripped through the hitherto firm supports of IV Corps' bridges. Afterwards it was only possible to cross over here using vessels, and it took 4 ½ hours for a pontoon to go over the Piave and return. Orders, medical supplies and some rations were dropped by planes. Under VII Corps the bridge at S Andrea, which lay too deep in the water, had to be reconstructed on the 18th. Shortly after it was once again serviceable it was ripped apart by beams floating downstream. Efforts made to restore the bridge anew were greatly hindered by artillery fire; despite the self-sacrifice of the tireless sappers, the structure still hadn't been rebuilt as of 19 June. The military bridge at Salgareda also sustained serious damage on the 18th, although by 2:00 PM it was possible to complete emergency repairs. But the nearby plank bridge couldn't be kept in service. The Corps' makeshift bridge north of Zenson was also a victim of the raging flood (around 8:00 AM), although it was rebuilt by evening. Throughout the 18th traffic passed over XXIII Corps' bridge at S Dona, which in the evening was swept away by the high waters of the river. The flood also tore up five of the seven bridges which had been built over the regulated lower course of the Piave in 1 CD's sector. Thus the

unchained elements were a powerful ally of our enemy.

Operations on 18 June

The HQ of the Isonzo Army had ordered that on 18 June the troops should advance to the Mèolo brook and secure its course upstream as far as Rovaré; from that point the objective was a line running through Calion, Villanova and Cadelu to the Piave. As noted earlier, to reinforce the Army's southern wing the 29 ID (including their artillery) were re-assigned from IV to VII Corps. 33 ID, after their troops standing guard on the Piave were relieved by 58 ID, would move back (without artillery) to the Lutrano-Fontanelle area as the Army's reserve. 46 Sch Div had already joined XXIII Corps.

For XXIII Corps the 18th of June was a day of great crisis. Already during the night the Italian 33 ID, which had been hurriedly brought forward to take the place of the burnt-out 61 ID, were launching attacks - supported by armored cars - against the very tired 10 ID; they pushed Infantry Regiments 55 and 21 back to the line Rigati - Le Casinelle. Meanwhile XXIII Corps HQ told their divisions that on the 18th they should again strive to reach the objectives assigned the day before. HQ of 46 Sch Div would take command over the sector between the rail line and the road leading to Portegrandi. HQ of 10 ID were still in charge of the fighting farther east. 1 CD were ordered to start mopping up the islands in the Piave.

At dawn the 1 CD tried to secure the small area on the western bank of the Piave vecchio southeast of Capo Sile, but the operation failed completely. On the other hand the east Galician IR 15 of 10 ID stormed boldly forward and reached the Mèolo near Ancilotto; thus they achieved the deepest penetration into enemy territory during the entire battle. But parts of 33 Italian ID and several storm detachments counterattacked from the northwest and west; the 15th Regiment, under pressure from three sides, had to withdraw to a line running north from C. Rigati to the railroad culvert.

Meanwhile SchR 13 of 46 Sch Div, which had already arrived on the western bank of the Piave, were ordered forward so as to provide better protection to the southern flank of 10 ID; they were also supposed to thrust from Montagner toward Malipiero on the 19th. The main body of FML von Urbanski's Schützen Division had already been instructed to deploy on both sides of the railroad so they could help 10 and 12 ID move forward to the Mèolo. But when GdI Csicsrics learned around noon about a success won by the

northern wing of VII Corps, he altered the assignments. 57 ID were supposed to capture Ronche as soon as possible, and meanwhile 12 ID would just hold onto their current front between the Pralongo road and Trentin; 46 Sch Div would take over the sector of 10 ID (which was to be reinforced by HR # 5 of 1 CD) and be ready to carry out the assault toward Mèolo which now was scheduled for the 19th.

But the plans went awry. Around 4:30 PM parts of 25 Italian ID plus cyclists and assault troops fell upon the 12 ID, which had already suffered heavy losses, and pushed back their center. Three guns of a mountain battery near the front, after firing until the last moment, had to be destroyed. A counter-thrust by the south Moravian IR 3 did drive the Italians back again. But alarm spread among the reserves of 10 ID; this in turn influenced the HQ of 46 Sch Div which believed it was advisable to leave 91 Sch Bde on the eastern bank to hold a switch position near S Dona. SchR 15, instructed to provide direct support to 10 ID, didn't reach the plank bridge west of S Osvaldo until evening. But the front of 10 ID remained undisturbed by the turmoil in the rear areas. 57 ID were able to storm the village of Ronche, although it was stubbornly defended by the enemy, and gained about one kilometer of ground farther west. By the evening of the 18th the total of prisoners taken by the k.u.k. XXIII Corps during the battle reached 170 officers and 6489 men.

VII Corps had been told that on the 18th they should just hold their current ground, while improving the front and bringing artillery closer to the Piave. But 14 ID believed, after several successful thrusts in the morning, that they were opposed by just a weak Italian force; therefore GdI Schariczer told them to attack with the right wing to C. Nuova and with the left to the Spinosola brook. The right wing of Urbarz's Group should also aim for the latter objective.

Now the upper Hungarian 27 Inf Bde (IR # 71 and 72) of 14 ID attacked with dash; they stormed several strongly fortified farmsteads and advanced to the bend in the Mèolo brook east of Alion and to Martini. In this operation IR 71 alone forced 1200 Italians to lay down their arms. The right wing of 28 Inf Bde remained linked with their sister brigade, although the latter were now about 2000 paces farther ahead.

Under FML Urbarz's Group the 24 ID brought the Bosco Nini, hitherto held only by patrols, behind their front. In the afternoon they repulsed a strong thrust by the Italian 11 ID. At the same time Italian storm detachments attacked 9 CD after

artillery drumfire. They penetrated the lines of the Savoyen (13th) Dragoons, but then were mostly destroyed; their remnants were thrown back and driven behind the Palombo brook. Here our 9 CD also encountered dismounted horsemen from 2 Italian CD. The enemy's 4 CD had meanwhile arrived at Treviso.

Thus VII Corps had accomplished their mission; after four days of combat under heavy artillery fire they'd reached their intermediate objective (the line Villanova - Al Bosco - Guarnieri). 29 ID, now assigned to the Corps, marched during the 18th to S Nicolo, Candole, Busco, Rustigne and Levada.

IV Corps HQ thought it was essential to enlarge their bridgehead so they could secure the crossing points. Therefore the left wing attacked toward C. Nuova and the right once again struck toward Folina. The attack of 70 Hon ID's 207 Hon Inf Bde began on 18 June at 1:30 PM; the Brigade did capture c. Nuova. But 208 Hon Inf Bde, which advanced west from Saletto, were unable to gain any noteworthy ground in costly seesaw fighting. The fate of 64 Hon ID's 127 Hon Inf Bde, which thrust toward Candelu, was similar; in the evening they were back at their starting points. But at least a link was established between the inner wings of the two Honved divisions. 208 Hon Inf Bde once more reached the village of Folina and took more than 800 prisoners from the 31 Italian ID, but at 3:00 PM were counter-attacked from the northwest and had to relinquish to the enemy the small area they'd captured. All the troops of IV Corps were quite exhausted from the fighting and other privations. The units were shrinking considerably, and large casualties among the officers made it more difficult to lead them.

d. Fighting on the Montello on 17 and 18 June

Operations on 17 June

On the Montello the fighting on 17 June also took place in heavy fog, which limited visibility, and strong rainstorms. XXIV Corps devoted the morning to preparing their forces. Under 17 ID, two more battalions of IR 139 (which had still been on the eastern bank) were ferried over the river by 11:00 AM. The bridge near C. Mercadelli was opened to traffic around 3:00 PM and then was used by FML von Schamschula's 41 Hon ID. 13 Sch Div's bridge at Villa Jacur, which had been restored at 4:00 AM, could only be used by infantry and porters. Therefore four of this Division's field howitzers used instead the bridge of 31st Division at Falzè, which was ready at 4:30 AM. 13 Sch Div now had ten of

their batteries on the western bank, as well as two batteries captured from the Italians. 31 ID, whose front until this time still hadn't been consolidated, reported early on the 17th that after skirmishes during the night their line extended from the right wing of 13 Sch Div (south of Point 226) northeast to the bank of the Piave at Point 118. Behind this front the Honved Hussar Regiments 9 and 5 were now completely assembled, and three mobile batteries of 31 ID had reached the southern bank.

Throughout the day the II Corps had to carry on a lively artillery duel. This development clearly indicated that they were confronted by a superior number of Italian batteries. Therefore 6th Army HQ assigned them a field artillery regiment and a battalion of heavy guns from XV Corps, which since midnight was once more under the Army's command.

Meanwhile FML Goiginger was ready to start the action to widen the bridgehead as far as S Margherita, Collesel Val d'Acqua, Venegazzu, Selva, Cusignana, Arcade, Spresiano and Palazzon. It was to begin in the afternoon of the 17th and continue on the 18th. But the HQ of 6th Army restricted the goal to a line which would run from the Collesel Val d'Acqua through Points 314 and 175 to the southern edges of Cusignana and Arcade, ending by the highway and railroad at Hill 63. Success of the operation was predicated on retaining the front on the Montello as it already existed and on sufficient artillery preparation. Because the number of batteries on the Montello was limited, just 17 ID and the left wing of 13 Sch Div would attack at first. Only after they reached the objective line in the plains would the thrust begin over the Montello toward the west. XV Corps would merely hold their positions, for which purpose 6th Army HQ believed three brigades would be sufficient. 39 Hon Inf Bde from 20 Hon ID, after marching through Follina to Trichiana, would be held there as a strong Army reserve; the march would take three days.

After a short burst of artillery fire the 17 ID opened their attack at 1:15 PM with Regiments 46, 39 and 43. IR 139, whose third battalion was still on the eastern bank, couldn't move forward due to the strong Italian bombardment. On the left the 34 Inf Bde (IR 46 and one battalion of IR 43) drove the parts of 48 Italian ID which had entrenched in Nervesa out of that town, captured Sovilla and S Andrea, and advanced to the arc of the rail line. The 46th pushed beyond the tracks, but then were forced back to the railroad by an enemy counter-thrust.²⁴⁹ The 33 Inf Bde (IR 39 and two battalions of IR 43) thrust ahead in fighting with 13 Italian ID as far as the railroad near S Mauro. On their right Battalion I/SchR 14 penetrated the second Italian position north of Giavera. But they came under heavy fire and - threatened from all sides - returned to their starting point, abandoning the three heavy guns they'd captured. Also the 33 Inf Bde withdrew from their isolated location within the main Italian position during the night. The gallant troops of 17 ID had taken 260 prisoners from six Italian regiments.

Although the left wing of XXIV Corps hadn't reached the line that was their goal, FML Goiginger believed they'd gained sufficient ground so that the Corps' right wing could attack early on the 18th. In this operation the inner wings of 31 ID and 13 Sch Div, supported by the artillery of 17 ID, would first advance against Heights # 314 (southeast of the Collesel Val d'Acqua). GdI Goiginger envisioned the Corps' left wing renewing their assault in the afternoon of the 18th.

But the HQ of 13 Sch Div raised objections against the orders to attack. They now realized that their troops were opposite the Italian second position, which was covered by a great amount of barbed wire and bristling with machine guns. Capture of this line would require an extensive bombardment by heavy guns. The regiments were reduced in size and holding an extensive front. The planned assault would require at least one regiment in reserve. 41 Hon ID, whose troops couldn't complete the river crossing before midnight, also asked that the attack should be postponed until 19 June.

FML Goiginger saw the merit of these requests. Therefore a re-organization of the front would first take place on the 18th. On the northern wing the Honved Hussars would enter the foremost line. 31 and 17 ID were ordered to take over the adjacent sectors of 13 Sch Div, allowing the latter to pull troops into reserve. Troops of the 41 Hon ID would take over the eastern wing of 17 ID.

²⁴⁹Dupont, p. 142

Of the reserves of 6th Army and the AOK, the 35 ID entered Costalbrigo and Barriera in the evening of the 17th. 9 ID marched through Trichiana and S Antonio to Colmaggiore, Gai and Tovena. The first troops of 12 Reit Sch Div left Toblach by train. But since the Division only had five trains available per day, they couldn't complete their deployment in the area around Codogne and Brugnera (south of Sacile) until 23 June.

Operations on 18 June

At the start of 18 June the weather once again featured fog and rain. XXIV Corps, which had reached the height of their success on the 17th, now found themselves in a very critical situation just like the Isonzo Army. High waters destroyed all the bridges during the night. Thus no supply columns or reinforcements (including the urgently-needed artillery) could reach the western bank. Stocks of food and ammunition were completely inadequate. It was also impossible to move wounded men and prisoners back over the river. The troops, who'd been in constant fighting while exposed without shelter to the elements, were completely exhausted. The average company strength in all the regiments at the front had shrunk to about 50 men. Most of the wire connections with the divisional HQ, which remained on the eastern bank, had been broken; sending messages by carrier pigeon, radio or signal lamps was an inadequate alternative. Nevertheless, after local actions in the night of 17-18 June the troops everywhere were still holding their makeshift lines.

Under 31 ID, in the morning of 18 June the Hon HR 5 replaced IR 44 at the front. Farther south IR 32, after repelling an enemy thrust, were relieved in the evening by Hon HR 9. The other regiments of 11 Hon CD (temporarily commanded by GM Hegedüs), were still encamped at Barbisano. The parts of BH IR # 3 stationed on the left wing of 31 ID inflicted a bloody defeat on an attacking enemy detachment and with a counter-thrust threw them back far to the rear.

The planned reliefs and troop movements within 13 Sch Div and 17 ID were greatly hindered by artillery fire which grew ever stronger. After 3:00 PM this bombardment increased to drumfire, which was followed in the evening by powerful attacks from the 13th and 48th Italian Divisions. The enemy were repulsed in hand-to-hand combat by 33 Inf Bde and the adjoining parts of 13 Sch Div. Now the troop movements could finally be completed. But 13 Sch Div gained just two weak battalions as a divisional reserve. Under 17 ID the IR 43 and two battalions of IR 139 entered the

front; the 39th and 46th Regiments - along with the Honved Bicycle Battalion - were in reserve. It was still impossible to bring Battalion III/139 to the western bank. South of Nervesa the 41 Hon ID took over the battle lines with Honved Infantry Regiments 31 and 12; Hon IR 32 stood in reserve. The Honved, who'd been attacked at Nervesa in the morning by a dozen Italian bombers, also had to repel a thrust by 48 Italian ID between 9:00 and 10:00 PM. Under the fourth regiment of 41 Hon ID (Hon IR 20) one battalion occupied a position on the eastern bank between Marcatelli and the Susegana railroad station; the main body of the Regiment, along with Storm Battalion 41, made up the Corps' reserve.

In reply to a question from 6th Army HQ, FML Goiginger stated that retention of the Montello was of decisive importance for any future offensive operations. But he felt that the territory already gained was insufficient since it wasn't deep enough to protect the bridges from continuous enemy air attacks and artillery fire. There was no guarantee that infantry, artillery, rations, ammunition and equipment would continue to flow to the front. This could only be possible if the front was moved forward not only to the Collesel Val d'Acqua, but also to the western edge of the Montello and - in the south - to Cusignana, Spresiano and Palazzina. If these objectives were attained it would be feasible to deploy the artillery (of which only 85 light guns were currently stationed on the Montello), and to launch a decisive thrust from the bridgehead in the direction of Castelfranco which would render the enemy's fronts in the mountains and on the Piave untenable. These calculations were the basis of a suggestion submitted to the AOK by 6th Army HQ that the bridgehead should either be expanded with the help of additional forces (three infantry divisions and four artillery brigades) or evacuated.

No significant developments occurred on the 18th in the sectors of II or XV Corps. Toward evening the rain tapered off and the waters of the Piave began to slowly fall.

3. Activities of Conrad's Army Group from 16 to 19 June

10th Army

FM Conrad's Army Group had already halted their offensive in the evening of 15 June. The diversionary operations of 10th Army had achieved some success. In the Riva sector storm troops from the k.k. Landsturm Infantry Battalions IV/2 and 166 wrested the Dosso

alto (southeast of Rovereto) from the Italians in a brilliant assault. In the Adamello sector some excellent high mountain companies stormed the Corno di Cavento. But they were supposed to hold the summit only until the enemy initiated serious counter-measures, and did in fact later evacuate the peak.

News of the failure of 11th Army's great attack had a depressing effect on 10th Army. It seemed possible that the Italians, emboldened by their victory, might soon carry out large-scale offensive operations of their own, perhaps in the Adige valley or the Judicarien, or at the Tonale Pass. Therefore FM Krobatin sent his subordinates a written order, demanding that the commanders of the various sectors should immediately inform the troops of the new situation "calmly and without recriminations." They should also "use all means, with the greatest determination, to raise the spirits and morale of the troops, to preserve discipline, and to instill in the men confidence and willingness to defy the enemy." Finally they should "oppose exaggerated or pessimistic rumors."

Henceforth the assignment of 10th Army was to hold onto their positions regardless of circumstances. The orders to carry out diversionary operations and to hold the eastern wing ready to join 11th Army's anticipated advance were canceled. XIV Corps resumed their original defensive deployment. Also the plans for recovering the positions on the border crest south of the Tonale Pass (lost at the end of May) were finally abandoned. But the HQ of 10th Army still intended to eventually recover the C. Presena.

11th Army - 16 June

11th Army weren't engaged in any major fighting during the night of 15-16 June. Only the enemy artillery occasionally opened lively fire; in particular, for no apparent reason they laid down a barrage in front of the positions on Mt Tomba and poisoned the Ornigo valley with a large number of gas shells. In fact General Giardino was anticipating an attack toward Mt Tomba because of intelligence gathered from deserters and because of the events on the Montello; therefore he kept in place the 24 ID, which the evening before had occupied the back-up positions by Cavaso.

In the morning the Italians launched a weak and unsuccessful attack on Mt Asolone. They committed greater strength to an effort to recover the Col Moschin which, as narrated earlier, did fall into their hands. On the Sieben Gemeinde plateau our III Corps and the main body of XIII Corps had withdrawn to the original positions. After daybreak the English mopped up the

woods northeast of Cesuna, where presumably parts of the Graz IR 27 had been holding out, and once more established themselves in their earlier foremost line.²⁵⁰ Otherwise the British infantry remained inactive, while their artillery kept up a lively fire on our lines and approach routes throughout the day. The French were content with the recovery of their front lines by Pennar and by the chapel at Point 1094; thus they didn't try to restore the original situation on their right wing, which had ben pushed back by 42 Hon ID. Adjacent to the Domobranzen the k.u.k. VI Corps held firmly to the area they'd captured. At dawn the Italian 14 ID (with an attached Bersaglieri regiment) and 28 ID (reinforced by parts of XX Corps) directed heavy thrusts against the Costalunga and Mt Melago. Jaeger Battalions 7, 20 and 22 - which had formed the spearhead of 18 ID in the penetration of the enemy lines the day before - repulsed the enemy and then bravely stood their ground despite a continuous, heavy bombardment. An Italian battalion pushed into the thin lines of the distinguished IR 59 of the Edelweiss Division, but were destroyed in action with the 59th and with parts of IR 107 which hurried to the scene. The artillery fire diminished around noon, but it swelled again in the evening which indicated that new counterattacks could be expected. The troops of VI Corps couldn't rest. The Italians did carry out some heavy attacks which ended at midnight, but their stubborn efforts were in vain.

There were no actions worth noting on the mountains between the Brenta and the Piave during 16 June. It was impossible for XXVI Corps HQ to gain an accurate picture of the situation on the battlefield. 27 ID, reinforced by four battalions from 4 ID, were undoubtedly stationed south of the Ca d'Anna, but no one knew whether any of our troops were still on the Col del Fenilon and the Col Moschin. There was no contact with the enemy, who in fact hadn't advanced back over the Col Moschin. In the Brenta valley outposts of IR 34 were near La Grottella. The regiments of 32 ID, which had fallen back to their starting points, had suffered very heavy casualties. Three regimental commanders had been eliminated, and the total number of officers who'd been killed or wounded was quite shocking. The disorganized remnants of this Division were therefore puled from the front. Eight battalions of 4 ID had already been deployed in this sector, over which the divisional HQ of the 4th now took command.

The troops of I and XV Corps suffered during the day from many sudden outbursts of artillery fire. After darkness fell the Italians carried out a number of heavy attacks in an attempt to recover the Solarolo Ridge, but their efforts were completely

250Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 293

thwarted by BH IR 4 of 55 ID. In the evening it was ordered that 60 ID should be relieved by 48 ID, and that at midnight the XV Corps would pass from the control of 11th Army and return to that of 6th Army.

In the afternoon the HQ of 11th Army asked all the corps to immediately report when and with what forces they would again be able to attack. Then in the evening GO Scheuchenstuel let it be known, based on orders received from Conrad's Army Group HQ, that XXVI Corps would carefully prepare for a new offensive, in which they'd be joined by I and XV Corps as well as the eastern wing of XIII Corps. The date of this operation had not yet been fixed. For now all the corps were to bring order to their formations and initiate measures for a new deployment, including reinforcements for the artillery opposite the area to be assaulted. It may have been somewhat surprising when GdI Horsetzky, in opposition to the optimistic reports of his Chief of Staff, stated that to renew the attack in XXVI Corps' sector he'd need two or three fresh divisions, and that it would take about 14 days to bring forward the artillery and its ammunition.

11th Army - 17 to 19 June

While the higher-ranking commanders were coming to their decision about a new attack, they were under the impression that the western wing of XXVI Corps was holding on firmly to the Col Moschin and the Col del Fenilon. But now the morning reports they received on 17 June clearly indicated that this was not the case. The high command sent a wire to Bozen and another directly to Levico, stating "Because of the great importance of the area [of the Col Moschin] for the upcoming operation, the AOK attaches the highest priority to the recovery of the sector. Report immediately on plans to carry this out." This message led to a lively exchange of views by wire between Bozen, Levico, Fonzaso and also Trent (where the Emperor arrived at noon). Finally GdI Horsetzky reported from Fonzaso that his Corps could secure the line Col Moschin - Col del Fenilon, but only if it had been abandoned by the enemy or was lightly held. If this wasn't the case, an immediate local attack couldn't possibly succeed.

The weather on the 17th again remained gloomy and rainy. The only activity in the morning was artillery fire of varying intensity. A heavy bombardment of the road junction at Primolano once again caused considerable casualties. At the meeting-point of the XIII and VI Corps, after a stubborn and gallant defense the 42 Hon ID and 18 ID had to abandon the advanced corner of their position on the Costalunga. Also the parts of 26 Sch Div

which had remained at Sasso evacuated that town and occupied the Col d'Ecchele (in the Edelweiss Division's sector). XXVI Corps sent scouting detachments into no-man's land, where they encountered enemy patrols. Under I Corps there was once again some lively fighting on the Solarolo Ridge. After several hours of combat the enemy finally captured an unimportant peak.

In the night of 17-18 June the clamor of battle subsided almost completely. Artillery fire resumed at daybreak, but stayed within the moderate range. In the morning of 19 June, after very strong artillery preparation, the Italians attacked in the vicinity of Mounts Sisemol and di Val Bella. After heavy fighting they were thrown back. The situation became relatively quiet when this costly action ended.

As we narrated earlier, the Italians and their allies planned to start a major counterattack on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau on 18 June. The commanders of the French and English corps were convinced that prospects for success were now greater than ever and said so in their suggestions to both the Italian high command and their own higher HQ in France.²⁵¹ But General Diaz apparently had a different opinion. He felt obliged to send all available reserves to the Piave front. Thus XXII Corps, which had joined 4th Army on 15 June and occupied the positions by Mussolente (at the southern foot of the Grappa massif), were sent on 17 June to march toward the Montello. Also on the 17th General Giardino reported to Abano that the developing battle on the Piave made it necessary for him to stay strictly on the defensive on the Grappa; in addition it seemed advisable to him to make timely preparations to retreat from the mountains in case of unfavorable development in the plains.²⁵²

This rather discouraging report caused the Italian high command to replace XXII Corps, when it left 4th Army, by 52nd Division, a unit of Alpini which hitherto had been stationed behind the eastern wing of 6th Army. Thereupon the HQ of 6th Army were given control over the parts of the French and British corps which were still in reserve. Thus the suggestions of the leaders of these allied corps remained unheeded; the Italians were content with their assessment that the opposing 11th Army was in no condition to resume the offensive.²⁵³

In fact the pause in operations on the mountain front lasted for

251Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 338

252Giardino, Vol. II, p. 372

253Baj-Macario, *op. cit.*, pp. 304 ff.

several days, since the Aus-Hung. commanders gradually abandoned the idea of renewing the attack in the narrow area on both sides of the Brenta. At a conference on 18 June the Chief of Staff of 11th Army GM Sündermann learned from GM Waldstätten that "the AOK wasn't ready to make a decision"; this can be ascribed to the fact that the high command HQ were still divided into three parts. Nevertheless preparations continued and resources were shipped to XXVI Corps. It was also planned that 11th Army would send two divisions to the interior and five divisions - along with a strong force of artillery - to Boroevic's Army Group, and release a cavalry division to 10th Army (to replace 22 Sch Div). This would leave GO Scheuchenstuel with twelve infantry and two cavalry divisions. The necessary relief of some units from the front, which in places had already begun, would continue in the next few days. But there was still no final order to give up any troops.

4. The turning point of the Piave battle

Deliberations of the Central Powers' commanders

The depression on the Emperor's train, caused by 11th Army's defeat, led to a desire to clarify the reasons for the setback. Therefore on 17 June the Emperor visited FM Conrad at Bozen and then the commanders of 10th and 11th Armies (FM Krobatin and GO Scheuchenstuel) at Trent. GM Waldstätten, uncertain about the upcoming operational plans of his Supreme Warlord, was left at Belluno with nothing to do. Finally late that night he was instructed by GO Arz to find out what FM Boroevic intended to accomplish next.

In the morning of 18 June the Field Marshal reported that he considered it essential to enlarge 6th Army's bridgehead as far as Cusignana, Arcade and Spresiano, and the Isonzo Army's bridgehead to Folina, Cadelu and Rovaré and from Rovaré down the Mèolo brook. Simultaneously he would increase the number of bridges and provide sufficient supplies for the troops fighting on the western bank so they could defeat the enemy. "What develops then," he noted in his message, "will depend on the situation and the forces that are made available. I urgently need orientation on the latter subject, since the time we're losing now is irreplaceable."

Despite his plea for a quick decision, which FM Boroevic felt was imperative for political and military reasons, he received no reply. The Field Marshal was of the opinion that if his Army

Group didn't soon receive the reinforcements they needed, every day they continued to spend on the right bank of the Piave would bring only pointless casualties. His conviction was strengthened by the report submitted on the 18th by 6th Army HQ (mentioned previously). On the other hand, after reviewing intelligence reports about the current enemy situation FM Boroevic felt that if he did receive sufficient new forces he could continue the battle on the western bank of the Piave with a reasonable chance of success.²⁵⁴

According to the intelligence data compiled at Udine, on 15 June the Italians had 11 divisions stationed in the line along the Piave between Pederobba and the sea (including the marine and finance guard troops), with around 11 more in reserve. Of these 22 divisions, 17 had already entered the fighting by the evening of 17 June and suffered more or less heavy casualties. Therefore we had to worry about just 5 fresh divisions. But the enemy could now denude their mountain front of reserves after the defensive victory they'd won over 11th Army. The HQ at Udine estimated that the Italians could shift 8 more divisions to the Piave front. Thus an overall total of 13 new units might be encountered, although they couldn't all enter the battle at the same time. Since - according to the reports from subordinate commanders to the Army Group - the losses of our own troops had been at an acceptable level, Boroevic's staff were strengthened in their conviction that both bridgeheads could be held. Therefore everything hinged on the size of the additional k.u.k. forces which could be sent to the Piave.

Since the fate of the operation would now be decided solely on the lower course of the Piave, the Emperor decided to travel to the area of Boroevic's Army Group. At 5:00 PM on 18 June the Imperial train steamed out of Schnalstal; after a short halt at Bozen, where GM Waldstätten came on board, it rolled ahead to Spilimbergo where it arrived early on the 19th. During the journey Archduke Frederick sought to calmly console the Emperor by relating the numerous twists and turns of fortune earlier in the war while he (the Archduke) had held the supreme command.

During these days the German OHL also played a noteworthy role. Already on 16 June GO Arz received through the Aus-Hung. plenipotentiary to the German HQ at Spa (FML Freih. von Klepsch-Kloth) a request for armed assistance on the Western front. On the next day GM Cramon relayed an identical request from Ludendorff, who no longer believed that the Aus-Hung. offensive

²⁵⁴Anton Pitreich, "Die Piaveschlacht" (a manuscript)

would succeed.²⁵⁵ According to a note which had meanwhile arrived from FML Klepsch-Kloth, Ludendorff was expecting all available American forces to come to Europe, as well as additional reinforcements to join his opponents in the West, but still expressed full confidence in the ultimate outcome of the war. To guarantee victory, he asked for six or more good, reliable (non-Czech)²⁵⁶ divisions; also he needed a lot of artillery (for which if necessary he'd provide German ammunition) plus horses and laborers. Since to honor this request would be to put an end to our own offensive, GO Arz wanted to wait several days before addressing the entire issue; first he wanted to gain greater clarity concerning the prospects of success in the battle still going on. He would also have to deal with the Emperor's aversion to giving up troops for the West.

Deliberations of the Entente commanders

Thus for now the Aus-Hung. high command wanted to see how the fighting developed on the western bank of the Piave but wouldn't shift forces from south Tyrol to Venetia to reinforce the combatants. The Italian high command, on the other hand, strove to win the initiative for their side and made plans to drive their opponents back over the river. At their HQ in Abano Bagni they saw the moment approaching when the Austrians, who were fighting under unfavorable conditions without a secure supply line due to the high waters in the Piave, would have used up all their reserves. Then the Italians could begin their counter-offensive.

To ensure that the attack developed in the greatest possible strength, the Commando Supremo had already ordered on the 17th that XXII Corps - not needed on the mountain front - should assemble in the area between Altivole and Istrana (northwest of Treviso). Furthermore the 21 ID (from 1st Army) and the 1, 27 and 29 ID (from 9th Army) were moving by train to the area Castelfranco-Padua. Finally the artillery of 8th Army was being reinforced. The armies that weren't under attack were to give up further forces to replace the parts of the strategic reserve (9th Army) that had already been committed.

255Ludendorff, "Kriegführung und Politik", p. 231. Kuhl, Vol. II, pp. 369 ff.

256TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The mistrust of Czech troops expressed here was by no means a universal sentiment within the German high command. Hindenburg even said "Czecho-Slovakian troops who failed against Russia performed well against Italy. [Like us] the Slavs consider Italians to be enemies - why not also the French?" (Quoted by Arz, p. 279).

The momentous decision was taken at Abano on 18 June. The Italian high command realized with ever greater clarity that the opposing units which had crossed the Piave were in a very dangerous position, despite the fact that they'd continued to gain ground on the 17th. The Italians accurately sensed that the strength of the Aus-Hung. assaults was ebbing, while their own counter-thrusts grew more effective. Also their air units were reporting the extent of the destruction which high waters, aerial assaults and artillery fire had inflicted on the military bridges. Locked in a desperate conflict, the k.u.k. troops stationed west of the Piave were in fact fighting between fire and water. To take advantage of this lucky development, the Italian high command decided to open the counter-offensive on 19 June.

This assault would be directed toward the Montello, because the Commando Supremo was most uncomfortable about the extent of the Austro-Hungarians' progress in that sector. On the other hand they felt no pressing need to advance toward the lower Piave, since the Army of the Isonzo was already being held in check and would have to commit much larger forces to retain their bridgehead at S Dona and Zenson. Once the Italians had recovered all of the Montello they wouldn't have to make a major effort to force their opponents to give up the ground they'd won between the Piave and the Mèolo Brook.

The counter-offensive would be directed by 8th Army, which was being reinforced by the remainder of XXX Corps (47 ID), all of XXII Corps (57 and 60 ID), three Assault battalions and still more batteries. To enable 3rd Army to keep their opponents pinned down, they received 22 ID (from 7th Army), which had reached Casier (4 km southeast of Treviso). Furthermore the high command took measures to prepare a new strategic reserve behind the battle lines; for this purpose 37 ID of XII Corps were brought from Camposampiero to Treviso (they were replaced in the former town by 54 ID, from 1st Army). 52 ID (from 6th Army) had moved to Mussolente in place of XXII Corps when the latter shifted to 8th Army. The commanders of XII French and XIV English Corps were instructed to group their reserves at points from which they could be transported quickly. Besides assigning units to 8th and 3rd Armies which would allow the former to counterattack and the latter to carry out an active defense, the Commando Supremo began planning in the evening of the 18th to create yet another reserve force; it was supposed to consist of eight battle-ready infantry and two cavalry divisions, to be joined by whatever formations from the allied corps which could

be spared from the front.²⁵⁷

Because of these measures by the Italian high command the night of 18-19 June represented the turning point of the battle. By deciding to counterattack, the enemy took the initiative and from now on would force the pace of the operations.

5. The Italian counter-offensive, 19-20 June

a. The Italian attack is repulsed on the Montello

19 June

In the morning of 19 June the k.u.k. XXIV Corps on the Montello enjoyed a period of relative quiet. After many days of rain, the sun was finally shining. The Piave began to fall, which gave the tireless sappers an opportunity to start restoring the bridges which had been destroyed by the high waters.

But toward 2:00 PM the Italians were noticeably intensifying their artillery fire against our battle lines and river-crossing points. The bombardment swelled quickly to an enormous strength. Air squadrons circled over the bridges and disrupted the sappers' work with bombs. On the southern edge of the heights the defenders could clearly observe the approach of enemy reinforcements. The Italians stormed forward everywhere starting at 3:30 PM.

G.Lt Pennella, commanding the 8th Italian Army, had decided to defeat his opponents on the Montello with a two-pronged envelopment assault, directed in general toward Falzè. For this purpose the XXX Corps (47 ID and half of 50 ID) would advance from the southwest past C. Serena toward the Collesel d. Sotta, while XXII Corps (57 and 60 ID) pushed from the south toward the Collesel della Madonna. Both corps were reinforced with mountain batteries and assault detachments. A group of five battalions would attack Nervesa from the sector of 48 ID. The Army's reserves were 13 ID (at Selva) and a regiment of 57 ID (at La Contea). The 58 ID, which had been completely worn down, were regrouping at Castelfranco. The parts of VIII and XXVIII Corps still at the front would join the attackers. Finally the 3rd and 4th Armies were ordered to support the operation of the 8th with their adjacent batteries.

257Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", pp. 53 ff.

The onslaught of 47 Italian ID struck Heinlein's Brigade, whose Honved Hussars not only repulsed the enemy but then, reinforced by several companies from IR 32 (stationed in reserve), pursued their fleeing foes and captured 800 men plus 8 guns. II Corps' artillery assisted this brilliant defensive success with effective flanking fire. The 50 Italian ID suffered a similar fate when they attacked the Aus-Hung. 31 ID. The enemy struck many times between 3:30 and 7:00 PM, but each of their attempts collapsed with heavy losses due to the unshaken stand by the Budapest Division. Around 10:00 PM parts of BH IR 3, stationed on the left wing of 31 ID, even thrust forward onto the heights to their front; however, the neighboring units were unable to join them, so the Bosnians had to again relinquish this ground to the enemy.

The fighting on the Montello's southern slopes was as bitter as the action on the upper part of the massif. The intense combat was reminiscent of the height of the Isonzo battles. The attack of the 57th and 60th Italian Divisions struck 13 Sch Div and 17 ID; some battalions from both of the Aus-Hung. divisions had to withstand as many as six assaults. The Italian air squadrons were also engaged; 36 bombers, operating in two waves, dropped ten tons of explosives. Also deep waves of ground-support planes raked the thin lines of the defenders with machine gun fire. Nevertheless, all enemy assaults collapsed in heavy fighting involving hand grenades. Toward 6:00 PM Aus-Hung. fighter planes drove off the Italian squadrons, which greatly increased the confidence of the infantry. Well-supported by our artillery (despite the shortage of ammunition), the foot soldiers repeatedly counterattacked. The Magyars and Romanians of the new IR 139 alone forced 2000 Italians to lay down their arms. The front became quiet around 10:00 PM; this was in part due to a new rain shower which began toward evening. The enemy pulled back to their starting points, leaving a field of corpses in front of the positions of 13 Sch Div and 17 ID.

The battle took a similar course for 41 Hon ID. After fighting which raged back and forth - and was among the bloodiest of the entire war²⁵⁸ - the right wing columns of 8th Italian Army finally were able to establish a firm foothold in Nervesa.

20 June

Despite the lack of success of this attack by so many fresh units, G.Lt Pennella decided to have his Army resume their

258Tosti, pp. 287 ff.

attempt on the 20th. After a short period of rest (roughly from midnight to 5:00 AM), the Italians stormed forward again.

At first parts of XXX Corps were able to penetrate the sector of BH IR 3, but after the commitment of half a battalion of IR 44 from the reserves the Italians were thrown out. An assault against the Honved Hussars began around 11:00 AM, but was defeated after two hours of hand-to-hand combat. At 3:00 PM the enemy again struck the border between Heinlein's Brigade and IR 69 (which held the right wing of 31 ID); parts of Budapest's often-distinguished IR 32 counterattacked and restored the situation. The battle here subsided around 8:00 PM, having been costly for both sides. The average strength of 31 ID's battalions shrank to 250 men. But the Italians had also suffered greatly. Besides those killed or wounded, many enemy troops had again been captured by the defenders. The number of prisoners couldn't be determined, because as soon as the Italians laid down their arms they immediately ran toward the bridges.

In the morning of 20 June the troops on the southern front of XXIV Corps, just like those of 31 ID, repelled all attacks. But the situation became critical around 4:00 PM, when the Italian XXII Corps managed to push the eastern wing of 13 Sch Div back along the road leading from Giavera to the north. The men of the 26 Sch Bde were exhausted after fighting already for six days, and their ranks were thinning (Battalion I of SchR 14 had just 105 troops). Nevertheless, parts of the gallant Schützen Regiments 1 and 14, along with Battalion II/39 which 17 ID had sent to the fight, threw themselves against the enemy and drove them back. Also 17 ID, which finally had been joined on the western bank by Battalion III/139, were victorious; they repulsed massive Italian thrusts at 9:00 AM and again at 3:00 and 4:00 PM. The 41 Hon ID defeated six attacks by their tireless opponents during the night, and three more in the morning; at the end they were in possession of all their original positions. The Italians fell back to Rotonda bidasio, leaving prisoners from eight regiments in the hands of the Honved.

Now the enemy ceased their very costly efforts, recognizing that they had been in vain. At 2:00 PM the HQ of 8th Italian Army had already issued the order to stop the attacks, which had cost XXX Corps in particular heavy losses in killed and wounded. The troops were to just hold their current ground.

The commander of the k.u.k. XXIV Corps, which had fought a wonderfully heroic battle on 19 and 20 June, was full of confidence. FML Goiginger believed that the situation at the

front had stabilized, and sensed that the enemy offensive was faltering. The weather was improving while the water level fell in the Piave. But the Corps commander felt that to retain the Montello it was essential that the bridgehead should be extended to the line mentioned earlier (Collesel Val d'Acqua - Cusignana - Arcade - Spresiano - Palazzon).²⁵⁹ At 9:00 AM on the 20th he'd already issued orders for an attack in echelon. The left wing (41 Hon ID and 17 ID) were supposed to be ready to strike first, by 8:00 PM. Goiginger got 6th Army HQ to rescind an order they'd issued on 19 June that no more troop should be sent to the western bank due to insuperable logistical problems. Now it was planned to send over the remaining two Honved Hussar regiments (one each to reinforce 31 ID and 13 Sch Div); the Corps' reserves (two battalions of Hon IR 20 and the 41st Sturm Battalion) would cross over to the area northwest of Nervesa.

But for now it still was impossible for units to get over the Piave. The bridge at Villa Jacur, which was ready once more at 4:00 AM, was shot up at 12:15 PM. It was completely restored by 7:00 PM, but at 9:00 was closed down after suffering a direct hit from a shell. 31 ID didn't have enough equipment and sappers to build a new bridge, and wanted to continue ferrying men and supplies. 17 ID had similar problems when their bridge at Mercadelli was destroyed by Italian artillery. Finally, as we will narrate below, neither the movement of the reserves nor the attack planned by XXIV Corps were carried out.

b. Actions of the Isonzo Army on 19 and 20 June

While the XXIV Corps of 6th Army engaged in heavy defensive fighting on the Montello, the Army of the Isonzo continued their efforts to reach the Mèolo Brook with VII and XXIII Corps; IV Corps restricted their effort to holding onto the small stretch of the river bank they'd occupied.

The northern corps on 19 June

Under VII Corps, Urbarz's group were to make the main effort; they'd been reinforced on their northern wing by 29 ID, which deployed between the railroad to S Biaggio and the northern edge of the Bosco Nini. The new Division's objective was the Mèolo Brook between the above-mentioned rail line and L'Isolella. Of the units which became available due to the arrival of the 29th, the 87 Sch Bde remained in the group's reserve, while 28 Inf Bde

²⁵⁹Ludwig Goiginger - "Die Piaveforcierung und die Erstürmung des Montello, Juni 1918" (Graz, 1929; a manuscript)

moved to Fagare, behind its sister brigade within 14 ID. The night-time river crossing by 29 ID was delayed, and shortly after it was complete the military bridge at Salgareda was again reduced to wreckage by Italian shells (around 9:00 AM).

Therefore the attack wasn't scheduled to start until 1:00 PM. South of 29 ID the 24 ID (reinforced by Mtn SchR 1) were supposed to reach the Mèolo Brook between L'Isolella and Monastier. 9 CD, along with Mtn SchR 2, were responsible for guarding the southern flank, for which purpose their right wing would join the advance of 24 ID. As their neighbors from XXIII Corps (57 ID) gained ground in the south the 9 CD would be pulled back into VII Corps' reserves.

The two brigades of FML Steiger's 29 ID deployed next to each other and made a coordinated assault. Visibility was severely restricted on the thickly-cultivated flat terrain, and the fighting very soon degenerated into a series of stubbornly-contested isolated actions which raged back and forth. Behind the enemy's front lines a rear position also had to be overcome.²⁶⁰ The north Bohemian troops were unable to capture the well-constructed Italian strong points.²⁶¹ Farther south some detachments were able to push forward to the chapel west of Le Taie, but then had to withdraw to Spinosola after heavy counter-attacks by infantry and armored cars.

The 24th Division were once more able to capture a larger area. With the 47th Inf Bde on the right and the 48th on the left, they advanced in heavy fighting. After forcing 7 Italian ID to flee from the Palombo Brook, they reached the irrigation canals south of La Taie. Here the gallant central Galician Division, as well as VII Corps, were at the high point of their success. But in this fighting the strength of 24 ID, which had already been engaged in battle for five days, was fully consumed.

The western wing of 9 CD (Mtn SchR 2 plus a squadron from DR 1) took part in the attack by 24 ID. A battle group composed of detachments from 24 ID, 9 CD and 44 Sch Div pushed through a

²⁶⁰Novotny, "Die 29. ID in der Juni-Piaveschlacht 1918" (Reichenberg, 1929), p. 66. "Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg. Vom IR. 94. Die Piaveschlacht im Juni 1918" (1932 edition, pp. 165 ff.)

²⁶¹TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original text here apparently contains an error. It refers to a specific Italian strong point at C. Nini; however, that town was already well behind the Aus-Hung. front lines on 19 June and moreover lay to the east (not the north) of Le Taie, the village mentioned in the next sentence as "south" of the strong point.

fortified line in the rear and even reached Monastier; however, they were forced to pull back from the town after street fighting against fresh enemy detachments which were accompanied by armored cars. The exhausted Dragoon Regiments 1 and 13 meanwhile had been pulled back into reserve at Castaldel (west of Zenson).

Toward evening the situation on the inner wings of 24 ID and 9 CD became critical. Under heavy bombardment from Italian artillery and assaults by strong enemy infantry detachments, parts of 48 Inf Bde and of Mtn SchR 2 (stationed on the right wing of 9 CD) crumbled during the night. SchR 21 from 87 Sch Bde were ordered to close the developing gap, but that night they only reached the southern edge of the Bosco Nini. The second regiment of 87th Brigade (SchR 2) stayed at Al Bosco.

Like 24 ID, the 27 Inf Bde of 14 ID, on the northern wing of VII Corps, had to repulse heavy enemy assaults. In the evening of 19 June the forward troops of the newly-arriving 37th and 22nd Italian Divisions were already making an impact.

North of VII Corps, the two Honved divisions of IV Corps fought a stationary battle on 19 and 20 June; their situation grew ever more difficult. They had no bridges over the river or regular supplies; therefore they lacked rations and had no way to move prisoners or their own wounded over the Piave. As predicted by the prisoners, the Italians opened heavy attacks against the northern wing of 64 Hon ID in the evening of the 19th; by exerting their last strength the Hungarians were able to hold off the attackers. 70 Hon ID, which had been weakened when 29 FA Bde departed to join their parent Division, moved their left wing regiment (Hon IR 315) forward to make direct contact with 14 ID.

The northern corps on 20 June

The situation of IV Corps was unchanged on 20 June, except that the units continued to shrink in size. The 128 Hon Inf Bde of 64 Hon ID had no more than 34 officers and 725 men; 127 Hon Inf Bde had about 800 men. The condition of 70 Hon ID, whose officers had suffered shockingly high casualties, was no better; one of the battalions was now commanded by a lieutenant. In the night of 20-21 June, as the water level sank, both divisions were finally able to once more build plank bridges over the various arms of the river.

Under XVI Corps, which since the departure of 33 ID commanded just the k.k. 1st IR 2 and 58 ID, the latter unit took measures to create a strong reserve. This effort seemed justified because there was little activity along this part of the front.

VII Corps HQ ordered that on 20 June the units, which had become intermingled, should be brought back in order. Reserves were to be drawn from the front lines and a straight line established. For this purpose 29 ID were to advance to La Callaltella and S Francesco. Also, as many of the mobile batteries as possible were to move to the western bank; the batteries without horse teams were to be dragged, when feasible, closer to the Piave.

The attack by 29 ID began around 1:00 PM, but was supported by only a few guns; it made little progress against the enemy, whose resistance was constantly becoming stronger. In particular the gallant defenders of the strong points opposite the center of the attackers' front continued to repel the determined assaults by the Bohemian battalions and inflicted heavy losses.²⁶² The situation was even worse for 24 ID, now stationed along a wide arc, which suffered a setback on the 20th.

The Duke of Aosta, commanding 3rd Italian Army, had decided to attack in order to carry out his mission of pinning down the enemy. He relieved the 11 ID (which had been worn down by the Aus-Hung. VII and IV Corps) and the 25 ID (which had been reduced to just a few hundred men). In their former places the 37 and 22 ID were ready to attack. Without artillery preparation, but supported by armored cars, these fresh troops assaulted the entire front of the k.u.k. VII Corps in the morning of 20 June. Their thrust struck the Aus-Hung. 24 ID with particular force;

262 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Once again (see preceding note) the text refers to the Italian "strong point of C Nini"; the only C Nini on the map (Beilage 21) lay behind the Austrian lines, not in front of them.

the defenders' southern wing gave way first, increasing the gap which already existed between them and the 9th Cavalry Division. To prevent a catastrophe, FML Urbarz - with the permission of VII Corps HQ - decided to pull back the Division's line, which had formed an arc, to a position on the western edge of the Bosco Nini that represented the chord of the arc. This would also close the gap between 24 ID and 9 CD. Then he ordered 87 Sch Bde to enter the line in the Bosco Nini, while behind them the 88 Sch Bde were to deploy in reserve. The completely exhausted 24 ID would withdraw east of the woods and into the group's reserve. During the previous night the 9 CD had repulsed many Italian thrusts, and in the morning they sealed off an enemy penetration in the sector of Mtn SchR 2. Now they were ordered to withdraw their right wing in conformity with 24 ID.

Creation of the new front was accomplished despite substantial difficulties. SchR 2 finally took up a position in front of the southwest edge of the woods around 2:00 PM. SchR 21 didn't occupy the adjacent sector to the left (at the edge of the trees) until after 5:00; here the Regiment encountered Italian patrols. Since Mtn SchR 2 and a battalion of Mtn SchR 1 remained with 9 CD, the 44 Sch Div had just two battalions in reserve instead of six. Toward evening DR # 4 routed an Italian battle group that was assembling opposite the left wing of 9 CD. The 29th and 14th Divisions on the northern wing of VII Corps also had to repel enemy attacks, but the latter unit had to slightly pull back their center, which had been in an exposed position pointing toward Calion and came under heavy pressure in the morning. Thus by the evening of 20 June the VII Corps were holding a relatively straight front between Villanova and Guarnieri, facing southwest.

Responding to a question from the HQ of the Isonzo Army, GdI Schariczer reported in the evening of the 20th that his 14 and 24 ID - as well as 9 CD - were much weakened and exhausted after five days of combat, continuing privations, and casualties. The latter two units were being withdrawn entirely from the fighting. If 14 ID were to stay at the front for a while longer they would need appropriate reinforcement. Therefore the Army Commander GO Wurm, who'd intended to send FML Iwanski's 33 ID to XXIII Corps, assigned them instead to VII Corps, where they'd relieve 9 CD and support 14 ID with one regiment. Furthermore the XVI Corps were ordered to send at least one brigade of 58 ID as soon as possible to S Nicolo and Candole; the second brigade of the 58th would follow as soon as they could be relieved.

XXIII Corps on 19 and 20 June

On 19 June the k.u.k. XXIII Corps were still suffering from the after-effects of the panic of the day before. The main task of the commanders was to restore the confidence of the troops and bring order to the units before they could think of resuming the offensive. To strengthen the battle front the 46 Sch Div was now to be deployed. Of this Division, SchR 13 was already with 10 ID, SchR 15 was moving ahead to 12 ID, and 91 Sch Bde, which crossed the Piave near S Dona at 6:40 AM on the newly-restored bridge, was assembling by Musile.

Meanwhile the Italian 33 ID, reinforced by bicycle, assault and Czecho-Slovakian battalions, attacked the 10th and 12th Aus-Hung. Divisions on the 19th and caused them considerable problems. Isolated Italian assault detachments were able to penetrate deeply into the lines of 12 ID along the road from Losson to Capo d'Argine. SchR 15 came up in time to throw back the enemy. At the same time Italian infantry plus armored cars pushed against the northern wing of 10 ID. The front of this Division was now withdrawn to the Gradenigo-Montagner road and 91 Sch Bde were told to counterattack. Then a mass panic spread among the troops on 10 ID's eastern wing. The divisional commander FML Gologorski intervened energetically and soon restored order. But Corps HQ told him that his Division, physically and psychologically worn down by the heavy and costly fighting, was to be relieved by 46 Sch Div. Since 12 ID was also in bad shape, and 57 ID didn't seem to be able to attack any more, GdI Csicsrics suggested to Army HQ that both of these divisions should also be removed from the front lines. To win time to assemble forces for a new attack, the Corps commander ordered that no major action should be initiated prior to the morning of 21 June.

Meanwhile under 10 ID the Infantry Regiments # 15, 21 and 55 were relieved from the front and pulled back to the eastern bank of the Piave; on 20 June they took up quarters between S Dona and Cessalto for rehabilitation. Only IR # 98 stayed behind; they were attached to 46 Sch Div, whose new temporary commander (GM Weisz von Schleussenburg) was placed in charge of the whole sector between Fossa Mille Pertiche and Il Palazzotto.

Since the enemy didn't attack the k.u.k. XXIII Corps on the 20th, the day started quietly. Then two companies of SchR 15, which had recently arrived at the front, thrust toward Losson; this soon led to a larger action, in which SchR 32 - adjacent to the south - also intervened. The group by Losson, though reinforced up to four companies, had to finally pull back due to an Italian counterattack.

In the evening of the 20th the k.u.k. XXIII Corps suffered yet another setback. Detachments of the Italian 61 ID, along with Bersaglieri and marine battalions of 4 ID, attacked the outposts which made up the position of 1 CD.²⁶³ Some enemy troops tried to land at Capo Sile after rowing on the Taglio del Sile, but were repulsed by HR 14. Although at Cavazuccherina sentries from HR 12 were temporarily driven from their post, they finally recovered it. But at Cortellazzo the outnumbered 12th Hussars had to pull back to their third defensive line. The intervention of the Storm Half Battalion from 201 Lst Inf Bde and of two squadrons of the 2nd Hussars²⁶⁴ could provide only some temporary relief. At least the penetration was sealed off north of C Rossa. This Italian thrust was just the opening move in prolonged fighting on and around the island at the mouth of the Piave. In the evening of 20 June the HQ of the Isonzo Army decided to reinforce 1 CD with Lt Col. Duic's Orientkorps. This unit, four battalions strong, had arrived at S Stino from Belgrade; two of the battalions moved forward to the Piave already during the night, using the field railroad which had been finished at the start of June. 1 CD had furthermore been joined on the 19th by Storm Battalion 7 (made available by XVI Corps). HR 5 were instructed to return to their parent unit from 10 ID.

Meanwhile GdI Csicsrics had canceled the attack which he'd planned for 21 June, as the re-ordering of his units continued. The Corps now were only supposed to undertake operations to improve their current positions or to take advantage of favorable opportunities. But new decisions by the high command would soon completely alter the troops' assignments.

6. Boroëvic's Army Group withdraws to the east bank of the Piave

a. The decision to break off the battle

Shortly after arriving at Spilimbergo in the morning of 19 June, Emperor Charles met with FM Boroëvic in an audience that lasted for almost two and a half hours; GO Arz and GM Waldstätten were also involved in part of the discussions. The Field Marshal brought with him reports from both his Army commanders. He supported the suggestion from Archduke Joseph (already mentioned)

263Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 334

264TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The independent Transylvania HR # 2 was attached to 1 CD throughout the June battles.

that 6th Army should either be assigned three divisions and three artillery brigades - so they could substantially widen the bridgehead and hold it with assurance - or else should evacuate the Montello. But Boroevic also presented to the Emperor the request by the commander of the Isonzo Army for fresh divisions. If VII Corps were able by exerting the last of their strength to reach the Mèolo Brook, it would probably be necessary to deploy 33 ID here after they arrived. Then the Isonzo Army's reserve would consist solely of 9 CD (once it was pulled from the front).

According to the notes which the Field Marshal wrote with his own hand, the very exhaustive consultations on the Emperor's train ended when he [Boroëvic] said, "Didn't I argue at every opportunity against this operation, endangering my standing when I said that we shouldn't grab the bull by the horns? It was all in vain!" The Emperor responded, "But Conrad wanted [the operation]." When the Emperor asked what should be done next, Boroëvic suggested, "An attack [by 6th Army] through Asolo to Bassano, while the southern flank is protected in the direction of Treviso by the Isonzo Army." GO Arz agreed with this suggestion and GM Waldstätten raised no objection, so the Imperial commander-in-chief also concurred.

The logistical dilemma

But the question of supplying the units with food and ammunition for this planned continuation of the offensive had to be addressed. GM Waldstätten held a long conference on the subject at Udine in the afternoon; it was joined at 6:00 PM by the Emperor and the Chief of the General Staff. Waldstätten now asserted that the two armies of Boroëvic's Army Group couldn't keep fighting on the western bank with just the supplies currently available. If it was planned to retain both bridgeheads, supplies and fresh troops must be sent there as quickly as possible.

Now two of the colonels on the General Staff were asked for their opinions - Ritter von Zeynek (the Chief of the Quartermaster Detachment) and Pflug (who was in charge of the Ordnance and Munition Department of the AOK). Their statements both had depressing effects.²⁶⁵

Colonel Zeynek described in detail the food crisis that confronted the entire Monarchy shortly before the harvest began; no one could say how they would be able to survive the next few days. Hopes of getting 15,000 boxcars full of grain from Germany had been in vain; unfortunately our allies were now themselves suffering a shortage of food and were forced to reduce the rations of their own troops.

Following this presentation, Colonel Pflug opened by describing how the lack of food was also having a heavy impact on the Monarchy's industrial production. Just like the front line soldiers, the manual laborers in the mines and factories were undernourished and therefore less able to perform their tasks. This was having a particular impact on the extraction of coal,

²⁶⁵Anton Pitreich, "Die Piaveschlacht" (a manuscript)

which in turn had an adverse effect on the production of weapons and munitions. Although at the moment there was sufficient ammunition, there was no guarantee that stocks were large enough for a prolonged major battle; it wouldn't be possible to pile up enough shells to quickly renew the offensive. And it was impossible to predict if the current level of production could be maintained. But this problem was much less pressing than the lack of food. Plans were even under consideration in Vienna to furlough 40,000 workers because the bread ration would have to be cut in half.

Based on these presentations, FM Boroëvic suggested that the Emperor should immediately travel to Vienna, assemble a ministerial council, and clearly describe to them the Monarchy's desperate economic plight. The governments of both halves of the realm should leave no means untried in an effort to avert the increasing dangers. The Emperor turned down this suggestion. He did ask Prince zu Windischgraetz, the Hungarian Minister of Food Administration, to come to Udine, but that gentleman wouldn't arrive for 36 hours.

Now FM Boroëvic asked the Emperor to at least issue an order that the two armies fighting on the western bank of the Piave should break off the battle. Hinting that it would hardly be possible in the next few days to supply the troops with sufficient rations and ammunition, he considered that any blood shed from now on was in vain. The main effort for the foreseeable future should be devoted to surviving the logistical crisis. The resources to continue the offensive simply weren't available. Even if the Isonzo Army did advance to the Mèolo, which hardly seemed likely any more, FM Boroëvic didn't believe their situation would improve. Another proposal was to retain just one of the two bridgeheads, namely the one on the Montello; the problem with this concept was that it would permit the enemy to assault 6th Army with their entire force. Based on all these considerations, the Field Marshal stated that the both armies should be pulled back to the left bank of the Piave, the sooner the better. The operation could be renewed in a different form at a time when the logistical situation had improved.²⁶⁶

The Emperor delays his decision

The danger to Boroëvic's Army Group was constantly increasing, while they engaged in bitter fighting on the western bank against Italian forces which were growing stronger by the hour. Nevertheless, a final decision wasn't reached on 19 June. The

266Anton Pitreich, "Die Piaveschlacht" (a manuscript)

battle continued, as described in the previous section.

On this tense 19th of June the German military plenipotentiary GM Cramon also intervened, with a message from GFM Hindenburg. The OHL wanted the k.u.k. AOK to cancel their offensive, which now seemed hopeless, and transfer six Aus-Hung. divisions to the West. But GO Arz thought, as he explained to GM Cramon, that this was not an opportune time to raise the issue with the Emperor, who'd always opposed sending Aus-Hung. troops to the Western front. Also measures had to be taken on the Piave to counter the strong Italian counterattacks that were in progress. On the next day GM Cramon, on Ludendorff's instructions, raised the issue again; this time GO Arz expressed the opinion that the Emperor certainly wouldn't decide this difficult question without consulting with his closest political advisers.²⁶⁷ And on the morning of 20 June Arz wired GdI Ludendorff a note to report that the outcome of the current fighting would influence "the decision whether to continue the decision and whether it would be possible to give up divisions or else some batteries for the Western front." Arz believed that the decision would in fact be made on the 20th. He didn't fail to mention the threatening food shortage in the Army and in the interior. He closed the telegram with an assurance that everything was being done to surmount the crisis, assuming that the OHL would carry out their plans to help by supplying flour.

Early in the morning of 20 June FM Boroevic sought through a written report to win Emperor Charles' approval for the plan - discussed the day before - to withdraw his armies behind the Piave. But the Emperor still wasn't inclined to issue an order to retreat; first he wanted to speak personally with the army commanders. At 11:50 AM he arrived in Vittorio, where GM Waldstätten had also traveled, to receive a report from Archduke Joseph. The HQ of 6th Army had already stated that the Montello could be held only if three fresh divisions and three artillery brigades were sent, along with plentiful ammunition. Otherwise an immediate retreat behind the Piave was the only solution. Now the Archduke made an identical report to the Emperor, adding his concern that if his men stayed on the western bank and a new offensive wasn't launched in three to four weeks the Montello could become another hell like Doberdo. This must be absolutely avoided. For a purely defensive strategy these heights weren't needed, since it would be much better to have the Piave in front of our troops. But also they couldn't evacuate the bridgehead while under enemy attack, which would lead to a catastrophe.²⁶⁸

267Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", p. 168

268Archduke Joseph, Vol. VI, pp. 571 ff.

Meanwhile around noon FM Boroevic was again pressing for a decision. Based on the deployment of fresh enemy forces and on the statements of prisoners, he believed that the Italian high command intended to destroy the Montello bridgehead. He sought to address another possible reservation of the Emperor with the remark that "with the operation now under way the Monarchy has most loyally carried out its duty to its allies, and cannot risk the possibility of becoming defenseless by continuing the offensive." Then he repeated the suggestion that both armies of his Army Group should withdraw behind the river to ensure the security of the front.

But since he'd still received no order to halt the offensive and evacuate the western bank, FM Boroevic also had to take measures to address the possibility that the operation would continue. At his request, he'd been given control of 9 ID, 51 Hon ID and 12 Reit Sch Div; he intended to assign these divisions, as he'd earlier assigned 35 ID, to 6th Army. Since the AOK had now exhausted all their reserves, they also sought new troops which they could keep the Piave battle going if necessary. The Minister of War was instructed to immediately send 25 ID and 39 Hon ID to Venetia, and FM Conrad to shift battle-ready combat troops to Boroevic's Army Group by railroad as soon as possible. For this purpose Conrad would first send 3 CD, and later the 28th and 5th Infantry Divisions. Furthermore, in an effort to pin down enemy forces opposite 11th Army the XXVI Corps would soon attempt to capture the line Col Moschin - Col del Fenilon - Point 1324 - S Giovanni - Mt Asolone; for this purpose the Corps was given command of the entire 53 ID.

Meanwhile the Emperor wanted to hear from the commander of the XXIV Corps, who was in charge of the fighting on the Montello. In his HQ near Conegliano FML Goiginger, who was fully aware of the importance of the ground won by his gallant troops and of the defensive success they had won, was confident he could master the situation. He sincerely believed he could hold the bridgehead indefinitely if it was enlarged toward the south by fresh forces and protected on both flanks by strong groups of artillery. He also needed three reliable bridges, with sufficient anti-aircraft protection, and an efficient funicular rail line. The Corps commander was completely surprised when the Emperor questioned him about the possibility of giving up the Montello; Goiginger asserted that it would be much harder to evacuate the heights than it had been to storm them, and that his troops would never understand the need for such a move. The impact on their morale

and fighting spirit would be very harmful.²⁶⁹

Finally Emperor Charles had a conversation that afternoon with the commander of the Isonzo Army at Pianzano. There are no written notes about this meeting, but presumably GO Wurm gave the Emperor an opinion consistent with the general consensus at his Army's HQ - which was that the Isonzo Army wouldn't be able to continue the offensive at their current strength. Presumably it would be possible to retain the ground that had been won on the western bank, but for defensive purposes it would be far preferable to re-establish the front behind rather than in front of the Piave. The Army's Chief of Staff Col. Körner had already expressed similar sentiments to GM Waldstätten.²⁷⁰

Decisions by the opposing high commands

Now the Emperor returned to Spilimbergo. After consulting further with Generals Arz and Waldstätten, and after a difficult struggle within himself, at 7:16 PM he issued an order to FM Boroevic which recognized that the offensive had failed - "The troops of the Army Group are to be withdrawn to the left bank of the Piave." FM Conrad was instructed to cancel the transfer of the three divisions which had been initiated.

Shortly afterwards FM Boroevic issued an order, which had been prepared earlier, to both his armies. "Because of the Monarchy's material situation, the parts of the Army Group which have advanced over the Piave are to pull back to the left bank where they will re-group to stand on the defensive. It is the responsibility of the Army HQ to ensure that the planning and implementation remain concealed from the enemy, and to coordinate the movements of the various groups. The HQ of the Isonzo Army will establish a favorable situation in the Bressanin sector."

In the same hours in which these fateful decisions were being made at Spilimbergo and Udine, the Italian high command were altering the plans for their next move. They were quite aware that the Aus-Hung. armies on the Piave suffered from a lack of reserves and of supplies of all sorts, and were certain that in the end they could no longer lose the battle.

But the heroic stand of the Aus-Hung. troops on 19 and 20 June had taught the Italian troops a healthy respect for their opponents; thus the Commando Supremo weren't inclined to

269 Goiginger, "Die Piavebefestigung" (a manuscript)

270 Per a letter from General Körner to the Military Archive at Vienna, 25 April 1937.

accelerate their victory with new attacks. The enormous casualties of the Karst battles were still fresh in their minds when they considered whether to spur their troops on to recover the lost terrain. The high command believed they could make their opponents retreat more quickly merely by strengthening the artillery bombardment, which had already been pounding the Aus-Hung. troops like a metal tidal wave for days. With systematic, destructive fire against the crossing points the Italian generals hoped they could even prevent parts of the opposing force from re-crossing the river. For this primarily artillery action, the 1st, 6th and 4th Armies would give up still more batteries and ammunition to the 8th and 3rd; after the first day of the battle, the level of combat on the mountain front had declined enough to enable the Italians to replace the enormous number of shells which they were expending along the Piave.²⁷¹ The infantry were instructed to merely take advantage of any opportunities, created by the strengthened artillery fire, to thrust against the Aus-Hung. units and hopefully complete their disintegration.²⁷²

Thus the Italians halted their counter-offensive at the very point when the k.u.k. high command decided to retreat. This would substantially aid the Aus-Hung. troops as they carried out the difficult task of disengaging from their enemies and retreating to the eastern bank of the Piave.

b. Evacuation of the Montello

When it was decided to withdraw Boroevic's Army Group behind the Piave, 6th Army left direction of the evacuation of the Montello in the hands of XXIV Corps HQ. The Army did issue a guideline - after the retreat was completed the 13 Sch Div and 17 ID should be occupying the original position on the bank between Mira and the rifle range east of the Sugana railroad station, while 31 ID and 41 Hon ID were pulled back into reserve. But it was planned to soon relieve the 13th and 17th Divisions also with fresh units. II Corps would assist the retreat of XXIV Corps with artillery fire; they would deploy at the front the hussar regiments of 11 Hon CD which had remained on the northern bank, while withdrawing Heinlein's Brigade to join 39 Hon Inf Bde in reserve.

FML Goiginger had already made his plans in the evening of 20 June. All the mobile field artillery batteries and as much of

271Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 339 ff.

272Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", p. 57. Tosti, pp. 299 ff.

the mountain artillery as possible would cross the river in the night of 20-21 June, followed by the supply trains and medical staffs along with the wounded. No movement would take place during the day. The majority of the Corps - half the infantry and the rest of the mountain artillery - would withdraw in the two following nights. But to deceive the enemy the foremost line would be occupied through the evening of 22 June, after which the entire front would be pulled back in one bound. If the withdrawal had been conducted by sectors the operation would have been betrayed to the enemy, enabling them to effectively hamper the river-crossing. Our batteries on the eastern bank would lay down a well-organized barrage to keep the enemy pinned down in case they tried to advance during the two critical days. The 31st, 13th and 17th Divisions would cross the river using the bridge by Villa Jacur and the vessels which had been attached to each unit. Heinlein's Brigade and 41 Hon ID would cross entirely by boat. By 5:00 AM on 23 June the 13 Sch Div and 17 ID were to be deployed in the old positions on the other side of the river, ready for defense.

Meanwhile on the Montello the enemy had initiated several new attacks late in the afternoon of the 20th and in the following night, directed against both wings of XXIV Corps. All the assaults were repulsed; some Italians did break into the thin lines of Hon IR 12 (in 41 Hon ID) and of Heinlein's Brigade, but were thrown out again by counter-thrusts. In these actions the Honved Hussars captured 230 prisoners and 10 machine guns.

The artillery began to move back on 21 June, soon after midnight. They suffered some losses on the river due to the Italians' continuous artillery bombardment of the crossing points, but the enemy had no inkling that the retreat had begun. During the daylight hours of the 21st there was virtually no further combat on the Montello, since the Italians had received the order that they were supposed to just hold their positions. On the other hand the enemy artillery continued to fire, especially against the rear areas, and their airplanes continued to attack the crossing points. Early in the day one of their bombs once more damaged the bridge at Villa Jacur, making it impossible for the batteries of 31 ID, as they now arrived, to get over the river. Repairs to the bridge were completed in the following night.

Although FML Goiginger issued all necessary orders for the retreat in the night of 20-21 June, and the withdrawal of the artillery had already begun, he wasn't reconciled to the idea of evacuating the Montello. In a conference with Archduke Joseph in the morning of the 21st he advanced numerous operational and

psychological reasons why the order to retreat should be canceled. In his opinion, if the Montello bridgehead was retained it would be more difficult for the enemy to attack over the Piave; furthermore, the position could serve as a sally port for a new advance by the Aus-Hung. Army beyond the river. XXIV Corps, which to date had captured 12,000 prisoners and 84 guns, felt they were victorious. But the complete abandonment of their gains would give the enemy a chance to claim that the battle had been a triumph of Italian arms. Toward evening Goiginger expressed the same opinions to the Chief of Staff of Boroevic's Army Group, but the order to repeat remained in effect.

The first echelon of the infantry began to pull back in the evening of 21 June. In all the divisions this was supposed to involve half of the infantry (or hussars) in each regiment. But in 13 Sch Div, which had lost both its brigadiers, the divisional HQ had serious reservations about the feasibility of retreating in stages; here all the personnel of Schützen Regiments 24 and 25 pulled back. But despite all difficulties, the withdrawal and river-crossing mostly went according to schedule. The only setback was that at 4:00 AM on the 22nd the bridge at Villa Jacur was once more broken up by drifting pontoons. Therefore the main body of SchR 25 weren't able to reach the eastern bank. On the other hand, traffic was eased because 17 ID were able to build their own bridge, which was opened at 2:30 AM on the 22nd.

On the 22nd there were several Italian thrust against 17 ID and 41 Hon ID, which were soon repulsed; otherwise nothing noteworthy happened at the front. In front of the extreme eastern wing of 41 Hon ID the enemy even pulled back about 1000 paces, apparently due to flanking fire which hit them from the left bank of the Piave. On the other hand the enemy artillery, as instructed by their high command, continued to bombard the crossing-points. The Italians also fired gas shells against 41 Hon ID and 17 ID.

In the evening of 22 June the second echelon withdrew from their positions, leaving behind just small rear guards. All of these troops were also able to cross the river without interference from the enemy. 13 Sch Div didn't have enough pontoons to restore the bridge over the eastern arm of the river. The commander of the bridges therefore decided to instead dismantle the structure and use its pontoons to ship men over the water. This led to some uneasiness among the troops waiting on the bank, who feared they wouldn't be able to cross before daylight. But here also the remainder of 13 Sch Div, along with some men from other divisions, were able to reach the eastern bank as scheduled. Between 3:00 and 7:00 AM, 5000 men and 4 mountain

batteries were ferried here, while the horses swam to the other side. At 3:20 AM some drifting pontoons from 13 Sch Div broke through the bridge of 17 ID, causing the deaths by drowning of several soldiers of the last battalion to cross (III/43).

The enemy failed to notice the retreat of the second echelon also. Early on the 23rd they were still strengthening their barbed wire obstacles and firing artillery at the abandoned position of XXIV Corps. Then some patrols from the south moved cautiously past Nervesa. They brought in as prisoners a few Aus-Hung. soldiers who'd been left behind, and from them learned for the first time about the retreat that had already been completed.

Now the HQ of 8th Italian Army, completely surprised, ordered a general advance; at 10:30 AM the high command assigned to the Army a brigade of 4 CD to take part in the pursuit.²⁷³ Strong detachments attacked the Collesel della Madonna, but found no opponents. Our artillery barrage delayed the Italian advance and finally brought it to a halt. In the afternoon the enemy were still bombarding the unoccupied Collesel delle Zorle, and we could also hear machine gun fire on the Montello. Finally the first Italian patrols reached the river bank around 6:45 PM. Meanwhile the Aus-Hung. sappers had already broken up the bridges and hauled away the pioneer equipment. Only a few pontoons had been left on the western bank on the 23rd, to be used by stragglers.

Thus the eight days of heavy fighting by XXIV Corps on the Montello came to an end. The successful attack over the highly-swollen river had been a brilliant achievement for all the troops and staffs involved. The heroism with which the Corps then defended the heights against an ever-stronger enemy was as glorious a feat as any of the defensive battles on the Isonzo. The evacuation of the Montello, as ordered by higher HQ, was an especially distinguished page in the history of the Aus-Hung. Army; thanks to the careful preparation of the staffs and the exemplary discipline of the troops, it had been completely concealed from the enemy.²⁷⁴

But the battle had also cost the XXIV Corps painful losses. Total casualties were 19,300 men (about 1700 dead, 11,000 wounded, 1600 ill and 5000 missing); the majority of the latter

273Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 339

274The Corps' commander FML Ludwig Goiginger was recognized for his outstanding leadership during the Montello battle when he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

category had found their death in the river's waters.

In accordance with an Army order issued on 22 June, the 35 ID relieved 13 Sch Div on the 25th; the Schützen first moved back to the area around Conegliano and Collalbrigo. 41 Hon ID rested east of Conegliano and 31 ID did so between Vittorio and Ogliano. 51 Hon ID, stationed near Sacile, were ready to go to the front; farther south the 12 Reit Sch Div completed their assembly in the Francenigo-Codogne-Maron area on 26 June. Per an order from FM Boroevic, 9 ID were placed under the Isonzo Army. Under II Corps the 11 Hon CD deployed in the front line on 22 June to the east of 8 CD. Four days later the 39 Hon Inf Bde took up positions on the western wing of 8 CD, to which they were attached. 41 Hon ID were assigned as a reserve to II Corps and instructed to start moving to the Soligo basin on the 28th.

Eventually the 17 ID were supposed to be relieved by 51 Hon ID and move back to Sacile. Then XXIV Corps would consist of 35 ID and 51 Hon ID. The 17 and 31 ID, as well as 13 Sch Div (which would move further back to Aviano) would make up the Army's reserve. For the time being 12 Reit Sch Div were still directly under FM Boroevic's HQ.

c. The retreat of the Isonzo Army

The decision to pull the troops back to the eastern bank of the Piave was taken in the evening of 20 June, but at first the HQ of the Isonzo Army informed their corps commanders only in summary and without further directives. The Army's orders to implement the retreat weren't issued until almost noon on 21 June. They emphatically demanded that complete calm and order should be maintained during the withdrawal. The troops shouldn't know what was intended until the last moment. To keep the operation from being betrayed by deserters or soldiers who were taken prisoner, the first movements were to be described as unit rotations and re-groupings. Artillery fire - in particular the barrages - would carry on as previously for as long as possible so the enemy wouldn't have a hint that we were pulling back.

The detailed instructions were that the artillery and supply trains would cross the Piave in the night of 21-22 June. Then IV Corps would evacuate their narrow bridgehead in one bound. But VII and XXIII Corps would withdraw by sectors in two stages; by the evening of the 22nd they would hold an intermediate line running along the highway from S Andrea through C Nini and Romano to Campolongo and from there through Ronche, Capo d'Argine and

Sperandio to Dubois. They would evacuate the rest of their bridgehead in the night of 23-24 June.

IV Corps

On the 21st the IV Corps enjoyed a period of relative respite from artillery fire, except at the river-crossings. That evening the wounded and prisoners, the few mountain batteries, and Hon IR 314 (of 70 Hon ID) left the western bank. The movement to the eastern bank went relatively smoothly, because 64 Hon ID had succeeded in spanning all the arms of the Piave with plank bridges and had also assembled a sufficient number of boats. 70 Hon ID furthermore could use a military bridge. The enemy didn't notice the withdrawal of any of the troops. Two attacks against 70 Hon ID during the night were fruitless.

Once again IV Corps saw hardly any action on 22 June. In the evening the bulk of both divisions, covered by rear guards, were able to withdraw without interference from the enemy. To deceive the Italians, the plank bridges were left intact on the 23rd; finally in the evening the parts of the bridges on the enemy side of the river were destroyed by our artillery fire and the other parts were carried away.

Once on the eastern bank, each of the Honved divisions took up the old positions along the causeway with three regiments, while holding one regiment in divisional reserve. The combined combat strength of both divisions didn't exceed 3300 men. Although the Corps had been designated the spearhead of the assault toward Treviso, it hadn't gained very much ground despite heroic fighting by the troops in eight days of battle. The Hungarians' casualties were 10,050 men (dead, wounded, ill or missing). They had taken 3000 Italian prisoners.

VII Corps

The HQ of VII Corps had been orally informed about the impending retreat in the evening of 20 June; nevertheless, during that night and on the 21st they carried out the already-planned replacement of 9 CD by the 65 Inf Bde of 33 ID and deployment of IR 19 (also from 33 ID) behind 14 ID. The HQ of 33 ID remained near S Nicolo, along with their IR 12.

The regiments of 33 ID finished crossing to the western bank on the bridge at Salgareda by midnight, after which 24 ID - which had already left the front the day before - used the same bridge to withdraw to the eastern bank. The regiments of 9 CD which had

also been replaced were shipped to the eastern bank near Zenson by boat. All the unit reliefs and marches were implemented without interference. An enemy thrust against 14 ID during the night was easily repulsed. In the daylight hours of the 21st the Italian artillery opened many sudden bursts of fire against the front of VII Corps, and constantly bombarded the crossing-points. In further small-scale thrusts against 14 ID during the afternoon the enemy damaged only themselves.

VII Corps finally received written orders to retreat in the afternoon of the 21st. Now all of the mobile field artillery and the supply trains were instructed to pull back to the eastern bank on the 22nd. Although the retreat of the infantry was supposed to take place in two stages in each of the following nights, this plan seemed too risky to GdI Schariczer. He was concerned that when the enemy noticed on the 23rd that all of IV Corps had retreated they'd be able to fall with full strength upon the parts of VII and XXIII Corps still on the western bank. Therefore he decided that the main body of his Corps would cross the river in the night of 22-23 June in one bound, simultaneously with IV Corps. To make the withdrawal easier, in the night of 21-22 June as much of the infantry as weren't needed would cross at the same time as the artillery. This would involve almost all of the troops stationed in reserve - the 28 Inf Bde and IR 19 from 14 ID, three battalions from 29 ID, the 44 Sch Div, and 65 Inf Bde. The other troops would remain in the forward position.

Comprehensive technical measures for the Corps' withdrawal had already been initiated in the night of 20-21 June. Three plank bridges were constructed to take the place of the destroyed military bridge at S Andrea. Despite bombardment with gas shells, the sappers finished this task on time and also put new ferries in service. The bridge at Salgareda, which had been shot up at 9:00 AM on the 21st, was functioning again by noon. Thanks to these exemplary provisions, the artillery as well as the first echelon of the infantry crossed the river without any delays and without attracting the enemy's notice.

The second part of the infantry pulled back at 10:00 PM on 22 June. Rear guards tarried until midnight in the foremost line to cover the retreat. To directly protect the crossing operation, 14 ID were instructed to leave a detachment along the causeway on the western bank; from the railroad south to Zenson the 44 Sch Div, reinforced by one battalion apiece from 29 ID and 65 Inf Bde, took up a temporary position on the two parallel causeways.

Despite the proximity of enemy outposts, the dis-engagement was

completely concealed from the Italians. Disruptive artillery fire, some of which utilized gas shells, didn't keep the river crossing from proceeding entirely according to schedule. Luckily all the bridges remained intact during the critical night. The crossing-points at Fagare were used by 14 ID, and those next to the destroyed bridge at Ponte di Piave by 58 Inf Bde of 29 ID. The 57 Inf Bde, 44 Sch Div and 65 Inf Bde crossed the river at Salgareda. By 8:00 AM on 23 June all the troops of VII Corps were on the eastern bank, all the pontoons and barges removed, the military bridge dismantled and the plank bridges destroyed.

In accordance with an order issued on 21 June, the 14th, 44th and 33rd Divisions now occupied the old positions on the river bank. 29 ID returned to IV Corps. 9 CD and 24 ID took up quarters to recuperate in the area between the Livenza and the Tagliamento. According to air reconnaissance, the area west of the Piave in which VII Corps had been fighting was dead quiet in the morning of the 23rd. Finally that evening the first Italian scouts appeared on the western bank.

Thus VII Corps' retreat had been successfully accomplished. The Corps had been victorious in most of the actions, taking 30 officers and 12,207 men from 51 Italian units as prisoners, as well as 28 guns, 281 machine guns and 27 trench mortars. However the majority of the captured arms had to be rendered inoperable and abandoned on the western bank. Casualties of VII Corps (dead, wounded, ill and missing) totaled 682 officers and 19,193 men.

XXIII Corps

The k.u.k. XXIII Corps HQ first learned of the impending retreat through a hint from the Chief of Isonzo Army's General Staff at 5:00 AM on 21 June. Therefore the planned reinforcement of the artillery with guns from the western bank wasn't implemented, and measures were taken to protect the crossing-points from enemy air attacks by deploying captured machine guns. That evening the Corps HQ moved 12 ID, which had been relieved by parts of 57 ID, back to the eastern bank along with IR 98 (which had been attached to 46 Sch Div); they pretended that this was a routine troop rotation. 12 ID were to move back to the area between Cessalto and Corbolone.

Meanwhile in the evening of the 21st parts of the enemy XXVIII and XXIII Corps thrust against the left wing of 57 ID and against 46 Sch Div. The attack at Losson collapsed under just our artillery fire; at the other points along the front the Italians

were repulsed by infantry. On the Piave island a new enemy thrust was defeated near Cortellazzo; however, the 4 Italian ID were able to push HR 7 of 1 CD back from Cavazuccherina to C Canani.

XXIII Corps HQ released written orders for the retreat shortly after midnight (21-22 June). Because of the difficulties which the many batteries would face while crossing the river during the night, GdI Csicsrics intended that the majority of his troops would pull back by sectors on the nights of 22-23 and 23-24 June. Therefore by evening of the 22nd they'd retreat only to the line Campolongo - Ronche - Capo d'Argine - Sperandio - Dubois, where they'd occupy an intermediate position. In the night of 23-24 June the 57 ID would withdraw to the eastern bank at the crossing-points by Lampol and S Osvaldo while 46 Sch Div used the military bridge at S Dona. Then both divisions would occupy the old position on the causeway between Noventa and Testadura. On the southern wing, in accordance with FM Boroevic's order on the 20th, the 10 ID would hold fast to a line running along the east bank of the Piave vecchio from the point it left the principal arm of the river to Paludello, and from there along the road on the causeway on the western bank as far as Capo Sile. Downstream from Bressanin the 1 CD along with the Orientkorps would hold their current position.

The removal of 12 ID and IR 98 took place without interference from the enemy. At 1:00 AM on 22 June an exploratory thrust was launched against 57 ID, but easily defeated. On the other hand, the Italians made further progress on the Piave island. Here HR 14 had counterattacked toward C Canani; they gained some ground at first, but then were struck from behind and suffered heavy casualties. Thereupon the enemy drove Hussar Regiments 7 and 14 back toward Bressanin, making it necessary to protect the eastern approaches to that area. 46 Sch Div also took defensive measures against the Italians' threat to their southern flank and 10 ID were supposed to come to the Piave island as quickly as possible.

The commander of 10 ID, FML Gologorski, was also given control over 1 CD (including the Orientkorps), Sturm Battalion 12, and Bicycle Battalions 1 and 2; his mission was to protect the artillery stationed on the Piave island and the crossing points between Testadura and Capo Sile, while clearing the enemy from the Piave delta. But 10 ID - like 12 ID - was very much under strength and there were concerns that both divisions would soon be torn apart in the difficult fighting on the island; XXIII Corps HQ asked for a full-strength division and were assigned the 58 ID from XVI Corps. Their 116 Inf Bde, which had been in

reserve, already reached S Stino on the 22nd. But 115 Inf Bde, still at the front, would have to wait until the arrival of 9 ID, which had been instructed to relieve 58 ID. In addition the XVI Corps received the HQ of 201 Lst Inf Bde with k.k. Lst IR 2, so that the Brigade could re-unite in their sector.

The retreat of the 57th and 46th Divisions to the intermediate position (Campolongo-Dubois) went smoothly in the evening of the 22nd. On the next morning the enemy's advance was very cautious. They didn't start to attack 57 ID and the northern wing of 46 Sch Div until 5:30 PM, and then were defeated. But the Italians also directed massive artillery fire against the road on the causeway from Fossalta to S Dona, and against the crossing-points. The military bridge again suffered damage, which fortunately could be repaired by evening.

As had been feared, in the evening of the 23rd the enemy pushed energetically against our retreating troops; 113 Inf Bde of 57 ID, which crossed the river near Noventa, suffered heavy losses. As 114 Inf Bde strove to reach the crossing points near S Osvaldo they were almost trapped in a river bend by parts of the Italian 7th and 33rd Divisions. To protect the endangered Brigade, the rear guard on the eastern bank was reinforced by IR 3 from 12 ID, brought forward by truck; VII Corps also rushed to help with three companies. Finally 114 Inf Bde were able to cross the river, although some isolated detachments were forced to lay down their arms. Early on the 24th it was established that the rumors of enormous casualties in 57 ID had been exaggerated. The reinforcements sent to the scene were again withdrawn. 46 Sch Div's passage to the eastern bank was uncontested, and completed around 1:00 PM.

So ended the retreat of XXIII Corps. Although originally assigned a subordinate role in the battle, they had gained the largest amount of ground and taken 179 officers and 7280 men as prisoners. 57 ID and 46 Sch Div, along with the tireless technical troops, had carried out the difficult evacuation with great skill despite the Italians' gallant infantry attacks and strong artillery fire (which from the south had been greatly augmented by the heavy guns of their monitors and floating batteries).

But the actions on the Piave island still hadn't been decided. Counter thrusts on 23 June by parts of the Orientkorps, 1 CD and 10 ID gained no success. Here the fighting continued; it was destined to be prolonged and costly.

7. Aftermath of the battle

a. Plans, decisions and orders

When the Aus-Hung. high command issued the order for Boroevic's Army Group to withdraw behind the Piave, they also had to decide the future assignment of the armies on the Southwestern front. For this purpose, on 21 June Emperor Charles traveled again from Udine to Bozen to discuss with FM Conrad the possibility of a thrust against the Brentonico plateau (between Lake Garda and the Adige). But this idea was soon abandoned, and attention returned to the thrust, already planned, between the Brenta and the Grappa summit. Realization that in fact victory had almost been within reach on 15 June, and a confident memorandum to GM Waldstätten from the Chief of Staff of I Corps (Col. Kundmann), made it seem that this operation would be promising - as long as it was carefully prepared and sufficient fresh forces were available. The plan was discussed for a considerable time by the leading personalities of the AOK, who on 23 June returned to Baden. If it was to be implemented, it was essential that the lines of communication of XXVI and I Corps should be built up as soon as possible. On the other hand the high command instructed FM Conrad - who didn't want to attack any more after the lessons learned near Asiago - that he should pull back the very unfavorably situated line in the area north of that town.

Now the major tasks for the immediate future were assigned. On the 26th Conrad's Army Group were ordered to make sure to hold their current defensive positions. But preparations for the operation in the Grappa sector should go on, without being pressed for time. On the Piave front FM Boroevic had already instructed both his armies on the 24th to retain the positions on the left bank which they'd held before the offensive. So the Aus-Hung. forces in the Southwest had fallen back everywhere onto the defensive.

In these days and hours the leadership also recognized the necessity to quickly undertake measures to alleviate the critical shortage of food. On 21 June the Emperor had already discussed the problem with the Hungarian Minister of Food Administration, who'd come to Udine for this purpose. The Minister (Ludwig Prinz zu Windischgraetz) declared that Hungary wouldn't be able to provide Austria any large amount of produce from the early harvest until the first days of July. The only other solution was to request help from the German Emperor. Three messengers were now sent to German General Headquarters - Windischgraetz,

Prince Max Egon Fürstenberg (a personal friend of Emperor William) and Col. Zeynek of the General Staff. But it was clear that the urgently needed flour wouldn't be sent unless the Army agreed to honor the German OHL's urgent requests of the last few days that Aus-Hung. divisions should be provided for the Western front.²⁷⁵

On 25 June the Aus-Hung. high command decided to agree to the German request for assistance. After Foreign Minister Graf Burian had also approved the sending of six Aus-Hung. divisions, GM Cramon was informed of this decision on the same day. On the next day an agreement was reached in Berlin about receiving flour from Germany.²⁷⁶ But since the situation in Italy still needed to be clarified (an enemy counterattack was expected), for the time being just two divisions would be sent to France, along with heavy artillery and some Russian prisoners of war serving as laborers. The remaining four divisions would be sent later as conditions permitted.

On 27 June GO Arz wrote to GFM Hindenburg about this matter, and also disclosed his further plans. He told the Field Marshal to be convinced that the Monarchy would send as many units as possible to the Western front in pursuit of the common war objectives. But the Aus-Hung. contribution would be limited by the necessity on the one hand to be sure of holding the front in the Southwest, and on the other to remain active enough to pin enemy forces down in Italy. Finally GO Arz stated that as soon as possible - in September at the latest - he intended to lead a new attack against Italy, because he didn't want his Army "to feel that they'd been beaten for good" after the failure of the June offensive. The operation - for which GO Arz would gladly welcome German troops - was necessary also because it would be impossible to survive a second winter in the area between the Brenta and the Piave.

It cannot be determined whether the Chief of the k.u.k. General Staff really believed that such an offensive was possible. GFM Hindenburg thanked him for the two divisions that would soon arrive and asked that the other four - and more if possible - should follow them quickly. He expressed a hope that the k.u.k. troops in the West would find an opportunity to participate in winning the war. But the Field Marshal didn't respond to the suggestion that German troops should return to the Southwestern front.

²⁷⁵Windischgraetz, "Vom roten zum schwarzen Prinzen" (Berlin-Vienna, 1920), pp. 232 ff.

²⁷⁶Landwehr, p. 237

Troop movements

The promise to send units to the West and the relief of divisions which had suffered particularly heavy casualties in the June battle led to a series of troop movements.

The 1 and 35 ID would go to France; the former would be relieved at the Tonale Pass by 22 Sch Div and the latter opposite the Montello by 41 Hon ID. Furthermore, Conrad's Army Group were to give up Heavy Field Artillery Regiments 11, 54, 59 and 72 as well as four batteries of the heaviest calibers for the Western front. The artillery were scheduled to entrain on 4 July and the two divisions on the 8th. They'd be followed nine days later by FML Ludwig Goiginger with the HQ of XVIII Corps. The current commander of XVII Corps, GdI Edler von Weber, replaced GdI Kletter as the leader of VI Corps.

The greatly weakened 38th and 32nd Divisions moved from south Tyrol to the interior. The regiments of 38 Hon ID started to board their trains at Matarello on 1 July. 32 ID, after marching from the Grappa area to 6th Army's sector, entrained at Sacile at the same time. Both divisions were welcomed by the Minister of War, who believed he had to replace the 25th and 39th Divisions (taken away by the AOK back on 20 June) due to general strikes which had broken out in Vienna and Budapest. Therefore both the 38th and 32nd were deployed as "Assistenz" units in the interior beginning in mid-July. 40 Hon ID, which had been ordered to join Conrad's Army Group, didn't start their journey from Croatia to south Tyrol until 28 July. In turn, FM Conrad sent 26 Sch Div marching overland to join Boroevic's Army Group. Since Conrad felt it was urgently necessary to relieve 159 Inf Bde, which had been at the front for two years already without a break, at the end of July the 10th Army received k.k. Lst IR 13 (hitherto stationed in the interior).

From Boroevic's Army Group the 1 CD, whose hussar regiments hadn't proven equal to the difficulties of combat at the mouth of the Piave, were sent to the Northeastern front; they departed from Portogruaro on 7 July. As their replacement the 2 ID, hitherto stationed in the area of General Command 4, started to move to Venetia on 9 July. FM Boroevic on 14 July also had to give up 47 FA Bde for the Albanian front where - as will be narrated shortly - there was a lack of manpower; they would be followed on 23 July by the Orientkorps. On the other hand the infantry of 7 ID, which had been stationed in the interior, moved in mid-July to join Boroevic's Army Group. And on 7 July the 34

ID, in Ukraine, entrained for Venetia. GdI Alfred Krauss, commanding the Eastern Army, declared that he couldn't give up any more k.u.k. troops unless German units would come to relieve them at all stations.

After the withdrawal of the Aus-Hung. troops it must have seemed very tempting to the Italian high command to follow their retreating opponents onto the eastern bank of the Piave. But the nine days of battle had cost the Italians and their allies heavy casualties; between 15 and 25 June they lost 84,830 men - 8030 dead, 28,998 wounded and 47,802 missing.²⁷⁷ Also, no technical preparations had been initiated for such a difficult operation against defensive installations of unknown strength protected by the river, and the troops hadn't been trained for the attack. Finally the Commando Supremo didn't believe that their current strategic reserve of nine divisions was sufficient to enable them to launch their own offensive. Thus the HQ at Abano Bagni decided to stay on the defensive for now. Only local attacks were to be undertaken to recover the high ground that had been lost on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau and in the Grappa sector. Furthermore the 3rd Army were to advance their right wing up to a shorter line - the regulated lower course of the Piave.²⁷⁸

277Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 404

278Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", p. 58. Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 316 ff.

b. Fighting on the island at the mouth of the Piave (24 June to 5 July)

The Italians intended to conquer the large island at the mouth of the Piave. On the other hand, on 24 June the HQ of the k.u.k. XXIII Corps decided that they would first hang onto the defensive sector from Chiesa nuova through Passarella d. so. and C Pirami to Cadel; then, as fresh troops came up, the Corps would advance once more to the Piave vecchio. Two days later GdI Csicsrics even extended his plan of attack to include the capture of Cortellazzo and the entire line of dunes as far as the Stabilimento Balneare. These conflicting plans for an offensive now led to a series of bitter actions in the area at the mouth of the Piave; it was difficult to make observations on the flat terrain, which was cut up by numerous canals but lacked drinking water. The Italians maintained the initiative in this battle.

Actions through 2 July

Already in the early morning of 24 June, while upstream the last Aus-Hung. rear guards were leaving the western bank, the XXIII Italian Corps directed a pincers attack against Capo Sile. Parts of 4 ID assaulted the battle group near Ba. Valerio (one battalion each of the Orientkorps and of IR 55 plus the remnants of HR 7), which was guarding toward the south; the enemy pushed the defenders north and during the day forced them to withdraw to C Guiotto. Also in the early hours detachments from the Italian 61 ID broke through the thin lines of HR 14 farther north at Capo Sile and Scabbio, and forced them to give up the road along the causeway. A planned counterattack by a battalion from 10 ID didn't materialize, so the hussars retreated to the eastern bank of the Piave vecchio.

On the next day the enemy were even able to establish themselves in the extreme northwest corner of the island and rapidly gained ground toward the east. But in the evening a counter-thrust by Bicycle Battalion 1 (along with small detachments of 10 ID) threw the Italians back.

Meanwhile GdI Csicsrics finalized a plan to defend the northwestern part of the island (as far as C Pirami) with 58 ID and the southeastern part with 10 ID and 1 CD. He wanted to place the Orientkorps in reserve; although this unit had completed very intensive storm-troop training, they were still unaccustomed to fighting under fire from heavy trench mortars, flame-throwers and airplanes. But it now became evident that the

troops of 1 CD and 10 ID, already quite exhausted, had little power of resistance. Therefore these two divisions were pulled back to quarters between Torre di Mosto and Portogruaro for rehabilitation, and the defense of the southeastern sector was still entrusted to the Orientkorps. Then, as already narrated, the 1 CD left the Italian theater of operations on 7 July.

In the following days both sides geared up to attack. FML Zeidler, the commander of 58 ID, was now placed in charge of all Aus-Hung. troops stationed on the island. He intended to advance toward Cortellazzo on 4 July. But his battle group suffered a very unwelcome loss of strength on 1 July when the two bicycle battalions (# 1 and 2) were withdrawn. Then the enemy struck before the Aus-Hung. forces (18 $\frac{1}{2}$ battalions, 292 guns and 16 trench mortars) were scheduled to attack. On 2 July both the 54th and 4th Italian Divisions opened an envelopment assault; each of them had three brigades, and their total strength was 37 battalions, 568 guns and 149 trench mortars.²⁷⁹

At 3:00 AM the enemy offensive started with heavy fire from their artillery and trench mortars. At the same time air squadrons bombed our infantry lines, battery positions and bridges. Soon afterwards the Italians once more thrust ahead near Intestadura onto the eastern bank of the Piave vecchio, where IR 96 was stationed; the Regiment was driven back and suffered very heavy casualties. Covered by an artificial smoke screen, the attackers constructed several plank bridges. Now IR 135 from 116 Inf Bde (in reserve) came forward and counter-attacked along with the remnants of IR 96. The thrust did push the enemy back, but a new threat at Chiesa nuova forced the Austro-Hungarians to again withdraw east where they took up a position that toward the right rested on the Piave embankment.

Farther south the gallant Silesians of IR 1 easily repulsed an Italian thrust toward C Pirami; in the southeastern part of the island the Orientkorps were also able to thwart an attack directed north from C Rossa, as well as an attempt to land troops from several torpedo boats. On the other hand the enemy were able to rip apart the line of outposts between IR 1 and the Orientkorps and to advance through C Molinato.

Since FML Zeidler's reserve consisted of just three weak battalions, he asked for reinforcements. XXIII Corps HQ decided to send 57 ID, which had been relieved by 12 ID, to the southeastern part of the island. But they also suggested to the Isonzo Army HQ that the island should be evacuated, because the

279Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", pp. 370 ff.

area being defended was so shallow that the danger of staying in place outweighed any possible advantages. FML Zeidler, on the other hand, spoke out against retreating; therefore the Army commander GO Wurm, after a conference with GdI Csicsrics, ordered that the island should be held under any circumstances. As reinforcements FML Zeidler was given 114 Inf Bde of 57 ID and SchR 32 of 46 Sch Div; the 113 Inf Bde had moved to Torre di Mosto as the Corps' reserve.

Actions on 3-5 July

On 3 July, during a fairly quiet morning, the k.u.k. forces regrouped for the defensive -

. in the northwest were 58 ID and SchR 32, which had relieved the worn-out Regiments 96 and 135, plus Field Artillery Brigades 10 and 4 K;

. in the southeast were 57 ID, the Orientkorps, Field Artillery Brigades 48 and 1K plus Heavy Field Artillery Regiments 24 and 255. If feasible, the garrison of the southeast sector were supposed to advance up to the Can. Cavetta.

But in the afternoon the enemy were already renewing their attack. Their thrust against C Pirami was again unsuccessful. On the other hand, deeply-deployed Italian units pushed north from Trinchet up to the embankment southeast of Grisolera and thus split the southeastern sector into two parts. GdI Csicsrics now ordered that the enemy were to be driven back by committing the Corps' reserves, and that SchR 13 of 46 Sch Div should move onto the island.

As ordered by FML Hrozny, commanding 57 ID, the counterattack on 4 July was supposed to reach C Molinato, I Busatti and C Vincenzetto. But it gained ground very slowly and finally came to a halt near C Boschetta in front of numerous Italian machine gun nests. Now our artillery opened heavy fire on the enemy and 20 planes also attacked, preparing for the next infantry onslaught scheduled for the evening. The enemy reacted to these preparations with very intense counter-fire. At several points the Italians' own infantry thrust ahead in strength; at C Fornera they drove back the western wing of the Orientkorps, which was pressed against the Piave. Although all of the Italian attacks were finally repulsed toward midnight, they had kept the k.u.k. 57 ID from renewing the offensive.

Meanwhile in the northern part of the island the enemy also advanced against 58 ID on 4 July, inflicting heavy casualties on SchR 32. Troops who penetrated the lines of IR # 1 were soon

thrown out.

Concerned by the reports from the island, GO Wurm shifted the 14 and 10 ID to the southern wing of his Army. From 10 ID, which was nearest to the battlefield, the 19 Inf Bde were to join 46 Sch Div; the latter unit in turn would help 58 ID with a battalion of 19th Bde and would send SchR 13 to the island.

The fighting continued on 5 July. In the morning the enemy advanced once more against the center of IR # 1, but soon gave up their assault when they came under concentrated fire from our artillery. The Italians had more success in the island's south-eastern sector. Here after four hours of artillery and trench mortar fire they stormed the Piave embankment west of Cadel, forcing weak detachments of the Orientkorps and of IR 122 to retreat to the eastern bank. The battle-group commander reported that there was no chance that the original situation could be restored. FML Hrozny canceled the attack south from Grisolera which had started the day before and decided to be content with the limited ground that had been won. But the situation also seemed hopeless in the northern part of the island. FML Zeidler reported that the troops were exhausted from the continuous fighting; he couldn't guarantee that further Italian attacks would be repulsed. Prisoners indicated that a new thrust with fresh forces was imminent.

For all these reasons the HQ of the Isonzo Army recognized that even if the island could still be held, the result would be substantial casualties that would endanger the Army's overall strength. To prevent this, at 4:20 PM they ordered that the island would be evacuated in the night of 5-6 July. The new defensive line would be established along the embankment on the eastern bank of the main arm of the Piave.

The river crossing took place in complete order and without any noteworthy interference from the enemy. Since the cohesion of the Aus-Hung. divisions engaged on the island had been considerably loosened, the 14 ID²⁸⁰ had to be brought up to reinforce the new defensive front. Thus by mid-July the XXIII Corps was deployed as follows (from right to left) - 46 Sch Div, 58 ID, 14 ID, 57 ID, Orientkorps; however, the last-named formation soon left the front.

280 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original contains an error here; it states that "14 and 10 ID had to be brought up..." However, Beilage 23 (with which this passage was cross-referred) shows that 10 ID had left the front "fully worn-out" on 2 July and withdrawn to Codroipo; it didn't return to this sector.

Thus ended the actions around the Piave island. The k.u.k. XXIII Corps, which had been so successful in the preceding battle itself, had lost a substantial amount of territory and additional casualties during the aftermath. Between 15 June and 6 July the Corps' total casualties (dead, wounded and missing) were 1000 officers and 31,472 and men. And our evacuation of the island ended the threat to the Italian Piave front which had always existed in this sector. Thus the Army of the Duke of Aosta gained an operational advantage in addition to the laurels of their defensive victory.

c. Italian counterattacks on the mountain front (24 June to 15 July)

The news that the Aus-Hung. troops had evacuated the western bank of the Piave not only relieved the Italian leadership, but caused some of them to cherish unrealistic hopes about the impending collapse of their opponents. The commander of the Grappa army was visiting the HQ of the Montello army on 23 June to get an update on the situation, and there experienced (as he stated later in his memoirs) an "unforgettable moment" when he learned of the retreat.²⁸¹ He hastened back to his own command post and found that an order from the high command had already arrived, advising him to take advantage of the new situation. After consulting with his corps commanders, General Giardino decided to attack immediately. Mt Spinuccia and the Solarolo summit were to be captured by XVIII Corps, Mt Pertica by VI Corps, and Mt Asolone, the Col della Berretta and Col Caprile by IX Corps. Only I Corps, on the Army's eastern wing, would stay in place for the time being. Therefore Giardino wasn't restricting his effort to an attempt to recover the positions lost on 15 June, but hoped that with one bound he could seize the entire crest of the mountain chain. But he wouldn't seek the further objective which his 4th Army had long desired - the Feltre basin - unless his opponents collapsed and he received substantial reinforcements. The high command were permitting Giardino to make temporary use of the Alpini of 52nd Division, but only if absolutely necessary.

Operations from 24 to 28 June

In the morning of 24 June the XVIII Corps were the first to attack. After a heavy artillery bombardment which had started at midnight a large number of picked infantry battalions, well

²⁸¹Giardino, Vol. II, pp. 380 ff.

equipped with flame throwers, advanced toward the summit of Mt Solarolo and also from the Col dell'Orso to the west and northwest. They suffered substantial casualties under a barrage from the Aus-Hung. batteries and then met stubborn resistance from the infantry. Finally they were hurled back by troops under 55 ID - the Bosniaks of the 4th Regiment and Silesians of Battalion II/120. Part of the attacking group from the Col dell'Orso were even forced to lay down their arms. Under these circumstances the right wing of XVIII Italian Corps abandoned the plan to thrust along the Mt Spinuccia ridge.

VI Corps wanted to first recover the line they had occupied prior to 15 June, but the start of their attack was contingent on the progress of their neighbors and in particular upon the capture of Mt Asolone by IX Corps. Storm troops from the latter Corps started to attack in the morning and continued to do so until evening, but couldn't prevail. The south Moravian IR 99 and Galician IR 9 of 4 ID, which now defended the Mt Asolone sector, remained in firm possession of these important heights.²⁸² Also the Italian attacks failed completely in the area around Ca d'Anna; here, in the sector of 27 ID, the Lower Austrian IR 49 and Moravian IR 8 along with remnants of the Hungarian IR 25 stood fast. Then in the afternoon parts of VI Corps tried to advance in the Mt Pertica area but were driven back by the Egerland IR 73 and Croatian IR 79, both from 48 ID which had just relieved 60 ID.

Thus the first large-scale attack coordinated by the HQ of 4th Italian Army had failed. General Giardino had expected 6th Army to also attack west of the Brenta, and complained that they failed to do so.²⁸³

But in fact there were many strong attacks directed against the Mt di Val Bella, in which the Italians penetrated the defenders' lines before being pushed back by counter-thrusts. Parts of IR # 53 and 126 were distinguished in this action. In the afternoon IR 114 of the Edelweiss Division also had to withstand several thrusts on the Col del Rosso. All these actions took place under extremely heavy and destructive fire from artillery on both sides, which inflicted many casualties.

The failure of the operation in the Grappa area had clearly shown the enemy that overall the Aus-Hung. troops hadn't been so badly shaken by their recent defeat than had been hoped in the Italian

²⁸²Gallian, "Monte Asolone 1918" (Graz, 1933), pp. 73 ff.

²⁸³Giardino, Vol. II, p. 388

camp.²⁸⁴ The parts of the attacking Italian units which were still in contact with their opponents in the night of 24-25 June returned thereafter to their starting points, and the entire Grappa army fell back upon the defensive. Since rumors again arose that the Austrians intended to attack, the Italians initiated measures to improve their positions, although they still intended to recover their lost lines at some point in the future. In the next eight days the only activity in the Grappa sector involved artillery fire of varying strength.

Under 6th Italian Army the XIII Corps felt that honor demanded the recovery of the "three mountains" remaining in the hands of their opponents - Mt di Val Bella, Col del Rosso and Col d'Ecchele.²⁸⁵ On 26 June, after an hour of hurricane fire, storm detachments of this Corps attacked the Edelweiss Division's sector with stubborn persistence, but their effort collapsed thanks to the accurate fire of our artillery and the steadfast stand by Infantry Regiments 107 and 114. The enemy broke off the action, but prepared carefully to renew it on 28 June. The English and French, who'd been observing the operations of XIII Italian Corps since 16 June and had only been active with their artillery in the last few days, carried out many small-scale thrusts starting on 27 June which led to local actions in no-man's land. Although the French Corps withdrew 23 ID from the front on 23 June,²⁸⁶ they continued to support their neighbors to the east with heavy batteries.

Between 16 and 28 June Scheuchenstuel's Army carried out many troop movements and rotations. The process was complicated by the fact that until 21 June the intention was to free as many of 11th Army's units as possible to move to Boroevic's Army Group, but this plan was canceled when the offensive on the Piave came to an end. Therefore by 28 June only part of the troop movements had been carried out. On this day the III Corps had 6 CD, 6 ID and one brigade of 52 ID at the front; the other brigade of 52 ID made up the Corps' reserve. 28 ID, originally chosen to join Boroevic, had first marched to Pergine but then were sent through the Sugana valley to the area around Arsie and Fonzaso where they now were placed under XXVI Corps. At this point XIII Corps commanded just 10 CD and 74 Hon ID at the front and 16 ID in reserve; 38 Hon ID had already left by train from Mattarello. 42 Hon ID were resting near Pergine, as were 5 ID by Levico and Roncegno. VI Corps intended to relieve 18 ID with 53 ID, but on

²⁸⁴Ibid., Vol. II, p. 405

²⁸⁵Baj-Macario, "Giugno 1918", p. 366

²⁸⁶Berthemet, p. 38

29 June the HQ of 18 ID were still in charge of the Mt di Val Bella sector, which was defended by IR 126 of this Division plus IR 131 from 53 ID. Although greatly reduced in strength, the Edelweiss Division were still stationed on the Col del Rosso next to the equally weakened 36 ID (of which two regiments had pulled back to the upper part of the Frenzella ravine as the Corps' reserve). One of the reduced brigades of 26 Sch Div guarded the heights of Foza and Sasso Rosso, while the remnants of the other brigade rested north of the Meletta massif. As mentioned earlier, the plan was to send this Schützen Division to Boroevic's Army Group. The deployment of the forces by Mt Grappa has been described in connection with the fighting on 24 June. Behind the front, in addition to 28 ID the 60 ID had been relieved and were stationed in the area northeast of Feltre; 32 ID, which had been marching to Boroevic's Army Group, later were instructed to entrain at Sacile for the interior. Finally the 11th Army had shifted 3 CD to 10th Army. But all of the artillery remained in the positions they'd occupied since 15 June.

GO Scheuchenstuel accurately deduced that the fighting wasn't over in VI Corps' sector. On 27 June, referring to "the possibility that the enemy will very soon renew [the attack] on VI Corps with strong forces", he took various measures to ensure that this Corps would be supported by their neighbors, and in particular by artillery. In fact the enemy's disruptive fire was already swelling to unusual strength in the night of 27-28 June; after daybreak the Italian guns and trench mortars continued to pound the "three mountains" with heavy rounds. For a time this bombardment resembled hurricane fire, since the wall of explosions kept rolling forward and back, although the anticipated infantry assault didn't materialize. The Italians had only wanted to wear down the garrison with their fire. But they also strongly affected the already very tense nerves of the k.u.k. generals. In particular the commander of the Edelweiss Division, who had no illusions about the condition of his troops and believed it would be essential to relieve his entire force as soon as possible, witnessed the course of events with concern. This is evident from a report which FML Wieden prepared on 28 June; it stated that even in the always-distinguished IR 59, which had been pulled back to recuperate after their heavy casualties on 20 June, morale was "quite unusually low." The Division's other regiments - IR 14, 107 and 114, which normally competed with each other in gallantry - had been "burnt almost to cinders" by severe losses due to battle and illness. Finally the divisional commander stressed that in the most difficult moments he had never lost confidence, but "today I must dutifully report that all the regiments are in a diminished psychological and

physical condition." Therefore he couldn't "guarantee that we can continue to hang onto the soil we'd won with so much bloodshed if enemy attacks continue", and requested that his Division should be relieved.²⁸⁷ In general the condition of the regiments was quite similar within 36 ID, whose relief was also urgent.

On this day the Army commander informed two of the Corps leaders (GO Martini and GdI Csanady) and FML Podhajsky who'd come to Levico to represent the HQ of VI Corps that the high command had suggested on 23 June that a better defensive position should be occupied in the Asiago basin. Everyone approved of the concept. Preliminary measures were initiated, and it was planned to pull the front back at the end of July. The intention was that in future the main line of defense would run roughly from the northern edge of the Assa Ravine through Camporevere and the town of Ebene to Mt Sisemol. East of that mountain, the current front reached by VI Corps would still be maintained. This was also the firm desire of GdI Kletter, who'd emphatically ordered his subordinates that in the interest of the general situation they must hold onto the line Mt di Val Bella - Col del Rosso - Col d'Ecchele under all circumstances. The Corps commander still couldn't honor the express request of FML Wieden to relieve the Edelweiss Division because no dependable reserves were available. Army HQ had in fact wanted to use 5 ID, resting in the Sugana valley, for this purpose; however, it appeared that although the Division had suffered only minor casualties on 15 June it wasn't fully reliable. 5 ID would have to be toughened before it could be entrusted with a difficult responsibility such as the defense of the Col del Rosso.

The Italians didn't deploy any fresh forces for their attack; rather they relied on some carefully selected and equipped storm detachments from the divisions which had already been engaged on this battlefield for weeks. They also used two Czech companies from the so-called Reconnaissance Regiment who'd volunteered to finally enter armed combat against their former comrades.²⁸⁸

Operations from 29 June through mid-July

In the rainy night of 28-29 June the Italian and French batteries opened a very lively and destructive fire, which betrayed the enemy's new plan. Around 3:00 AM, just as on the day before, there was a sudden and powerful bombardment, which this time was repeated after an interval of ten minutes. Upon the first call

287Hoen, "IR. 59 im Weltkrieg", pp. 702 ff.

288Pettorelli-Lalatta, "J.T.O.", pp. 247 ff.

for help by the defending infantry, our artillery responded with powerful counter-fire. The commander of the Edelweiss Division had the impression that "this time [the Italians intended to advance] along the entire front between the Frenzella Ravine and Mt di Val Bella in one great coordinated assault." He doubted whether his worn-out troops would be able to hold out in their hastily-constructed position. In fact the enemy storm detachments did thrust forward along the entire line mentioned above as well as against the Cornone, a rocky summit south of Sasso Rosso. Amidst the dust and smoke bitter fighting developed, in which the Italians broke through the defenders' line on Mt di Val Bella. But they were soon forced to fall back under counterattacks from parts of IR 131, of Battalion I/16, and of IR 125 (which was coming up in relief); all attacks on the Col del Rosso and Col d'Ecchelle had been repulsed at the beginning. The fighting died down around noon. Only the summit of the Cornone remained in the attackers' hands.

Fire from the guns and trench mortars flared up again in the afternoon; from this fact and the approach of new enemy forces it was evident that the Italians would soon renew their attempt. But the evening passed quietly. In combat within such a narrow area it was difficult to clearly separate the troops by their divisional affiliations, and so Corps HQ entrusted direction of the battle in the entire Col del Rosso - Col d'Ecchelle sector to FML Wieden. Thus he was also responsible for 36th Division, which still had two regiments - 16 and 53 - in reserve. However, these units were "totally exhausted" after the latest fighting, so FML Wieden found himself compelled to return IR 59 to the front sooner than had been intended. The sector of 18 ID, in which IR 126 had recently been relieved by IR 125 (of 53 ID), was taken over by the commander of the 53rd (FML von Goldbach). On 17 July the 126th Regiment left by train for Wiener Neustadt, where they'd serve as Assistenz troops.

After a relatively quiet night the battle was renewed on 30 June. A heavy rain of shells once more trampled the terrain, which had already been turned into a scene of rubble and shell holes, and pounded the ranks of the last troops of the Edelweiss regiments who were still heroically fighting in this hell. The enemy infantry attacked at 10:00 AM, assisted by airplanes firing machine guns. In a surprisingly quick thrust the Italians captured the Col del Rosso. The resistance of Infantry Regiments 114 and 107 soon collapsed. Counterattacks by IR 14 weren't successful. The fighting raged back and forth for a long time between the calibration points, which now were heavily bombarded by our artillery, and the original (pre-June 15) position of the

Edelweiss Division. When the battle died down in the afternoon, only one small group was still stationed ahead of the old position. The entire Edelweiss Division - including IR 59 which had arrived once more on the battlefield - had no more than 700 riflemen. FML Wieden, who had insufficient information about the condition of 53 ID and the situation on the Col d'Ecchele, feared that a counterattack would fail and might even lead to the loss of the original fortifications.

Meanwhile by evening the IR 116 and 78 of 36 ID had withstood multiple attacks on the Col d'Ecchele. 53 ID held stubbornly to Mt di Val Bella, though they were stricken by destructive artillery fire and repeatedly assaulted by Italian infantry, especially in the afternoon. The Magyar-Slovak IR 125 were once again distinguished in this defensive action.²⁸⁹

The Corps commander had instructed IR 82 of 53 ID to quickly support the Edelweiss Division; since he had no other reserves, he also asked XIII Corps to send him two battalions of Hon IR 306. He requested that 11th Army HQ should rapidly send forward 5 ID, of which two battalions in fact immediately moved by truck from the Sugana valley to the plateau. Thus GdI Kletter apparently believed that the situation could still be restored on the Col del Rosso; Kletter let FML Wieden know that "until relieved by 5 ID you are fully responsible for all developments at the front." Now the commander of the Edelweiss Division decided to pull all the troops in his sector back to the positions held prior to the offensive. This compelled VI Corps HQ in turn to order the retreat of 53 ID. But the order to the 53rd Division didn't reach the troops on Mt di Val Bella until early on 1 July, and couldn't be carried out in the daylight hours. Powerful attempts by the Italians to force the evacuation of the heights were all thwarted. Finally in the night of 1-2 July the gallant regiments of 53 ID fell back as instructed to the old positions, leaving the blood-soaked Mt di Val Bella to the enemy; the Italians occupied the peak after another pointless artillery bombardment. Their XIII Corps were content with achieving their goal - recovery of the line they'd guarded prior to 15 June. Operations on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau hereafter was restricted mostly to artillery bombardments. Only the infantry of the British corps were somewhat more active in the next few days; they made several thrusts with storm detachments in the Canove area. The k.u.k. Infantry Regiments 17, 27 and 74

289First Lieutenant Arpad Taby of IR 60, who was attached to the II Bn of the 125th (the old Bn II/60) displayed heroic gallantry in the battle; he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order.

drove the enemy back and brought back some prisoners from the English 7th Division.

Meanwhile 4th Italian Army renewed the fighting east of the Brenta. On 2 July parts of IX Corps stormed the Ca d'Anna heights. Since meanwhile the Austrians had abandoned plans to resume the offensive in the sector of GdI Horsetzky's corps, they didn't attach any importance to recovering the Ca d'Anna. But they repulsed further Italian attacks against the "old" position by Col Caprile; a battalion from IR 47 (of 28 ID), hastily brought to the scene, played a notable part in this combat.²⁹⁰

On 4 July parts of Italian XVIII Corps, protected by powerful artillery fire, tried to recover the Solarolo Ridge. They suffered substantial casualties under the accurate barrage of our batteries, and couldn't prevail against the Bosniaks, Poles and Silesians of 48 ID. On 6 and 7 July these distinguished troops drove back additional enemy battalions which had assaulted the so-called Tasson Ridge (northeast of Mt Pertica).

Recovery of the Solarolo Ridge seemed to be of great importance to the enemy. On 9 July the commanders of VI and XVIII Corps met with the leader of their Army's artillery and prepared a new plan of attack, which was approved by General Giardino. The carefully-prepared offensive was scheduled to take place on 15 July.²⁹¹ As planned, at 4:00 AM on that day a rain of shells of unprecedented weight suddenly fell upon all positions between Mt Pertica and the Calcino valley. Immediately afterward the Italian infantry stormed forward. On the Solarolo Ridge they penetrated the defenders' trenches near Point 1672. At the other parts of the front held by 48 and 55 ID the attackers were forced to fall back before reaching the outermost lines, thanks to exemplary cooperation of our artillery and infantry. They were able to take only two unimportant outposts on the Tasson Ridge. Meanwhile the Bosniaks of the 2nd Regiment, along with parts of Carinthian IR 7, were battling the courageous Italians for possession of the summit of the Solarolo; the latter were finally defeated and abandoned the field, leaving behind many dead and wounded soldiers. After this latest setback the Italian generals refrained from further efforts to seize the Solarolo Ridge. They must have understood that they wouldn't be able to overcome their stubborn antagonists with the troops on hand, who'd been bled white in weeks of fighting. And so these heights, which were also important to the Aus-Hung. leadership, represented the only

290Vogelsang, "Das steirische Infanterieregiment Nr. 47 im Weltkrieg" (Graz, 1932), p. 735.

291Giardino, Vol. II, p. 411

territory permanently occupied as a result of the battle which had started on 15 June.

The following were the most important troop movements along 11th Army's front between 1 and 15 July -

- . The Edelweiss Division and 36 ID were relieved by 5 ID;
- . 36 ID then took over from 26 Sch Div the task of guarding the Foza and Sasso Rosso areas; and
- . 4 ID were replaced by 28th Division.

Details about troop movements behind the front are given in the following section.

Summary of troop movements between 1 July and 15 August

Here is a summary of the changes in division assignments which took place on the Southwestern front. It shows the organization as of 1 July and notes changes through 15 August.

- * FM Conrad's Army Group *
- . 10th Army
 - . Archduke Peter Ferdinand's Group
 - . Area I (at the end of July designated 164 Inf Bde)
 - . Area II (subordinate to 1st ID; at end of July designated 163 Inf Bde)
 - . 1st ID (relieved at the start of July by 22nd Sch Div and began to leave for the German Western front on 8 July)
 - . In reserve - 22nd Sch Div - Relieved 1st ID in the Tonale sector at the start of July
 - . XX Corps
 - . 49th ID
 - . Riva Sector - Consisted of 6 ½ Lst bns and 2 SS bns
 - . XXI Corps
 - . 3rd CD - Had just relieved 19th ID at the end of June
 - . 56th Sch Div
 - . In reserve - 19th ID (at Trent; at the end of July with just one of its brigades the Div relieved 159 Inf Bde; IR 50 went to 49th ID and IR 111 to 56th Sch Div)
 - . XIV (Edelweiss) Corps
 - . Kaiser Jaeger Div
 - . 159 Inf Bde (relieved at the end of July by 19th ID; the Bde received Lst Bns II, 10, 164 and 171 from 11th Army and at the start of August moved to Stenico)
 - . In reserve - 38th Hon ID (at the end of June and start of July were already leaving Matarello by train to Croatia, where they relieved 40 Hon ID)
- . 11th Army
 - . III Corps
 - . 6th CD
 - . 6th ID
 - . 52nd ID
 - . In reserve - 42nd Hon ID (at Pergine)
 - . XIII Corps
 - . 10th CD
 - . 74th Hon ID
 - . In reserve - 18th ID (had been relieved at end of June by 53rd ID, and assembled at Borgo; moved to Bozen at the start of July and to Malè at the end of July; IR 126 were sent to Wiener Neustadt to replace k.k. Lst IR

- 13, which in turn joined the 18th ID)
- . In reserve - 16th ID (at the start of July moved temporarily with one brigade to the front near Col del Ross; in mid-July returned to the reserves in Val di Nos)
- . VI Corps
 - . 53rd ID
 - . Edelweiss Div (relieved by 5th ID at the start of July; assembled near Borgo and then moved to Auer and Kaltern)
 - . 36th ID
 - . In reserve - 5th ID (had pulled back to Levico at the end of June; relieved the Edelweiss Div, as well as parts of 36th ID, at the start of July)
 - . In reserve - 26th Sch Div (at the start of July one SchR was still at the front, on the Sasso Rosso, but they were relieved by parts of 36th ID; the 26th Sch Div moved to Sedrano - north of Pordenone - at the end of July)
- . XXVI Corps
 - . 27th ID
 - . 4th ID (relieved by 28th ID in mid-July, but returned to same part of the front at the start of August)
 - . In reserve - 32nd ID (had been relieved by 4th ID at end of June and assembled near Feltre; moved through Vittorio to Sacile at the start of July, and left Sacile for the interior in mid-July)
 - . In reserve - 28th ID (relieved 4th ID at the front in mid-July but again went to reserve, switching places with 4th ID, at the start of August)
- . I Corps
 - . 48th ID
 - . 55th ID (relieved by 17th ID at the start of August, then recuperated at Sedico, west of Belluno)
 - . In reserve - 60th ID (recuperated at S Giustina, west of Belluno)
- * FM Borojevic's Army Group *
- . 6th Army
 - . XV Corps
 - . 50th ID
 - . Half of 20th Hon ID
 - . II Corps
 - . Half of 20th Hon ID (relieved by 31st ID at start of July and returned to XV Corps' jurisdiction, re-uniting the Division)
 - . 8th CD
 - . 11th Hon CD (relieved by 12th Reit Sch Div at start of

- August and moved to Cison di Valmarina)
 - . In reserve - 31st ID (at Vittorio; relieved half of 20th Hon ID at Valdobbiadene at the start of July)
 - . In reserve - 13th Sch Div (at Aviano; marched to Belluno in mid-August)
 - . In reserve - 12th Reit Sch Div (had come from Toblach by rail to Pordenone; marched to Cison di Valmarina at the end of July and relieved 11th Hon CD at the start of August)
- . XXIV Corps
 - . 35th ID (relieved by 41st Hon ID at the start of July; left for the German Western front in mid-July)
 - . 51st Hon ID (had relieved 17th ID at the end of June)
 - . In reserve - 41st Hon ID (at Cison di Valmarina; relieved 35th ID at the start of July)
 - . In reserve - 17th ID (recuperated east of Conegliano; marched to Belluno at the end of July and relieved 55th ID, under I Corps, at the start of August)
- . Army of the Isonzo
 - . XVI Corps
 - . 201 Lst Inf Bde (relieved by 29th ID at end of July, then recuperated at Codogne)
 - . 9th ID
 - . In reserve - 29th ID (resting by S Cassiano di Livenza; relieved 201 Lst Bde at end of July)
 - . In reserve - 9th CD (resting by Cordovado, north of Portogruaro)
 - . IV Corps
 - . 64th Hon ID
 - . 70th Hon ID (extended their lines southeast as far as the Ponte di Piave during July)
 - . In reserve - 24th ID (resting by Cinto Caomaggiore and Pramaggiore)
 - . VII Corps
 - . 14th ID (relieved by parts of 33rd ID and of 70th Hon ID at start of July; assembled at Motta di Livenza and re-assigned to XXIII Corps in mid-July)
 - . 33rd ID (relieved parts of 14th ID at the start of July)
 - . In reserve - 44th Sch Div (had been relieved by 33rd ID; assembled near Codroipo)
 - . XXIII Corps
 - . 12th ID (had relieved 57th ID at end of June; re-assigned to VII Corps at the start of July, so that the authority of the latter Corps extended to S Dona di Piave)
 - . 46th Sch Div

- . 10th ID (completely worn out; pulled from the front on 2 July, assembled at Portogruaro and then moved to Codroipo)
- . 58th ID (relieved the remnants of 10th ID at start of July)
- . Orientkorps (a unit of four battalions; relieved by parts of 14th ID in mid-July and left for Albania at the end of July)
- . In reserve - 57th ID (by S Stino and Torre di Moto; entered the fighting on the Piave island on 3 July, near Grisolera)
- . In reserve - 1st CD (assembled near Portogruaro at start of July and then departed for the East)

8. Observations

a. The causes of the defeat

During the great battle in Venetia, Austria-Hungary's Army had expended their last strength as they attacked with a firm will to triumph. But the battle ended in a heavy setback, equivalent to a defeat. The wide-ranging plans, which envisioned an advance at least as far as the Brenta and if possible to the Adige, collapsed in a single blow. Before we discuss the important results of this fateful event, we must make clear the reasons which led to the failure of the offensive. They can be traced mainly to the planning of the great operation, to its tactical direction, and finally to the area of logistics.

Difficulty in selecting the points of attack

In preceding sections we have examined the development of the operational plan in all its phases. From the narrative we can deduce that this involved a lively dispute between the two Army Group commanders. In essence, FM Conrad advocated a thrust from the Sieben Gemeinde plateau toward Vicenza, and FM Borojevic an attack from Oderzo through Treviso and Padua toward the lower Adige. Each field marshal asked to be given the majority of the units stationed on the Southwestern front so he would be certain of ripping apart the enemy's network of positions, and then could inflict a destructive defeat on the Italian armies opposing the neighboring army group by striking them in the flank and rear.

A purely theoretical justification, without regarding the

terrain, could be made for either army group commander. Perhaps Conrad's offensive, which ultimately would be directed toward the sea, offered larger possibilities of success. On the other hand, FM Boroevic's plan would take advantage of the better lines of communication and supply situation in the Venetian plains, as well as the apparently easier advance on level ground. But both concepts were deficient in that they depended upon breaking through the enemy's first defensive zone, a tactically difficult prospect because of local terrain considerations.

The enemy positions south of Asiago lay on the northern edge and in the center of a forest on high ground which blocked the way to the southern part of the plateau. The slope leading to the forest was covered mostly with smooth meadows, on which the Aus-Hung. regiments had already bled themselves during assaults against the Italian positions in the woods in June 1916 and once more - also in vain - in November 1917. Since then the enemy had considerably built up their defensive installations. A network of trenches - studded with machine-gun nests - crisscrossed the forest, which also concealed powerful artillery whose locations were only known in part by the attackers. The enemy were strengthening the area because they also intended to attack here; near Asiago the English and French, who were particularly well equipped with military equipment of all sorts, were stationed. Nonetheless the HQ of the Tyrolean Army Group decided to make their main effort in this sector in June 1918, and even hoped to reach the southern edge of the forested area in the evening of the first day of combat.

Leaving aside the operation in June 1916 mentioned above, there are hardly any examples in military history of an army conducting a systematic general offensive against a forest. Yet on 15 June 1918 the attackers attempted with eight divisions to frontally storm a continuous forested zone which was fortified for prolonged resistance and protected by troops determined to fight stubbornly. Despite powerful artillery preparation²⁹² and heroic fighting by the infantry, the day ended in a severe setback. There had been no lack of warnings, such as the frank words of FM Boroevic. Thus it cannot be said that thrusting south from Asiago was a promising direction of attack.

But objections can also be raised against the main axis of advance chosen by FM Boroevic (Oderzo-Treviso). In the first place, it involved a difficult assault over not just a river, but a series of watery obstacles. Although it was often maintained

²⁹²However, as noted farther below, the poison gas shells were ineffective.

that the islands in the Piave should make it easier to cross the stream, this was true only of the islands already in our hands. Where multiple branches of the river had to be bridged there was a greater strain on the available equipment and labor force, while the risks of failure increased. This became evident when the Army of the Isonzo crossed the Piave on 15 June. XVI Corps couldn't establish themselves firmly anywhere on the western bank. IV Corps and the northern wing of VII Corps made it over the river, but only with great difficulty. Then the troops on the western bank, exhausted and reduced by casualties, didn't have the strength to quickly punch through the Italian positions on the shoreline. Furthermore, the operation wasn't helped by the selection of IV Corps' two divisions (made up of Landsturm troops) as the spearhead of the attacking group. On the other hand, the southern wing of VII Corps, as well as XXIII Corps which had been assigned just a subsidiary role, found it much easier to cross the river principally because here the Piave had been regulated - forced to flow in just one stream which could be crossed in a bound. Then fresh infantry came over on pontoons and were able to advance much farther than the center and northern wing of the Isonzo Army.

It should be noted that the Piave in front of the Montello is also dotted with islands, but nonetheless the attack here was a success. This was due to the decision by XXIV Corps HQ to start moving the infantry across even while the artillery bombardment was still raging, enabling them to surprise the enemy. Furthermore, in this sector the Austro-Hungarians could take advantage of very favorable observation points on the heights east of the river; thus they were able to fire their guns with great accuracy and maintain effective support for the infantry as the latter advanced on the Montello.

Yet another factor limiting the possibility of success in the offensive from Oderzo to Treviso was the thickly-cultivated terrain of the Italian plains, which limited visibility. The attack here very quickly broke down into numerous isolated actions; to succeed in fighting at this level an army needs many non-commissioned officers well-trained in tactics, and such was no longer the situation of the Aus-Hung. Army in 1918. And the terrain also made it questionable whether the artillery would be able to support the infantry, as planned, with a rolling barrage. If the gunners fired according to an exact timetable, they could all too easily lose touch with the infantry; if the latter tried to control the pace of the fire themselves with visual signals, there was no guarantee that the artillery could shoot accurately due to poor visibility over the plains. Thus during the June

battle the rolling barrages were almost never as effective as desired in the plains (and this was true in most cases in the mountains as well).

The HQ of the Isonzo Army were well aware of the potential disadvantages of a thrust from Oderzo toward Treviso. Therefore in conferences with the leaders of the neighboring 6th Army they always insisted that it was of decisive importance for the success of the Isonzo Army that the 6th should quickly take possession of the Montello, which presented fewer difficulties than the thrust into the plains. But never was it clearly stated that the attack against Treviso was less likely to succeed than an assault on the Montello.

Thus we can state that neither the assault past the Sieben Gemeinde nor the offensive over the un-regulated course of the Po were promising courses. In response to a question from GM Waldstätten, GdI Alfred Krauss suggested an advance in the Adige valley²⁹³; however, south of Ala this valley is too narrow for an attack by large units, and as it enters the plains it is blocked by the strong fortress of Verona. There was only one other possible target for the offensive - the area between the Brenta and the eastern edge of the Montello. This in fact was the sector where GM Waldstätten had wanted to break into the plains with 20 divisions. But his colleagues at Baden had rejected the idea, in part because the Quartermaster's Detachment pointed out how difficult it was to supply this part of the front.²⁹⁴ But a more decisive factor was the fact that the AOK, as GO Arz himself concedes in his memoirs, "couldn't ignore the forceful convictions of a commander of Conrad's esteem and reputation."²⁹⁵ But FM Boroevic also had achieved an enormous status thanks to great successes to date (although mainly in defensive fighting on the Isonzo front), so his suggestions could not be ignored. The result was a compromise; the attack would take place on a front that was much too broad, without a designated point of main effort and with virtually equal forces in the Asiago and Oderzo sectors.

This defective allotment of our forces was the primary cause of the misfortune; particular failures by the generals were of less significance. The assault at the Tonale Pass, where our troops

293Krauss, "Ursachen", p. 248

294Ratzenhofer, "Die Pflichtverletzungskommission über die Piaveschlacht" in Österr. Wehrzeitung for 1929, Issues 18 to 21.

295Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 268

were apparently opposed by an enemy force equally ready to attack, could hardly have cut off the upper Adda valley as was hoped, and this should have been apparent after the events of 25 and 26 May. The two divisions deployed here would have been better used as part of the central reserve, since reinforcements would soon be needed in other places.

And in this connection we must take issue with the charge that since the Italians stopped their counterattacks on 20 June the Aus-Hung. high command were at fault in ordering the retreat to the eastern bank of the Piave too soon. In the race to bring reserves to the two bridgeheads and to the western bank of the river the Italians always had the advantage - thanks to their incomparably better and shorter railroad connections - over the Austro-Hungarians who had to first bring divisions from Tyrol or from the interior. Furthermore it must be borne in mind that the garrisons of the bridgeheads were in a very precarious position with the inadequately-bridged Piave to their rear.

A purely negative analysis would leave the readers of our General Staff work dissatisfied. Therefore we will examine whether an attack on both sides of the Piave, such as was suggested by GM Waldstätten, might have been more successful given the actual course of events as the offensive unfolded.

If the target chosen for the breakthrough had been restricted to the area between the Brenta and the eastern edge of the Montello, all the laborers and artillery could have been shifted there from the Sieben Gemeinde and Oderzo. Had this decision been made soon enough, it certainly would have been possible to complete preparations by summer. It wouldn't have been necessary to cram all the attacking forces into the Grappa area. Only a sufficient number of divisions were needed there to ensure that the offensive reached the plains. The actual course of XXVI Corps' fighting leads to the conclusion that if supported by plentiful artillery the advancing troops could reach the edge of the high ground. The battle proved that the Montello could be stormed.²⁹⁶ An attack from north to south would have effectively utilized the many roads leading in this direction, although first the Italian batteries which could deliver flanking fire from the area around Mt Sulder would have to be neutralized. Certainly this was possible if heavy batteries had been assigned to XV and II Corps

296 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: However, it should be noted that at least in the judgment of the English Official History ("Military Operations - Italy", p. 240) "the Italians should never have lost" the Montello; they attribute the attackers' success to the gross over-confidence and errors of the defenders.

instead of to the Asiago and Oderzo sectors.

To make it easier to supply the main body of the strong strategic reserves, they could have been held ready to join the offensive in the area Vittorio-Conegliano-Sacile, easily accessible by rail. After the first wave of the attack reached the southern edge of the Grappa massif, Mt Sulder and the Montello beyond the Piave, the reserves would have entered the fray to exploit the initial success. Based on the concept that breakthroughs can best be exploited from the angle of a salient reaching into the attackers' lines, it's probable that the thrust would have reached the Brenta. A secondary assault over the entire lower course of the Piave - where, as the actual battle demonstrated, there was a good chance of success - would have greatly facilitated the operation.

Deficient supplies and equipment

In addition to the operational planning, logistics had a large impact on the fate of the offensive. Supplies were short because of the inadequacy of the Monarchy's overall economic situation, the length of the front to be attacked, and the need to start the operation as early as possible. Even the medical measures initiated by the attacking armies were insufficient to care for the unexpectedly large number of wounded.

A very depressing surprise was the ineffectiveness of our poison gas. Its chemical composition was short-lived, and so on 15 June the contents of many rounds had already broken down and acted only as irritants. Most of the Italians, on the other hand, were now equipped with excellent English gas masks. Based on reports of the meager impact of the gas, after the offensive the HQ of the Isonzo Army conducted experiments on some animals. The results confirmed the accuracy of the reports of our troops and the assertions of captured Italians. Had this been known beforehand, the entire preliminary bombardment would have been conducted differently. Or, if the attack had been postponed, more effective gases could have been requested from Germany. It must be concluded that the insistence on starting the attack on 15 June, when the river waters were already rising, was a mistake. Postponement would also have allowed time to improve the material preparations. Our German allies had no influence on the decision of the k.u.k. AOK to adhere to the original schedule. Decisive was the belief of FM Conrad and of the Quartermaster's Detachment of the AOK that the shortage of rations for the divisions deployed on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau made it impossible to delay the offensive. And the unfortunate

outcome of the battle quashed hopes that more food could be captured as booty.

Because of the lack of supplies, the question arises whether the risk of opening any battle in June 1918 wasn't already too great. As mentioned earlier, FM Boroevic had advised that the troops should just stand pat. But this would have meant that the fate of the Monarchy would rest entirely on the tips of German bayonets. The HQ at Baden couldn't bring themselves to make this abdication since the Army was eager to fight and since "time was undoubtedly against us."²⁹⁷

The spirit of the troops

Besides covering the principal reasons for the setback, as we've done above, it is our duty to emphasize that the fighting troops bore no guilt. They had thrown themselves into the preparations with marvelous endurance and devotion. Almost without exception, the regiments did their best in the attack. Officers and men stormed forward with the same *elan* as in 1914. The accompanying light artillery vied in courage with their infantry comrades. Our air units proved they were the equals of the enemy's larger squadrons. The sappers and pioneers carried out their difficult tasks in the Piave with courage and devotion until collapsing from exhaustion; they proved themselves to be true heroes. During the June battle our forces captured about 50,000 prisoners along with a large quantity of military equipment.

Because of the Army's spirit of self-sacrifice, casualties were extraordinarily high. According to the calculations of the three attacking armies, between 14 and 25 June they suffered permanent losses of 11,643 dead and 25,547 missing. The latter category includes the prisoners; the Italian high command claimed to have captured 24,475 troops.²⁹⁸ Furthermore 80,852 soldiers were wounded and another 24,508 left the battle lines due to illness. Thus the grand total of losses during the main battle was 142,500 officers and men, a much higher figure than in the eleventh battle of the Isonzo (110,000 men), which lasted twice as long.

297The phrase is from a letter by GM Waldstätten to the military archive on 14 June 1937.

298Commando supremo, "La battaglia del Piave", p. 60. Presumably this figure includes men captured in the fighting after 25 June on the Piave island and around the "three mountains." The Italians furthermore claimed to have taken 70 guns, 75 trench mortars, 1234 machine guns and 151 flamethrowers. These figures may include armaments which the Italians originally had lost but later recovered.

On the other hand, the number of divisions engaged in August 1917 was only 40% of the number involved in the battle of June 1918.

In detail, the following were the losses of the armies from 14 to 25 June²⁹⁹:

- . 11th Army (excluding XV Corps) - 63,080 (5692 dead, 32,901 wounded, 14,117 ill and 10,370 missing)
- . 6th Army (plus XV Corps) - 20,870 (1751 dead, 9951 wounded, 3691 ill and 5477 missing)
- . Army of the Isonzo - 58,600 (4200 dead, 38,000 wounded, 6700 ill, 9700 missing)

299 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: In analyzing the casualty figures, it must be borne in mind that except for a handful of units the 11th Army, which had the greatest losses, were heavily engaged only on 15 June.

b. Military consequences of the June Battle

In every age the failure of a military operation causes psychological depression in the attacking force; this was true of the Aus-Hung. southwestern armies to an extraordinary degree after the June 1918 battle. From the Emperor and the highest-ranking commanders down to the lowliest soldier, everyone had been motivated by a burning desire that the offensive would end in an impressive victory which would bring nearer the peace for which they yearned. The troops remembered how quickly they'd broken through the foremost Italian position in May 1916, and especially their victorious advance in fall 1917; they hoped for an easy success. They expected the gas to knock out the Italian artillery and render helpless the defenders of the enemy positions. Also it can't be denied that many soldiers hoped to feast on the Italians' substantial supplies of food, and to seize some that could be sent to their starving relatives at home.

None of these dreams became reality. The meager local successes had to be won with a large amount of bloodshed. Since the supply system was breaking down and since we'd failed to capture stocks of the enemy's food, the regiments that reached the western bank of the Piave suffered greater privations during the fighting than before the offensive. On the Sieben Gemeinde plateau the enemy succeeded in recovering the high ground that they'd lost. This failure and the very high casualties shook the confidence of the troops in the upper levels of the commands structure. Often the comment was heard that if German troops had also participated in the June offensive - as they had at Caporetto - the outcome of the battle would certainly have been different. Similar sentiments were apparently felt at Baden itself, as indicated in GO Arz's letter of 27 June to GFM Hindenburg, mentioned earlier.

Within the higher command levels of the Southwestern front, confidence that they could attack again (and with greater success) now increasingly evaporated. Everywhere this feeling also spread to the troops. In places where the crisis of confidence still hadn't developed, despite censorship the destructive process was initiated by press reports and letters from home. The result was that more soldiers went over to the enemy or deserted to the interior. Furthermore many troops on leave didn't return to the front because they didn't believe that the war would end in victory. Men also disappeared from the replacement units in the interior. The number of bands of "green cadres" rose, causing still more insecurity in many portions of the Monarchy.

Desertion was one reason why troop strength declined on the Southwestern front. On 1 July there were still 406,000 men available, plus 252,950 more in the March formations right behind the armies. By 1 October, although no major fighting took place in the intervening period and a number of March battalions had been sent to the armies, there were just 238,900 men at the front and 146,650 in the March formations in Italy. But disease was another major reason for the decline in numbers; the Spanish influenza spread especially quickly in summer and there were also cases of malaria.

The unfortunate outcome of the June offensive dealt a heavy blow to the prestige of the Danube Monarchy, one from which it never recovered. A later chapter will describe the political and diplomatic ramifications of the Monarchy's diminished standing. The military result was that the Aus-Hung. armies in the Southwest fell back strictly onto the defensive. Plans for an offensive were still being discussed in Baden (as we will also discuss), but at the front itself any belief in a large-scale decisive assault disappeared as the strength of the regiments constantly wasted away.

c. The dismissal of FM Conrad

The undeniable failure of the June battle was discussed heatedly in the Hungarian Parliament, and the Austrian Reichsrat were also greatly concerned about the subject. There was a search for scapegoats. The Emperor at first considered whether to sacrifice to the popular wrath both Army Group commanders, as well as the Chief of the General Staff; the latter furthermore again offered on 4 July to resign (as he often had before). GO Arz would have been replaced by FM Böhm-Ermolli, who'd already been instructed to begin preparations for taking over the General Staff by visiting the Italian front. The fate of other leading personalities was also in the balance. But finally the Monarch decided to dismiss only FM Conrad, in whose sector the offensive had completely broken down. In a meeting at Eckartsau on 14 July the Emperor informed the Field Marshal that he was granting his (much earlier³⁰⁰) request to be relieved. In a personally-written note dated 15 July he rewarded Conrad with the titles of baron and colonel of all the guard units.

300TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Probably a reference to Conrad's request to be relieved from active service back in spring 1917 when he lost his position as Chief of the General Staff.

The Field Marshal took his leave in a very bad mood, but also with the feeling that the ship he was being forced to leave was sinking.³⁰¹

Thus Conrad von Hötzendorf, the most noteworthy leader of the k.u.k. Army, left the stage of world history. He had held the most important position during the last seven years of peace; in this time of enormous tension in Europe and of unprecedented technical progress, his was the greatest influence upon the development of the armed forces, which previously had been stagnant for a decade. The extent to which the Army was able to enter the field with modernized weaponry, despite financial restrictions and political-parliamentary interference, was due largely to Conrad's incessant and stubborn efforts. Training the units for war was his personal mission. And when the world conflagration broke out in July 1914 he shouldered burdens greater than those of his predecessors in command. He bore these burdens for two and a half years with almost super-human strength and self-control.

During the World War all of the operations conducted under Conrad's command bore the stamp of his ingenious concepts. Still, it must be conceded that he also had weaknesses. Some of his plans were too wide-ranging to be realized; in carrying them out he didn't always take the interaction of space, strength and time fully into account. Also at the start of the war he underestimated the destructive power of the latest armaments and the strength of field fortifications and over-taxed the strength of his troops, both at the front and on the lines of communication.

Despite his extraordinary talents, Conrad wasn't a very lucky commander; the god of battles was reluctant to see him succeed. But as a leader Conrad was inferior to none of his contemporaries. He held the responsible position of Chief of the General Staff for a longer period than any other officer of the nations contending in the World War. Thus he was also subject for the longest time to the whims of the god of war. But regardless of how sharply Conrad's achievements are criticized, none of his peers during this greatest of all wars equaled the high points of his generalship.

The correctness of the basic concepts of his first Russian campaign was fully proven as time went on, since the war in the Northeast in the following years developed along the lines which

301 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 260 ff. See also Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 277

Conrad had indicated. His bold leadership in late fall of 1914, when he halted the Russian steamroller, will remain as an example forever. It was he who first recognized the importance of Gorlice and thus found a way out of the costly fighting in the Carpathians. In planning for a war of annihilation he always found himself in agreement with the ideas of the team of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. The ultimate course of events proved that Conrad was correct in his analysis of the Salonika problem, and in constantly advocating an attack in Italy. This was particularly true of the last of his plans for an Italian offensive, which he submitted to his allies in January 1917 shortly before leaving the post of Chief of the General Staff; this was a time when the Entente were about to confront their greatest crisis, which the Central Powers failed to exploit. In advocating this operation Conrad was also the first person to point out that the Tolmein area would be an excellent point at which to attempt a breakthrough.

"Thus Conrad may claim a prominent place in history among the commanders of the World War. None of the generals of the Entente gave greater proof of ability, not even Foch although he secured the final victory. As for the generals of the Central Powers, even some Prussians have agreed that this Austrian held the first place. The final chapter in the glorious story of old Austria included the truly historic accomplishments and fascinating personality of Conrad."³⁰²

To replace FM Conrad as Army Group Commander, Emperor Charles nominated the leader of 6th Army, GO Archduke Joseph. The Archduke brought with him his Chief of Staff FML Willerding to fill the same position at Bozen. The new commander of 6th Army was GdK Schönburg, who'd recovered from his wounds; his Chief of Staff was Col. von Lorz.

After the unfortunate outcome of the June offensive the Aus-Hung. Army had passed the high point of its military and political strength. When the divisions which didn't seem needed for the defense of the Southwestern front departed for the German Western front, the focus of the war shifted completely from the Italian theater of operations. For this reason, and because of the rapid decline in the strength of the Aus-Hung. forces in the Southwest, it became ever more improbable that another large-scale operation would be undertaken. In the sad aftermath of the June battle the downfall of the Aus-Hung. Army and of the Danube Monarchy began.

302From a radio broadcast by government-minister Glaise-Horstenau.

Translator's appendix - was there a defeat?

After completing my translation, I noted that I had misrepresented the original text. At a couple of points I'd referred to a "defeat", but actually the authors had been careful to avoid using the word "Niederlage" (defeat) to describe this catastrophic event. The closest they came was on page 352, where they spoke of a "heavy setback, equivalent to a defeat." In reviewing the section, I realized that the authors implicitly agreed with a rather surprising theory, stated explicitly in other sources, that the June battle was not a defeat.

The theory appears in GO Arz's memoirs ("Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 276-279) in a passage worth quoting at some length because it also sheds light on the process behind GO Conrad's dismissal.

"On 3 July the Emperor summoned General von Waldstätten and me to Eckartsau to learn our opinions about the demand from several persons that Field Marshals Conrad and Boroevic should be relieved from their commands. Earlier I had advised His Majesty against changes in the command structure due to the events in June; it was my opinion that we should avoid such measures since they would make the failed offensive appear to be a defeat.

It was true that the attackers hadn't broken through, which was very deplorable and important. But [the battle] wasn't a defeat. Not a square foot of the ground we'd earlier won by expending so much blood had been lost, and not even a tiny part of our defensive position was in enemy hands. We had brought in 50,000 prisoners. It was true that our own casualties were large and painful, as in all the earlier battles.

There was no reason for me to again express this opinion, which I had repeated several times in the last few days. Now I just stated my belief that this time neither Field Marshal Boroevic, who'd won twelve battles on the Isonzo, nor Field Marshal Conrad had been blessed by good fortune."

[The passage goes on to describe how Arz himself offered to resign, and how the Emperor finally decided to dismiss Conrad despite the discussions mentioned above.]

Arz's denial that he had been defeated was not an isolated instance, since other writers through the years made the same point. A rather extreme example appears in a biography of FM

Boroevic (Ernst Bauer, "Der Löwe vom Isonzo; Graz, 1985; pp. 104-105):

"The relative strengths of the opposing armies hadn't been substantially altered. It was the disappointment which this last great Austro-Hungarian battle caused in the population, in the Army and in the Emperor himself that made it a defeat. This disappointment was our punishment for the arrogance felt in Austria-Hungary toward the Italian Army.....It is one of history's ironies that [the Austrians] themselves made the battle in Venetia a defeat.

Reaction to the battle not only in Italy, but also in France and England, was quite different. For the French and English it proved that Austria-Hungary and its army were still intact; they weren't surprised that a hungry army, troubled by well-known dissension between national groups and roughly equal in size to the Italian, had failed to prevail. The result was that neither London nor Paris was willing to write Austria off as a great power in eastern Europe and as a possible counter-weight to Germany. Recognition of 'Czecho-Slovakia' as a co-belligerent and the exiled leaders as a government, which had been advocated by many Entente politicians, was again postponed. It was the task of our own political leaders to turn the setback into a victory.

It's true that the military leaders had made some mistakes.... Nevertheless the Army and its generals had given the government the means to save the Monarchy. Of all the armies in Europe, Austria-Hungary's was in the best condition thanks to the circumstance that for months it was the only one (besides Italy's) which wouldn't fear a serious enemy assault. After the lessons learned in the June battle the Italians had soon decided to finally abandon their own plans for an offensive, which had been entertained right up until the Austro-Hungarian attack. For this reason also the battle was in a certain sense a success for the Monarchy. Ultimately the political leaders rather than the Army lost the June battle."

For this author, therefore, the campaign had ended (at least in a military sense) in victory. However, without disputing the arguments above or quibbling about the definition of victory, it seems that common sense should prevail. The k.u.k. Army hadn't achieved any of the objectives it set out to win, and its state after the offensive was worse than it had been previously. By any realistic standards this does seem to me to be "equivalent"

to a defeat.

VI. The Balkans and the East in Summer 1918

A. *The summer campaign in Albania*

1. The attack by the Italians and French

As previously, the attitude of all the responsible military commanders of the Danube Monarchy toward Albania were in opposition to those of the Ballhausplatz. In mid-July 1918 the AOK explained to the Foreign Ministry their position concerning war aims in the Balkans, along with the military justification. They also once more requested a clarification of the Monarchy's policy in Albania, because they had found the instructions received to date - which were to prepare the Albanians for future independence - to be restrictive and insufficient. They also required guide-lines for propaganda, which was an important aid to military operations.

The Ballhausplatz, on the other hand, adhered to their previous position. They believed that even the already declared goal of an "autonomous Albania under the effective protection of the Monarchy" was causing difficulties while the situation was still in flux, and could interfere with potential gains that might be achieved if the outcome of the war was favorable for the Central Powers. Based on many decades of foreign and domestic political tradition, the diplomats weren't inclined to adopt a policy of conquest, especially since they didn't want to further inflame the feelings of the enemy or cause friction with the allies. Caution was also advisable because of the Albanian policy of the Entente, which was based on granting autonomy to the area; even the Italians had at least nominally abandoned their earlier plan to make Albania a colony and now advocated national self-determination.

After the latest successes of the French in Albania (through early June) the Entente high command decided to continue the operation.³⁰³ General Henrys, the Chief of Staff to the French

303For the description of events in the Entente camp, we used two sources - Ravenni, "Cenni sull'azione italiana in Albania dal 1914 al 1918" in "Rivista militare italiana" for 1931; Lepetit, "Les operations d'Albania 1918" in Revue Militaire française (Paris) for 1924.

Army of the Orient, planned with Italian help to advance to the line of the Skumbi River, which was considerably shorter and tactically more favorable than the current position. Discussions with the HQ of the Italian forces (at Valona) finally had a tangible result on 24 June when General Ferrero reported that his own high command had given him a free hand to exploit the successes won so far. But as previously the main goal of the Italians was to gain control of the chain of heights north of the Vojusa known as the Malakastra. Nonetheless, General Ferrero declared he was ready to cooperate with the French in a thrust over the Cafa Devris to open the valley of the Tomorica, which in turn would make it easier to advance from Berat toward Elbasan. Ferrero insisted however that the latter town must finally be part of the Italian sphere of influence. This demand prolonged the negotiations so that the offensive, originally scheduled for the end of June, was postponed until 7 July.

a. Operational plan of the Entente

According to the French plan of operations the Entente forces would attack in three phases; thus a thrust over the Tomorica and the lower Vojusa would be followed by a advance to the Semeni and then finally to the Skumbi. If the offensive succeeded, the Bulgarian-German front in Macedonia would lose the protection to its western wing which would open new possibilities for a war of movement. The Italian attack over the lower Vojusa would be preceded on 6 July by a Franco-Italian operation between the Devoli. For this purpose the units of both allies were placed in readiness during the night of 5-6 July. And so after the end of the great battle on the Piave a new action started to cause considerable trouble for the Aus-Hung. high command.

The orders of battle

The Entente forces

- . Under XVI Italian Corps (G.Lt Ferrero) was the 38th ID - Bdes Savona [IR 15 & 16], Tanaro [IR 203 & 204], Verona [IR 85 & 86]; 10th Bersaglieri Regt, 16th Assault Party; 19 Militia Bde [Regts 47 & 48]; 23 March Bde [Regts 67 & 68], independent 101st March Regt; 9 Cav Bde [Regts 15, 22 & 30]; 1 & 2 Mixed Arty Groups (bn-sized)
- . Under the French 3rd Divisional Group of the Orient Army was the 57th ID - IR 260, 371, 372; a sqdn of 4th CDA Regt; 204 (field) Arty Regt, a bn of 1 Mtn Arty Regt. Also engaged were "many" detachments of colonial troops and Albanian volunteers.

The k.u.k. XIX Corps

a) Organization on 1 July

Commander = GdI von Koennen-Horak

Chief of staff = Col. Schneider

- . 47th ID (FML Ritter von Weiss-Tihany)

- . 93 Inf Bde (GM von Szabo) - Bn III/94; Bor Jaeger Bn 1; k.k. Lst Bn 45; k.u. Lst Bns III/29, I/30, I/31; a zug of 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11

- . 94 Inf Bde (GM von Förster) - Bn III/BH IR 7; BH FJB 1, 2; k.u. Lst Bns IV/4, II/32; a indep zug of the Dalm RS Bn; an Albanian cavalry detachment

- . Independent - Albanian Comps 1, 3 and I through VIII

- . A zug of 1 Sqdn/Dalm RS Bn; Sapper Comps 1/47, 2/33, 3/40, 3/48, 2/55

- . Arty Command "Albania" (Col. Forstner) - 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 Batties/Mtn AR 5; 1 to 6 plus 9 Batties/Mtn AR 13; 5 Batty/Hvy FAR 47; 15 cm Can Batty 121; an Albanian mtn batty; four flak züge

- . On lines of communication - k.k. Lst Eta Bn 491, k.u. Lst Eta Bn V/6

- . Group I/XIX (FML Komma)

- . Sturm Bn 47; Sturm Comp 1/XIX; High Mtn Comp 23

- . Bn II/118; Bor Jaeger Bns 2, 3, 4, 5; IV Bn/SchR 23; k.k. Lst IR 23 (2); k.k. Lst Bns I/37, 46, 158; k.u. Lst Bn I/9

- . Albanian volunteer bands of Capt. Ghilardi, Salih Butka and Strelca

- . An indep zug of DR 5; Sapper Comps 2/15, 3/18, 2 & 3/41, 2/44, 2/48

- . Arty HQ of 220 Lst Inf Bde - 1 & 7 Batties/Mtn AR 5; 1, 2, 4, 7 and 9 Batties/Mtn AR 7; 7 Batty/Mtn AR 13

- . On lines of communication - k.u. Lst Eta Bns IV/6, V/9

- . 220 Inf Bde (GM Elder von Lerch) - Sturm Comp 220; IR 88 (3); Bns III/SchR 33, II/SchR 34; BH Gendarme Bn

- . Albania Coastal Sector (FML Haas)

- . Sub-Sector Alessio (Col. Siemens) - k.u. Lst Bn VII/8; 1/4 of k.k. Lst Bn IV/16

- . Sub-Sector Durazzo (Col. Dörfler) - k.k. Lst Bns V/9, ½ of IV/16, V/33; just arriving was III Bn/SchR 22

- . Sector Arty Command - 15 fixed batties, one flak batty and 5 flak züge

- . Detached to the Bulgarian Ochrida Div (of GdA von Scholtz's Army Group) - Bor Jaeger Bn 6; 3, 5, 6 & 8 Batties/Mtn AR 7; 8 Batty/Mtn AR 13; 6 Batty/Hvy FAR 47; two flak züge; Sapper Comp 2/25

- . Directly under Corps HQ - Air Comps 6, 64; Sapper Comps 3/44, 2/47

b) Changes in organization

- . Reinforcements that arrived during July
 - . The Orientkorps (Lt Col. Duic) - Bns IV/103, VI/BH 1, VI/BH 2, VIII/BH 3
 - . Also - Sturm Bn 45; Bn I/SchR 17
- . There were many other changes in assignment; the outline OB of XIX Corps on 30 July was as follows....
 Commander = GO Freih. von Pflanzer-Baltin
 C/Staff = Col. Schneider
 . 47th ID (FM Ritter von Weiss-Tihany) had 93 and 94 Bdes with 16 ½ k.u.k. bns
 . 81st ID (FML Wossala) had k.k. 161 and k.u. 162 Lst Bdes with 5 k.k. Sch bns, 6 1/4 k.k. Lst bns, 6 1/4 k.u. Lst bns and 1 BH Gendarmerie bn
 . 220 Inf Bde (Col. von Vittorelli) with 4 k.u.k. bns (the Orientkorps) plus 4 k.k. Lst bns

b. Initial actions on 6 July

The main thrust of the French units, which were roughly equivalent in strength to a mountain brigade, was delivered by four columns made up of parts of an infantry regiment plus Moroccan Spahis, Algerian and Indo-Chinese Tirailleurs, and Albanian volunteers. Their targets were the advanced strong points on Cafa Gjarperit and Mali Kercir, defended by k.k. Landsturm Battalions 158 and I/37. These points repeatedly changed hands during a day of very bitter fighting until a counterattack by Border Jaeger Battalion 2 and k.k. Landsturm Battalion I/9 ensured that all the positions were retained.

Because of this failure of the French, the cooperative effort by the Italians also was unsuccessful. It involved a group under General Treboldi, whose objective was the capture of the Cafa Devris. Although the last remnants of the Albanian bands fighting on the Aus-Hung. side collapsed under the Italian artillery fire, the following infantry attack was completely repulsed by Border Jaeger Battalion 5. Elsewhere along the front the French effort was limited to some feint operations on 6 July, while attacking groups of the XVI Italian Corps moved into forward positions on the lower Vojusa in the night of 6-7 July.

The Franco-Italian attack on 6 July was not unexpected by either the HQ or troops of XIX Corps. Particular signs of an impending large-scale enemy offensive were the Italians' (completely

unconcealed) preparations to cross the lower Vojusa, recent air attacks on Durazzo, and the appearance of torpedo boats which took soundings along the coast north of the mouth of the Vojusa. There were also wild reports, spread by word of mouth among the population, about the arrival of enormous Italian reinforcements. Since most of the Albanian volunteers had deserted during the recent actions, and the unreliable remnants of their units were pulled from the front, the activity of bandit gangs increased in the rear areas and further deepened the sense of crisis among the local people. And the k.u.k. troops also awaited the coming events with diminished confidence. This was due above all to the enormous scale of the technical preparations taking place in the Italian positions on the Vojusa, which forcefully illustrated the poverty of our own material resources.

Despite the open preparations by the Italians along the Vojusa, the k.u.k. HQ (of XIX Corps and even more so of 47 ID) believed that the main enemy thrust would be directed over the Cafa Glavs toward Berat. The main body of 220 Inf Bde (the former 20 Mtn Bde) were stationed in the Corps' reserve on the Cafa Glavs; the Brigade's principal component was IR 88, which had arrived from the Southwestern front. 47 ID, commanded by FML Ritter von Weiss-Tihany, held the front on the lower Vojusa as far as the mouth of the Leftinja Brook with 94 Inf Bde (ex 14 Mtn Bde) and from there as far as Cerevoda on the Osum with 93 Inf Bde (ex 211 k.u. Lst Bde). To the northeast were stationed GM Lerch's Group I/XIX, deployed on both sides of the upper Devoli in two sectors ("Tomorica" and "Devoli"); their lines extended to the watershed south of Gora Top, where they were linked to those of the Bulgarian Ochrida Division.

Until the start of the latest French attack, the front of Group I/XIX had been held mainly by Albanian volunteers. But because of the constant need for reinforcements, there were now fifteen battalions - the majority of XIX Corps - stationed on the heights on both sides of the upper Devoli. HQ of 47 ID, on the other hand, had just ten battalions available. This Division's artillery had no prospect of getting back the teams of horses they'd given up at the start of the year for the planned action against the eastern part of the Kamia Ridge.

On 5 July the k.u.k. AOK at Baden received intelligence through Switzerland that an Italian offensive toward Berat was imminent, and that it would be accompanied by a French thrust toward the north. This news, along with the fighting that actually did develop between the Osum and the Devoli on 6 July, seemed to confirm the theory that the Entente's major thrust would be

directed toward Berat. It was only in the evening of 6 July that we recognized that a major effort was under way on the lower Vojusa, where a swarm of enemy planes was cruising over the battlefield and the main body of XVI Italian Corps had already completed their deployment.

c. The Entente thrust to the Semeni (7-13 July)

Under 38 Italian ID, in the night of 6-7 July the Savona Brigade and 10th Bersaglieri Regiment stood ready in several battle-groups to cross the lower Vojusa. Meanwhile the Verona Brigade had already come over the river, covered by a bridgehead established near Feras, and had deployed in the Bacova area for an attack toward Pojani. The Tanaro Brigade were assembled southeast of Cafa Glavs for the thrust to Berat.

7 July

Despite the agreements with the French, as previously the main goal of the Italians was merely to capture the Malakastra. A plan for this operation had already been drawn up³⁰⁴ in spring 1917, and preparations had even been completed that summer. But the plan hadn't been carried out because for political reasons the Rome government ordered parts of XVI Corps to instead occupy Epirus. Now General Ferrero had ensured that an Entente flotilla would cooperate in the attack on the Malakastra. The ships appeared north of the mouth of the Vojusa at dawn on 7 July; together with the batteries on land they opened fire primarily against Fjeri and the artillery positions near Levani. Covered by this fire the Verona Brigade, which had deployed in the woods near Bacova, attacked the sector between Pojani and Levani, defended by weak parts of k.u. Lst Bn IV/4. After stubborn resistance, the important strong point at Jora fell around 6:00 AM. BH FJB 1 were ordered to counterattack, but during their approach march they were routed by a much larger enemy force; the guns of the battery attached to this Battalion were able to escape to Fjeri.

A participant describes the further course of the fighting as follows.³⁰⁵ "Meanwhile the 22nd Italian Cavalry Regiment rode forward through the coastal plain without encountering resistance. By 8:00 AM they overran the airfield north of Fjeri and occupied the bridge over the Semeni at Brustar, but then were driven from this point by a battalion [III/SchR 33] of 220 Brigade which had hurried ahead from Ardenica. Part of the enemy regiment fell upon a supply train on the road and drove off the personnel, whereupon the baggage was immediately plundered by the Albanians; another part turned toward Fjeri, which was devoid of any combat troops. In great danger the HQ of 94 Brigade managed to escape over the Djanica bridge, though not without casualties; meanwhile a half battalion [$\frac{1}{2}$ of k.u. Lst Bn II/32] hurriedly arrived, and after brief street fighting cleared the Italian cavalry out of Fjeri. Badly knocked about, the horsemen sought safety outside the town. In this action a copy of the new Italian cipher system for radio transmissions fell into our hands on the first day of its use. During their retreat the cavalry suffered further losses; they were repeatedly attacked by an Albanian squadron....(grouped around a few Dalmatian Mounted Rifles) which took a considerable number of prisoners (including two officers) and horses, and drove the remnants of the Italian

304 Cadorna, "Altre pagine sulla grande guerra" (Milan, 1926), p. 184

305 Veith, "Der Feldzug in Albanien" (in Schwarte, Vol. V, p. 544)

unit over the Vojusa...."

"Although the mounted thrust of the 22nd Regiment had ended in a severe setback, it had nonetheless decided the outcome of the entire day's fighting. The sound of rifle fire from Fjeri immediately sparked rumors that the town, the bridges on the Semeni, and the commander of 94th Brigade had been captured by the enemy. This would have meant the loss of the only practicable line of retreat, so the rumors had a catastrophic effect at the front. Until now only the sector on the extreme right wing had been lost, and the Italians had hardly exploited their advantage. But the alarming reports from Fjeri caused troops in the neighboring sector, though they had been only lightly engaged, to fall back. Unfortunately they retreated not to the north but toward the east, principally to reach the crossing point over the Semeni at Kalmi. Since the ferry had for an undetermined reason been prematurely blown up, the retreat continued toward Kuci. Due to these developments, after several battalions [from the Savona Brigade] crossed the Vojusa near Selist and Romzi the remaining garrisons of the various sectors along that river decided to also retreat to the north. They were still influenced by rumors, since all communications had been broken. The howitzer batteries stationed along the Vojusa had to destroy their guns, since the only passable road to the rear - through Fjeri - was blocked. Some of the pieces of the cannon batteries also were blown up because of the lack of horse teams. A total of 13 guns were lost."

During the course of 7 July the remaining components of 38 Italian ID finished crossing the lower Vojusa. The main body of the Savona Brigade came over the river at Romzi, while the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment did so at Memaliaj. Without encountering noteworthy resistance they all reached their goals for the day - the southern slope of the Malakastra and the heights south of Izvori.

While the rest of 38th Division were easily successful, the Tanaro Brigade encountered heavy resistance when they launched the thrust toward Berat against the lines of the k.u.k. 93 Inf Bde. Since XIX Corps HQ had long anticipated an enemy attack over the Cafa Glavs toward Berat, this part of the front was more heavily garrisoned and provided with stronger reserves. Other than driving back some weak outposts, the Italians were able to achieve only an insignificant penetration of the position of 93rd Brigade near Parasboar. The French stationed opposite Group I/XIX were also unable to gain any ground on 7 July; after night fell they were finally able to push back the advanced corner of

the defenders' position on the Mali Kercir.

Because of the enemy's success on the lower Vojusa, the HQ of XIX Corps decided already on 7 July to pull back Group I/XIX as well as 47 ID. This was due primarily to the need to shorten the front so that troops from the eastern sector could be shifted to support the western wing. During the night of 7-8 July the units were supposed to move back to the line Semeni - Fjeri - north slope of the Janica valley - Cafa Hmalinat - Tomorica.

8-11 July

During 8 July the troops in the sector on the lower Semeni were placed under the commander of IR 88, Col. Freih. von Wächter, and those stationed on the Janica under GM von Förster of 94 Bde. GM Lerch took over 93 Bde and FML Komma the Group I/XIX. HQ of 47 ID were moved back from Berat to Ljusna, from which they restored the communications with the battle groups which had been completely disrupted the day before.

On this day the Italians didn't advance as forcefully as expected. The Verona Brigade restricted their effort to reconnaissance in the area around Fjeri, while the Savona Brigade, 10th Bersaglieri Regiment and Tanaro Brigade felt their way forward (respectively) to the Janica, a point west of Cafa Glavs, and Cafa Hmalinat. The Aus-Hung. troops under the Tomorica Sector had to abandon important strong points to the Italians as well as to the French; thus the area of the upper Tomorica plus the Bofnia heights and the southern part of the Kosnica heights fell into the hands of their opponents. On the other hand, the French troops who attacked Komjani (in the Devoli Sector) suffered such heavy casualties that General de Lobit, commanding the 3rd Divisional Group of the Orient Army, ordered them to cease their efforts.

On 9 July the Verona Brigade occupied Fjeri, while the Savona Brigade overcame the last resistance on the Janica and began to advance toward the Semeni. The Tanaro Brigade reached Berat without any fighting. The reason for this surprisingly rapid abandonment of the defensive line is clearly explained in Col. Veith's narrative³⁰⁶: "Until now the individual battalions, which on average were at half strength, had held sectors 4 to 10 km wide, with their men stationed in a few small strong points. Since these outposts were in reasonably close contact with each other, the illusion was created that the front was continuous. This illusion was now cruelly shattered. During the withdrawal

³⁰⁶Veith, p. 545

each commander naturally first sought to bring his troops together; therefore the retreat involved small groups of often no more than 200 to 300 men separated by intervals of 4 to 10 km. The groups had no inter-connection and no means to communicate as they moved through the tangled Albanian hill country. Under these circumstances, each soldier lost his belief that resistance could be renewed....As the front rolled back it naturally became impossible to put on the brakes after a few kilometers."

Confronted with this development, on 9 July the HQ of XIX Corps found themselves forced to pull back their entire force to the line Guri Gomarei - Ljusna - Kosova maze - Petrohondi - Blesova - Point 938 - Kursova - Mascani - Point 1900. The crest-line of the Mali Silove was designated the border between 47 ID and Group I/XIX.

Almost all the units of XIX Corps reached the new line of resistance by the evening of 10 July. Contact was lost completely with the main body of the XVI Italian Corps; enemy scouting parties were all quickly repulsed by the outposts of 47 ID. On the other hand the rear guards of Group I/XIX, which started to retreat on 9 July, were hard pressed by the columns from the French 3rd Divisional Group which could be slowed down only by strong resistance. Nevertheless, the assigned positions were occupied in this sector also by the evening of the 10th.

XIX Corps HQ believed that the Italians' surprising success on the lower Vojusa was due to landing troops behind our own right wing. Therefore on 7 July they'd already asked the military harbor command at Cattaro to commit the cruiser flotilla to prevent any further landings. The Navy did promise support, but used their ships cautiously. Because of the general situation it had to be anticipated that a large-scale landing of enemy forces could take place on the north Albanian coast, so it would be necessary to guard the only line of retreat running next to the sea. Therefore the Corps HQ at Tirana³⁰⁷ decided to reinforce the right wing at the expense of the left. The coastal area had been almost completely denuded of troops when 94 Inf Bde retreated toward the east on 7 July; therefore on the very next day a new group was created from available reserves to operate there under Col. Wächter (as noted above). Also, on 9 July the 93 Inf Bde and Group I/XIX were ordered to send some men toward the coast. To implement the newly planned deployment, on 10 July the 47 ID were instructed to check the enemy with their right wing, but to avoid being drawn into a decisive battle; they could pull back

³⁰⁷To add to the other problems GdI Edler von Koennen-Horak, who was still the general in charge of XIX Corps, was very ill.

their left wing to the line Kosova maze - Polovin - Gorica at their discretion. But in any event the units in the coastal sector were supposed to offer stubborn resistance at the Divjaka isthmus³⁰⁸ and on the Dusku Ridge (south of the lower Skumbi). Group I/XIX would conform with the movements of 47 ID, withdrawing first to the line Gorica - Zavalina - Point 1603 and then if necessary to the line Driza - Bukanik.

From these orders it can be inferred that XIX Corps HQ had very little hope after the latest events that the troops would be able to hold onto the Ljuzna [Ljusna] line. They felt there were better prospects of offering prolonged resistance in the Dusku position on the Skumbi, where the men could obtain the necessary rest and the units could regroup for a planned counterattack.³⁰⁹ The enemy was expected to make their main effort along the line of least resistance, where they could hardly be halted - through the coastal plain which in this season was passable. Here they would endanger the only line of retreat. "And over all other matters hovered the threatening specter of a landing at Durazzo and Alessio, which was believed to be imminent."³¹⁰

Corps HQ at Tirana didn't want to speculate about the possibility of holding the Ljuzna line until they could ascertain where and how the enemy would attack. Anyway they were pleasantly surprised when there was no activity opposite 47 ID on 11 July; the Italians had apparently lost all contact with our western wing. The only fighting on this day occurred on the eastern wing, near the confluence of the Devoli and Tomorica rivers where the oncoming French were halted. All the reports from air units indicated that strong enemy forces were assembling in the Berat area; this was confirmed by an intercepted radio message.

12-13 July

In fact the 93 Inf Bde, stationed north of Berat, were attacked in the morning of 12 July by the Tanaro Brigade near Petrohondi. GM Lerch feared that the direction of the enemy thrust could separate his units, so he broke off the fighting and pulled the troops back to the line Polovin-Lozani-Gorica. The enemy were content to just occupy the abandoned positions. Because of 93 Inf Bde's retreat, Group I/XIX also had to withdraw (to the line

308The isthmus lies between the Adriatic Sea and a lake that is the source of the Ljusna.

309From a report to the Military archives by FML Joseph Schneider, who at the time was the Corps' Chief of Staff.

310Veith, p. 546

Gorica - Holta Brook - Gora Top).

Despite all expectations, the dreaded enemy attack on the western wing of the Aus-Hung. forces didn't materialize on 12 July. Therefore Col. Wächter's group and 94 Inf Bde could dig in along the Ljuzna line without interference. It appeared that the area in their front was still clear of the enemy as far as the Semeni.

This surprising development, along with the Italian attack north from Berat and the French thrust on both sides of the Devoli, revealed that the enemy intended to make their main effort in the direction of Elbasan. It was also clear that General Ferrero for the time being would do no more than occupy the Malakastra. For some reason our opponents wouldn't try to accompany the difficult thrust in the mountains with a relatively easy advance along the coastal plain, supported by naval units.

Until this time the Aus-Hung. generals just couldn't believe that the enemy would make such an incomprehensible decision. When the staff at Tirana reviewed a captured Italian operational map, on which an arrow showed that the main effort was being shifted toward the eastern wing with Elbasan as the principal goal, they at first believed that the map had been deliberately prepared with erroneous information to deceive them. But now the HQ of XIX Corps decided to organize a unified command to protect the threatened eastern sector. They placed 93 Inf Bde, which already had to be supplied by Group I/XIX, under FML Komma. This alteration in the chain of command was also necessary for operational reasons; if the troops were forced to retreat the 93rd Brigade could do so only through Paprijali. Furthermore, their communications with 47 ID HQ, broken on 7 July, still hadn't been restored.

On 12 July the HQ of XIX Corps decided to counterattack against the enemy forces that had advanced from Berat through Petrohondi; for this purpose they placed the Corps' reserves under Col Vever and attached them to GM Lerch's command. Also 47 ID were instructed that unless they were themselves attacked they should assemble reserves on their left wing to support the counter-thrust. The units at the front were to give way to any enemy assault on 13 July, so as to create favorable conditions for our own operation. The earliest date on which the counterattack could start was 14 July.

On 13 July the entire right wing and center of the front were quiet along the new line of resistance. Most of the Corps' reserves reached the area north of Fraseri. On the other hand,

around noon FML Komma's units were withdrawing; their rear guard successfully staved off the pursuing French near Gramsi until evening.

Now Group I/XIX was re-designated the 81st Inf Div; the troops of the former Devoli and Tomorica Sectors made up the k.k. 161 and k.u. 162 Lst Inf Bdes, respectively. Since the seriously ill Corps commander wasn't expected to recover quickly, thought had to be given to his replacement. The selection fell upon an individual who'd displayed extraordinary leadership ability on many occasions in the first two years of the war, and therefore seemed able to master the critical situation in the Albanian theater of operations; on 10 July the Emperor named GO Freih. von Pflanzer-Baltin commander of the forces in Albania.

2. Developments in Albania after the arrival of GO Pflanzer-Baltin

a. Further plans of the opposing sides

The decisive factor influencing relations between the members of the Entente camp was the fact that General Ferrero had kept secret his true intentions and goals for the July offensive from his allies until the last moment, so he wouldn't have to expand the operation as the French would have expected. But for the coalition as a whole the Italians' unexpectedly quick success opened up some very tempting possibilities. On 13 July General Franchet d'Esperey, commanding the allied Army of the Orient, was therefore already explaining to General Ferrero his intention of having the French 3rd Divisional Group continue their thrust north past the Gora Top if the Italians decided to push their opponents over the Skumbi. The Army HQ at Salonika hoped that this operation would separate the Bulgarian forces from those of their allies in Albania and permanently secure the right flank of the XVI Italian Corps.

But meanwhile the French units in the Devoli valley had already reached the limits of their effective striking distance. At least temporarily they would have to leave only their light troops, the Moroccan Spahis and the Albanian irregulars to mop up the area. In the event, these were the only units to be kept west of the Gora Top; for military-political purposes, Albania was being left to the Italians. In return for this purely political concession, the French asked the Italian commander to occupy Gostima (on the northernmost bend of the Devoli) as soon

as possible, thus cutting the only line of retreat of the Austro-Hungarians facing the French in the upper Devoli valley. General Ferrero agreed to do so, intending first to establish contact with the French left wing using his Albanian auxiliary forces. But at the same time he indicated he couldn't continue his advance to the Skumbi because his own superiors had denied him the necessary reinforcements.

Nevertheless on 13 July General Henrys, commanding the French Army of the Orient, received an order from Salonika to prepare to attack the Gora Top. The order also approved his plan to cut off the opposing units still stationed in this area with a thrust by light troops to Gramsi, but the resultant forward bulge in the front was to be straightened out as soon as possible. Therefore on 14 July General Henrys instructed the 3rd Divisional Group to move their front forward on the next day, north as far as the heights on the southern edge of the Holta Brook and west up to the heights between the Kamia and the Gora Top. Along this line the 57 French ID would dig in while their strong western wing linked up with the Italians.

Within the k.u.k. XIX Corps the depression caused by the recent setback dissipated quickly after GO Pflanzer-Baltin was named commander in Albania. "Early on the 12th the new leader arrived at Cattaro by torpedo boat; that afternoon he reached Scutari, and at noon on the 13th Tirana. On the same day he told the divisional, brigade and group commanders to come to Tirana by plane. News of this order, which has been correctly called the turning point of the campaign, spread like wildfire along the front. By evening on the 13th everyone knew that they'd be moving forward again, and believed they would be successful."³¹¹

The General Oberst obtained a clear picture of the situation from the personal reports of his subordinates, and approved the tactical decisions of his Chief of Staff Col. Schneider. All the commanders reported that their troops were quite exhausted. Because of this factor, as well as the lack of rations and the very hot, debilitating weather, the Corps commander decided that for the time being he'd hold onto the current positions. The counterattack would start when the strength of the troops had improved.

Information obtained from the unit leaders also allowed GO Pflanzer-Baltin to quickly and accurately determine the causes of the defeat on 7 July. These were:

- . a certain carelessness caused by the long period of positional

³¹¹Veith, p. 547

warfare, which was especially prevalent in the area near the mouth of the Vojusa,

- . the lack of sufficient reserves in the Fjeri sector (which caused the counterattack to fail), and especially
- . the deployment of the troops in a long cordon along which it was impossible to quickly concentrate in response to the enemy penetration.

Based on these lessons the General Oberst forbade deployment in a cordon and retreats by individual units. In accordance with the latest guidelines of the AOK he ordered that the front should be held in depth with a series of strong points, supported by strong reserves which would immediately counterattack any foes who penetrated the front.

b. Actions from 14 to 23 July

In the days which followed the initiative was still completely in the hands of the French 57th Division. The group of this unit which had advanced over the Kamia made contact with their opponents in the area around the source of the Holta in the evening of 17 July. Meanwhile the main body of the group advancing in the Devoli valley occupied the heights along the lower Holta, where Aus-Hung. troops still held Strori on the southern bank. On 19 July the French south of the Devoli linked up with the right wing of Treboldi's Italian group, whose main body on the southeastern slopes of the Mali Siloves were preparing to attack over this ridge toward Gostima. In front of these allied units the newly-designated 81 ID had deployed the k.k. 161 Lst Inf Bde on the Holta and the k.u. 162 Lst Inf Bde on both sides of the Devoli.

The preparations of the Entente to attack on the Devoli didn't stay concealed from XIX Corps HQ; on the other hand, the enemy's overall intentions were still unclear due to the end of their movements in the coastal plain. On 16 July we had the impression that the Italians were assembling forces near the bend in the Semeni by Kuci, and on the next day there was a flood of rumors that an attack toward Gostima was imminent. Thus for the time the orders of 81 ID were unchanged - if the enemy did attack the Division would counterattack with the Corps' reserves (assembled behind 93 Inf Bde); their right wing would be supported by available units from 47 ID. But the General Oberst was already planning that the left wing should just hold their ground with their current resources, while the counter-offensive was prepared on the right.

Meanwhile the inter-allied HQ at Salonika found themselves forced to at least temporarily limit their operational goals in the Albanian theater of operations. On 19 July there were reports that strong German-Bulgarian forces were shifting toward the west, apparently to at least ensure that the positions on the lower Holta were retained. Therefore General Franchet d'Esperey ordered a halt to the advance; for now the troops should just occupy favorable defensive lines. But meanwhile preparations for the combined attack on both sides of the Devoli had been finished. The operation, under the command of General Treboldi, was scheduled to start on 20 July; the majority of the Italian force would attack the southern heights (Points 900 and 950) of the Mali Siloves. The French and Albanian units assembled on the left bank of the Devoli would support this attack, while French

infantry detachments attacked the Austro-Hungarian positions south of the lower Holta.

Thanks to intelligence reports, the 81 ID were expecting the attack, which did start early on 20 July. The enemy were able to achieve only a small penetration of 93 Inf Bde's lines, and the ground was recovered on the next day. On the other hand, on the 20th the 162 Lst Inf Bde lost Point 1071, and on the 21st they lost the key position at Point 900. A French envelopment assault aimed at the mouth of the Holta Brook seemed so dangerous for a moment that all the reserves still available in the Devoli sector were hastily rushed in this direction.

3. The counter-offensive by the k.u.k. XIX Corps

a. Events through 28 July

21-25 July

Orders to 47 ID had been issued orally in a meeting of the subordinate commanders, followed by written confirmation. Early on 21 July the Division's detachments thrust toward Ardenica and the Kuci bridgehead. The operation in the following days against the foremost strong points of the 38 Italian ID didn't gain as much ground as expected, but did finally clarify the enemy situation. On 23 July GO Pflanzer-Baltin had the impression that his opponents' attack against the left wing had already reached its high point. Therefore FML Weiss-Tihanyi at Rogozina was given an oral command to relieve 81 ID, which was heavily engaged, with an attack by his entire Division to capture Ardenica and Kuci. The right wing of 93 Inf Bde would join this assault. That morning the General Oberst personally visited Elbasan to consult with FML Komma; he learned that all of Col. Spaics' group (k.u. 162 Lst Inf Bde) had already withdrawn over the Holta. Therefore he ordered 81 ID to also attack with all their strength to recover the points which had been lost to the enemy. For this purpose the left wing of 93 Inf Bde would thrust to the southeast while Lt Col. Malcher's group (k.k. 161 Lst Inf Bde) attacked to the southwest; thus the enemy units pushing against 162 Lst Inf Bde would be threatened with envelopment from both sides.

47 ID began their general attack toward the south at daybreak on 24 July. Col. Wächter's group, assembled near Guri Gomares, advanced toward the Ardenica heights which were guarded by the

foremost elements of the Verona Brigade. At 7:00 AM the Border Jaeger Battalion 1 had already broken into the strongly fortified position; however, they were soon struck in the flank by a counter-thrust and then had to repulse a number of further assaults. Finally it was possible to renew our own attack up to the barriers by enveloping the enemy on both sides.

Under 94 Inf Bde the group on the right wing (III Battalion/SchR 33) reached Kalmi at 8:00 AM and secured the fords there over the Semeni. 94th Bde's main body, aiming for Kuci, soon encountered heavy resistance from the advanced lines of the Tanaro Brigade. They were first able to cross the Semeni east of the town, where two battalions (BH FJB 2 and k.u. Landsturm Battalion II/32) thrust over the river, attacked the heights rising to the west of the valley, and also passed the road leading to Banja. Down-stream from Kuci the BH Gendarmerie Battalion finally got over the ford in their sixth attempt. After mopping up Kuci, this Battalion also managed to take the heights to the south which rim the valley and to create a bridgehead. The day passed quietly on 81 ID's front.

Unexpectedly, the operational position of the Italian XVI Corps had greatly worsened when they lost the heights within the river bend at Kuci to 94 Inf Bde; their only worth-while route from Valona through Fjeri to Berat had been cut. The Italians had very quickly built on the firm foundations of an old Roman road a highway that could be used for trucks, and were using it extensively. Because the mountains made it impossible to detour toward the south this route led through Kuci, and so loss of the town was a devastating blow.³¹² It's no wonder that in the days which followed this key geographical point became the scene of the most bitter fighting of the entire Albanian campaign. GO Pflanzer-Baltin's troops, though outnumbered and under-supplied, would emerge from this seemingly hopeless action as victors, demonstrating glorious spirit and willingness to fight despite their recent setbacks and subsequent heavy exertions. The action is also a tribute to the positive influence of their clear-sighted and unshakeable commander, who understood how to restore the soldierly virtues of his men after their brief period of depression, and how to successfully employ their courage.

On 25 July the General Oberst already had the impression that the success at Kuci was achieving the goal of relieving the pressure on the eastern wing, which hitherto had been in such heavy fighting. Now, however, he had to anticipate an assault by strong allied units against 47 ID. To guard against this

³¹²Veith, p. 548

possibility, on the 25th he renewed the order (which 81 ID had already received on the 23rd) for a general offensive, which would commence on the 26th.

Meanwhile 47 ID achieved further success on 25 July. Already before dawn Col. Wächter's group drove elements of the Verona Brigade out of the positions they'd been holding on the Ardenica heights; in the subsequent pursuit the group reached the line Petova-Vojkan (north of Fjeri), where they repulsed enemy counterattacks. Farther east they made contact with Battalion III/SchR 33, stationed at Kalmi where the situation was unchanged.

For the forces stationed in the Kuci bridgehead, on the other hand, the 25th was a day of heavy fighting. After intense artillery preparation, the Italians began to attack around noon using all the parts of 38 ID available in this area; in the evening three battalions of the Tanaro Brigade, hitherto operating against 93 Inf Bde, joined the action. In fighting that frequently surged back and forth, every local Italian success in their efforts to penetrate the lines of the bridgehead was canceled by an immediate counterattack; at nightfall just one forward position remained in enemy hands.

On the front of 81 ID the 93 Inf Bde east of the Devoli had again been heavily assaulted on 23 July. In these critical days the Brigade's reserves - BH FJB 3 and Sturm Battalion 47 - were very distinguished. Both battalions decisively threw the enemy back in brilliant though costly counterattacks. After the first unsuccessful attempt to re-open the vital road connection through Kuci, General Ferrero found himself compelled on the 23rd to call for French help to support his right wing. Thereupon the combined group which linked the two allied forces, hitherto under Italian command, was immediately reinforced by the 1st Moroccan Spahi Marche Regiment and placed under French control.

According to the allies' joint orders, the forces of the French 57 ID on the Devoli would begin their advance at the same time as the attack of the Italian right wing under General Treboldi, which however wouldn't begin until 28 July.

26-28 July

Meanwhile fighting engulfed the entire Albanian front on 26 July. As ordered on the day before, the various groups of 47 ID were only supposed to hold their current positions north of Fjeri and south of Kuci throughout the day, since the General Oberst

anticipated an assault by larger Entente forces.

In fact heavy fighting broke out already on the front of Col. Wächter's group (north of Fjeri) in the night of 25-26 July. No fewer than nine enemy assaults were repulsed by 5:00 AM, after which the troops pulled back to a more favorable line on the heights south of the carriage road from Petova to Vojkan. The left wing group of 38 Italian ID renewed their assault around 7:00 AM, but gained no success.

XIX Corps HQ regarded the swampy low ground on both sides of the Semeni around Kalmi not as a potentially dangerous area, but rather as a natural protection for the flanks of their separated battle groups; therefore this stretch of the river was guarded by very small forces. Since the enemy were of the same opinion, on 26 July the Battalion III/SchR 33 were able to advance through Kalmi against negligible resistance and establish a bridgehead over the Semeni south of Jagodina. The Italian cavalry stationed here withdrew to the south, effectively pursued by our Albanian squadron.

Meanwhile in the morning of 26 July the HQ of XVI Italian Corps, after strong artillery preparation, renewed their attack on the positions of 94 Inf Bde with all the forces they'd assembled south of Kuci. The enemy won only temporary success. And the advance of the right wing of 93 Inf Bde aided the defenders by forcing the Italians engaged southeast of Kuci to withdraw through Rokovec, followed by one of our battalions. While the main body of 93 Inf Bde in this area advanced to the Kozara heights and the point where the Devoli flows into the Semeni, the Brigade commander GM Lerch had his left wing mount a feint attack against Point 900 in support of 81 ID's assault on both sides of the Devoli. Here 162 Lst Inf Bde thrust forward and at first won some important successes in the morning of 26 July. They captured the villages of Izgjuba and Cruja. Then Sturm Battalion 45 came up from reserve, deployed farther east, and moved further ahead in small groups. But the Battalion was thrown back by a French infantry regiment guarding the lower Holta, whereupon the other parts of 162 Lst Inf Bde also had to withdraw to their original positions.

This setback to 81 ID had at least one favorable result. The allies' preparations for a combined thrust on the Devoli had been substantially disrupted, and the offensive they'd planned for the relief of XVI Corps thus was postponed. And therefore most of the front was quiet on 27 July, except for some actions in the coastal sector.

To ensure that any crisis could be addressed, the eight Albanian cadres and volunteers were brought together and sent along with an Etappen battalion to Rogozina as a Corps reserve of last resort. In an extreme emergency fourteen sapper companies would also be used as combat units.

After a quiet night, in the morning of 28 July the enemy renewed their assault on the Kuci bridgehead as had been predicted by intelligence agents; once more they were defeated. Further Italian thrusts later in the morning, at noon and in the afternoon were shattered. The fifth and strongest assault came in the evening and led at many points to hand-to-hand combat; it ended when the enemy retreated to their starting points. Our losses in men and equipment, especially due to Italian artillery fire, had been substantial. "But the achievement of the infantry and artillery of 94 Inf Bde in these days of defensive fighting near Kuci was perhaps the proudest in the Albanian theater of operations."³¹³

Although the thrust by 93 Inf Bde over the Semeni, intended to relieve their hard-pressed comrades near Kuci, also failed to break through it had reduced the force of the Italian assault. The left wing of this Brigade and the adjacent parts of 162 Lst Inf Bde west of the Devoli stayed on the defensive on 28 July. Against this part of the front on the Mali Siloves was directed the allied thrust which had been planned since 25 July; the right-wing group of XVI Italian Corps under General Treboldi and the combined allied forces on the left wing of the French 57 ID had been getting ready to attack since then. But the initial preparations had been considerably disrupted on 26 July by the ultimately unsuccessful operation of the k.u.k. 81 ID; General Treboldi didn't get orders from Valona to implement the offensive until the 27th. Prior to the start, spies revealed the entire plan of attack to the Aus-Hung. commanders. As a result, the Italian assault against the positions of 93 Inf Bde on the western slopes of the Mali Siloves in the morning of 28 July was soon shattered. After committing their principal force the Italians were able to penetrate the trenches on the ridge by Point 900, but then were thrown back in a counterattack by Border Jaeger Battalion 3. The French assault on the right wing of 162 Lst Inf Bde was nipped in the bud by the defenders' artillery fire.

313Veith, p. 549

b. New decisions by both sides

After the initial thrust by XIX Corps and the allied counter-attack, on 29 July there was extreme tension among both sides along the entire front in Albania. Since the Aus-Hung. forces were considerably outnumbered there was still a danger that they could be defeated; much depended on the decisions of the allies.

At this time the high command at Baden also doubted whether the hard-pressed 47 ID would be able to withstand the upcoming attacks, since Italian reinforcements were expected. Secretly they suggested to XIX Corps HQ that the Division should be withdrawn to the old positions near Ljuzna. But GO Pflanzer-Baltin stuck with his decision. A retreat would demoralize the troops and also have an unfavorable impact on the local population, which would side only with the stronger party. Furthermore, a withdrawal by the right wing would allow the French to assault 81 ID and to advance to the Skumbi; thus the rich harvest in this area would fall into enemy hands. Finally, the General Oberst believed that casualties during a retreat would undoubtedly be even greater than during a defensive action.

The will to resist was also evident among the combat soldiers, as demonstrated on 29 July in 47 ID's positions near Kuci. In the morning this part of the front was subjected to very heavy artillery fire, partly from the flanks. Covered by the bombardment, larger enemy forces attacked two battalions stationed here (III/BH 7 and IV/k.u. Lst IR 4), but were defeated without gaining an inch of ground. 93 Inf Bde also repulsed enemy thrusts northwest of Gorica and at Lozani. The French opposite 81 ID displayed very little activity during this day, which ended in almost complete quiet.

The fighting had slackened off because of secret orders which General Henrys had meanwhile received from Salonika. They instructed him to have 57 French ID prepare a deep defensive position in the captured lines north of the Devoli; in general it would run over the mountain ridges between the ends of the Skumbi and Holta valleys, and then along the heights south of the Holta.

The latest instructions were part of a plan for a general Entente offensive in the Balkans, which will be discussed later. The role of the French 3rd Divisional Group in Albania would be to capture the Gora Top, thus separating the Aus-Hung. forces from their allies and drawing Bulgarian reserves in this direction. But the operation was to be carefully prepared, and thus wouldn't start until the second half of August. Meanwhile however the

parts of 57 French ID on the southern bank of the Devoli would continue to participate in the offensive by XVI Italian Corps. The fact that the French plans were kept strictly secret from their partners illustrates clearly the disadvantage of fighting as part of a coalition. Immediately afterwards there would be another illustration when the Italians unexpectedly decided to retreat, thus threatening to undo all of the gains which the French had achieved in Albania during the last few months of difficult battle.

c. Retreat of the XVI Italian Corps (30 July-7 August)

In the morning of 30 July General Henrys received a partly-garbled message from General Ferrero, which was repeated in expanded form in the afternoon. The Italian General intended to withdraw the main body of his forces, which were fighting under heavy pressure near Kuci, to the area around Berat. Because of concern that the Italians' right-wing group might be cut off on the Mali Siloves, their commander General Treboldi also received an order to pull back to the Cafa Dara, and to deploy his eastern wing so it would rest on the Tomorica at Krpica. These movements would be timed so that during the night of 30-31 July the troops could occupy the line Krpica - Hills # 1150, 938, 700 and 472 - Orjania - Point 350 - Gorjan - Hill # 559 - Semeni.

The French couldn't understand this decision by their comrades-in-arms. At this time the XVI Italian Corps consisted of 44 battalions (including 26 of active troops), 16 squadrons, 210 field cannon and 91 heavy guns, and their striking power was enhanced by proximity to their excellent base at Valona. But the Italian decision forced the French to take account of the new situation by withdrawing their own troops in the area near the Devoli. The French infantry regiment stationed on the lower Holta were ordered to retreat for the time being to a line between the Poroi Brook and the heights near Gere. The withdrawal was covered by the Moroccan Spahis serving on the left bank of the Devoli; this mounted regiment were also instructed to take part in the defense of the lower Tomorica along with Albanian units sent to the area. General Treboldi requested that the new lines should be linked with the Italian right wing, but General Henrys explained that the reduced size and exhaustion of the French force made this impossible; for the present he would only be able to hold onto the northeastern slope of the Mali Siloves, facing the mouth of the Holta.

Although General Franchet d'Esperey approved the plans of his

subordinate, he still expressed a desire - because of the overall situation - to hold onto the Gramsi area if possible. Furthermore he asked General Ferrero to keep the line of resistance northeast of Berat since this was vital for maintaining a secure link between the Italian and French troops and since it would be possible to mount an effective counter-thrust from this area in case the Austrians, as expected, advanced on Berat. Without discussing this demand, Ferrero responded to the commander of the Entente forces in the Balkans that if necessary he would abandon Berat - painful as this might be - since defense of the fortified camp at Valona was of more importance to the overall allied effort.

Early on 30 July GO Pflanzer-Baltin came up from Rogozina with FML Weiss-Tihanyi to visit 94 Inf Bde and to order them to hold out until the end of their strength. He stated that the general situation was favorable and announced his intention to have the Orientkorps, as they arrived from Italy, assemble north of Kalmi from which they'd eventually thrust south over the Semeni. The 47 FA Bde were also coming to the front.

Then at 1:20 PM the General Oberst received a trustworthy intelligence report of the highest importance - an intercepted radio message from General Ferrero indicated that the principal force of XVI Italian Corps, which had been fighting 47 ID and 93 Inf Bde, would withdraw in the night of 30-31 July to a line that on average was about 15 km farther south. GO Pflanzer-Baltin immediately issued instructions for the pursuit. The 47th and 81st Divisions would follow hard on the enemy's heels; the boundary between their sectors would be a line from Gorani through Kondasi to the upper Semeni at Osum. The pursuit would be accompanied by a thrust and breakthrough to the south over the Semeni by the group at Kalmi; this force would then pivot to the east, threatening the rear of the Italians stationed south of Kuci. The largest force, 94 Inf Bde, were to advance toward the heights southeast of Vokopoli.

The right wing of 93 Inf Bde had already crossed the Semeni during 30 July and reached the Kucova heights; farther east the Italians stationed near Dras [Driza] were still holding their positions. In the following night detachments of 47 ID thrust ahead to find that their foes were still in place. At dawn, however, when the main body followed in three columns they only had to overcome weak resistance from rear guards; in the evening of 31 July they reached the line Jagodina-Velemis-Halvadzijas-Petrohondi-Hidran. Lt Col. Mauretter's group, which until now made up the right wing of 93 Inf Bde, were placed directly under

the HQ of 47 ID. On 93rd Brigade's other front only slight gains were achieved on this day; the enemy in general held their ground. The troops of 81 ID also encountered stiff resistance. 162 Lst Inf Bde, now commanded by Col. Dörfler, captured Izgjuba, but the attacks at Cruja and Stori failed to push through. The 161 Lst Inf Bde were also checked by the French. Therefore the General Oberst instructed 47 ID to stay on the line they'd reached and to only attack if the Italians continued to retreat; 81 ID, on the other hand, were to resume their assault.

At this same time General Ferrero informed General Henrys that due to hostile pressure against the center of his front he would be forced to withdraw to the Malakastra during the night of 31 July-1 August; therefore his right wing on the heights south of the Tomorica (in the Cafa Glumaka - Kapinova sector) also must retreat. But objections from the French caused the Italian commander to postpone the retreat by a day. In the afternoon of 1 August General Ferrero decided to have his eastern wing remain for the time being on the line Sinja - Berat - Cafa Darz, staying in touch with the French near Krpica. Now the commander of the French Army of the Orient ordered that the movement to the rear, which had already been planned, was to be implemented in cooperation with the Italians.

On 1 August the components of 47 ID deployed along the lines they'd already reached without seeing any action worthy of note. Meanwhile 81 ID advanced along their entire front past the enemy's former line, driving rear guards before them. By the end of the day 47 ID had been ordered to carry on an active defense while preparing a permanent position. 81 ID, on the other hand, were to keep attacking until they reached the line Hidran - Narta - Point 1900 (southeast of the Gora Top), and linked up with the Bulgarians.

In the evening of 2 August the French also began to retreat along both sides of the Devoli; on the next day the left wing of their 57 ID made contact with the Italians north of Krpica. From here the new French line ran east over the strongly fortified heights by Narta-Mascani and the ridges south of the upper Holta. In front of these positions the troops of the k.u.k. 81 ID, who'd been in pursuit, halted in the evening of 7 August after some locally heavy action with French rear guards. According to the latest orders this Division now also reverted to an active defensive stance.

d. A pause in operations (8-21 August)

Meanwhile the fighting had also ended in the other sectors. On 8 August the entire Albanian front was quiet, and in general would remain so until the 21st. Both sides needed a pause to recuperate, as indicated by the casualty figures. During July the k.u.k. XIX Corps has lost 6000 men, of whom only 1500 were killed or wounded; the rest had been taken prisoner or stricken with malaria. The Italian XVI Corps had lost one third of their combat strength. The ranks of the French units had also been depleted. Furthermore, both sides were trying to bring order to their forces and to deploy them for new missions; thus in the first half of August they made significant changes to their orders of battle and troop stations. The French 3rd Divisional Group proceeded in accordance with the tactical planning for the general offensive in the Balkans by their nation's Army of the Orient, while for the time being the Italian XVI Corps were concerned only about the defense of Valona. General Ferrero didn't intend to recover the lost ground until the arrival of reinforcements he'd been promised.

The AOK at Baden still believed that the principal mission of XIX Corps was merely to cover the western wing of the Macedonian front; loss of territory in Albania was of no particular importance. The only advantage of having troops stationed as far south as possible was as a bargaining chip in future peace negotiations. Since XIX Corps were playing a subsidiary role, they would have to get by with a limited number of troops; they would receive no further units. In fact, after the arrival of the latest reinforcements (7 battalions and 12 batteries) they would have to give up 2 battalions which the high command had requested earlier. The AOK did concur with the intention of Corps HQ to hold onto the current front.

Nonetheless, GO Pflanzer-Baltin was already planning to resume the offensive, although for now he discussed his plans only with some of his unit commanders. The line they'd occupied was not favorable for building a permanent position, since it wasn't protected by river lines or high ground. This deficiency caused the commanders of many sectors to request that parts of their front should be pulled back; without exception, such requests were turned down by the General Oberst.

**e. The offensive resumes to capture Berat and Fjeri
(22-26 August)**

Meanwhile the situation became ripe for resuming the offensive. Since the current front wasn't suitable for defense, the General Oberst decided to attack first with 47 ID, for which purpose the 93 Inf Bde was returned to their control. The Division's objectives was a line running along the Buvalica and then from Sinja (Point 1197) through Dobronika to Rosniki. The 81 ID would begin to attack a day later.

On 18 August GO Pflanzer-Baltin summoned to Kuci the officers who'd be most involved in the operation; he explained to them the situation of both sides, his objectives, and the tactics to be used in the attack. To maintain secrecy, most of this information wasn't committed to writing. For the same reason, the date when the offensive would start wasn't revealed, although at the last moment the HQ of 47 ID were informed that their preparations should be complete by 21 August. But FML Weiss-Tihanyi would initiate the operation only if he could achieve surprise, since he was outnumbered by his opponents. Everything hinged on whether the reinforced Orientkorps - stationed for the moment behind the lines - would be able to suddenly overwhelm the weakly-occupied center of the 38 Italian ID south of Kalmi. If so, they could break through the enemy positions and roll up the front on both sides of the penetration. Then both neighboring groups would join the advance. Costly frontal assaults were to be avoided. The other units were also supposed to attack, but only to take advantage of local opportunities that arose in their various sectors, separated by the mountains.

During the days which followed the front was still completely quiet. Along the north Albanian coast, on the other hand, raiding enemy flotillas were very active; on 19 August they sank the transport steamer "Gorizia."

22-23 August

In the night of 21-22 August twelve Aus-Hung. and German planes carried out the first large-scale bombing of Valona; they repeated the effort in the two following nights, and were completely successful. And in the early morning of 22 August all components of FML Weiss-Tihanyi's 47 ID began to attack. Soon troops were in constant advance toward their day's objectives along the entire front except on the right wing, where the movement soon ground to a halt.

Here the group under Col. Dörfler (formerly under Col. Wächter) attacked in three columns. The western column had crossed the lower course of the Semeni and now were pushing along the southern bank with the assignment of helping the central group as they attacked the Brustar Mah. bridgehead; on the eastern wing a detachment established contact with the neighboring group. As expected the central column encountered bitter resistance at the main Italian bridgehead position, which also protected Fjeri. The column on the right proved to be too weak to carry out the planned envelopment of the enemy's western wing, so the assault came to an end in front of the Italian trenches on the line Petova-Vojkan.

On the other hand Lt Col. Duic's group, the reinforced Orientkorps, reached their goals despite strong resistance. The left wing thrust past the important crossroads at Rozkovec and mopped up the positions on the heights near Kurjani, while the right broke through the enemy lines at Ljuari and in the evening the high ground on the northern side of Buvalica valley. The groups on the wings, which were kept strong during the whole movement, were relieved as quickly as possible so they could roll up the Italian front on both sides and advance toward the inner wings of the neighboring groups.³¹⁴

GM Förster's 94 Inf Bde also advanced, in three columns. After occasionally heavy fighting they reached the line Alambreci-Veteriku. Here the Brigade's left wing linked up with Col. Vittorelli's group (formerly led by Lt Col. Mauretter), whose attack north of Berat had stalled along the heavily fortified

314 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The assault was facilitated by panic which broke out in the Italian ranks. During the day the Orientkorps captured 1600 men and 6 guns, while their own casualties were so low as to be "almost unbelievable." For example, the group in the center of the assault lost just one man killed and six wounded. (Schachinger, "Die Bosniaken Kommen!"; Graz, 1989; p. 243)

position between Orjana and Vrioni.

After face-to-face meetings with the leaders of the neighboring groups, the commander of 93 Inf Bde - GM Lerch - intended to attack with a strong left wing over the Mali Tomorices ridge and southwest through Cafa Darz toward Berat. For this purpose the new commander of 81 ID, FML Wossala, loaned him five batteries and a battalion. The 93rd Brigade, organized in three groups, captured and held onto the dominant heights northeast of Malibarza. There were no changes along 81 ID's front on 22 August.

GO Pflanzer-Baltin had attentively observed the method and course of all the individual actions in detail; in the afternoon of the first day of action he had the impression that the surprise attack of 47 ID was in most cases carried out with determination and successfully implemented. He was concerned only by the situation on the right wing, where Col. Dörfler's group, having committed their main body to a frontal assault, could hardly be expected to effectively envelop the Italians who were standing their ground north of Fjeri. FML Weiss-Tihanyi, who was overseeing the battle from the command HQ of 94 Inf Bde, decided that to avoid unnecessary casualties and a possible setback to that Brigade (all of which was committed already at the front) they should wait for the successful breakthrough by Lt Col. Duic's group to take effect. On the next day he wanted to avoid a frontal advance, and to weaken the Italian front primarily with small-scale local envelopment attacks.

In fact the western wing of 47 ID gained no success on 23 August. On the other hand the majority of Lt Col. Duic's force established themselves firmly along the heights north of the Buvalica valley; two battalions attacked east toward the Sinja Heights to help the right wing of 94 Inf Bde move forward near Alambreci. Although the attackers here reached the heights south of the town, on other fronts the Brigade couldn't gain any further ground. The enemy also maintained their position in front of Col. Vittorelli's group. But 93 Inf Bde encountered declining resistance as they reached the line of heights between Malibarza and Cafa Darz. That evening a detachment of infantry and artillery pushed ahead toward Rosniki; they would be able to cover from the southeast an advance by the main body of the 93rd toward Berat.

Since the eastern wing of 93 Inf Bde had already advanced past the western wing of the French units opposite 81 ID, at noon Wossala's Division were once again ordered to start a general

attack; this would prevent the enemy here, who were inactive, from shifting forces toward the west. The objective of 81 ID was the line Cafa Darz - Narda; their right wing began to gain some ground by the end of the 23rd.

24-26 August

On 24 August the attack was maintained by all parts of XIX Corps with undiminished determination. On the western wing the main body of Col. Dörfler's group broke into the Brustar Mah. bridgehead before dawn and drove the Verona Brigade over the Semeni. On the extreme right wing Battalion I/88 and BH FJB 1, which had already crossed the river the day before, advanced toward Fjeri, which was also under attack from the east by one battalion of Lt Col. Duic's group. In coordination with this detachment the main force from the north entered Fjeri in the afternoon but weren't able to win a decision in heavy street-fighting. The left wing of Lt Col. Duic's group attacked toward Sinja, entering the sector of 94 Inf Bde as far as the Bjesova Heights; now the threatened right wing of the 38 Italian ID, under very intense artillery fire, began to fall back from the unprotected Spiragui ridge. On the other hand the enemy still held out north of Berat against Col. Vittorelli's group; they did evacuate the Malibarza Heights under pressure from 93 Inf Bde, parts of which thrust into the area around Rosniki. 81 ID, still encountering stubborn French resistance, didn't gain any substantial success.

Nevertheless the 24th of August was also the turning point for the French 57 ID. For on this day the undiminished pressure and heavy casualties forced General Ferrero to abandon Berat and Fjeri and to order a general retreat by his forces to the line Malakastra - Cafa Glumaka. Although the French had anticipated this withdrawal, they now were compelled to a quick decision to bend back the left wing of their Balkan front. They had already planned to set up a line from Lunga through Kukri and then along the high ground south of the Proni Tokrit valley as far as the point where that stream flows into the Devoli; then it would run along the heights east of the Tomorica valley upstream from Armen. The retreat started already in the night of 24-25 August. It would be easier to supply the French troops in the new position, but the planned thrust against Gora Top - part of the overall operation of the Entente forces in the Balkans - was canceled for now.

Street fighting in the town of Fjeri continued until early on 25 August. Finally FML Weiss-Tihanyi, who was leading his Division

resolutely, ordered battalions from Lt Col. Duic's group to attack from the east, forcing the Italians to withdraw. Then the group of Col. Kokotovic (who'd replaced Col. Dörfler) overcame a fierce counterattack and advanced to the line Jokali-Brustar-Zupan-Driza-Portica. There was no change in the situation along the heights north of the Buvalica, where the main body of Lt Col. Duic's group were stationed. 94 Inf Bde, on the other hand, reached Sinja and Boljani early on 25 August, cutting the last direct connection between Valona and Berat.

At the same time the action around Berat was won. The decisive factor was GM Lerch's plan to have most of 93 Inf Bde thrust to the southeast, threatening to take Berat from the rear. Since General Treboldi naturally expected his opponents to continue to attack toward Cafa Darz, he had prepared to offer his principal resistance there. Thus he was completely surprised by GM Lerch's thrust on 24 August and couldn't implement counter-measures in time. Only with difficulty were the Italians engaged around Berat able to cross the Osum before they could be cut off along that river. On 25 August parts of Lerch's Brigade marched through the town; later in the morning, assisted by Col. Vittorelli's group which had been following right behind, they occupied the heights to the south. Advanced outposts were established ahead up to Cafa Hmalinat.

On 25 August the 81 ID on the eastern wing of XIX Corps were also able to join the general attack. The positions on the heights of Narta and Mascani opposite 162 Lst Inf Bde were defended by French rear guards and didn't fall until the next day. 161 Lst Inf Bde kept pace with the 162nd, while the adjacent Border Jaeger Battalion 6 (assigned to the right wing of the Bulgarian Ochrida Division) captured Heights # 1900.

f. The fighting ends; further plans

Already in the evening of 25 August GO Pflanzer-Baltin believed that the operation was ending with the capture of Fjeri and Berat. He ordered 47 ID not to send strong forces beyond the line they'd already reached; only 81 ID had one more goal - to take the Narta Heights. Contact was to be maintained with the enemy, and positions were to be prepared in depth for prolonged defense. The troops were surprised and even disappointed. The western groups in particular had felt that an advance to the old line along the Vojusa was obviously the next step, especially

since the enemy were voluntarily withdrawing in that direction.³¹⁵ However, the generals refrained from a further attack, despite the improved morale and the tempting tactical targets. They knew that the units had already advanced past the point where they could be effectively supplied, since in the zone of the recent battle the transportation lines as well as the accumulated stocks of food had been destroyed. Casualties were another factor but were less troubling than the increase in cases of malaria, which spread because it had been impossible to maintain prevent measures during the fighting. Thus it was the very nature of the theater of operations that forced the commanders to limit their objectives.

But since most of the Italians had pulled back to the Malakastra and the French were behind the upper course of the Tomorica and the Proni Tokrit, on 26 August the General Oberst ordered an advance to the line Jokali - Rina - Driza (south of Fjeri) - heights north of the Janica valley - Sinja - Cafa Hmalinat - Tomorica Maja - heights south of Narta - Proni Tokrit. Strong detachments were already moving up to this line in the following day and then scouting the enemy positions. Near Cafa Hmalinat the Italian front bulged forward, so forces were prepared to attack here on 28 August. However, on that day the enemy rear guards withdrew further, enabling the groups of XIX Corps to reach their objective. Only on the heights east of Cafa Hmalinat did the Italians still hold a flanking position.

Meanwhile XIX Corps HQ proposed to the AOK that the forces in Albania should be re-organized as three infantry divisions (two with 13 battalions, one with 14), but this would be possible only if they were allowed to retain seven battalions which the high command wanted to withdraw. The General Oberst noted that he currently had available just 10,000 riflemen, 470 machine guns and 172 artillery pieces, "a ridiculously small force for the defense of Albania"; the task would be "a large-scale bluff, an adventure." Nonetheless he was prepared without reservation to hold onto the 180 km long front with his force; he intended to not only occupy the most important sectors with groups deployed in depth but also to establish between them a system of strong points from which an active defense could be conducted.

The AOK couldn't concur with GO Pflanzer-Baltin's proposed re-organization because they insisted that the seven battalions to which he referred would have to be given up. On the other hand, they would assign XIX Corps a cavalry division.

³¹⁵Veith, p. 553

At this time the Corps consisted of 47 ID (with 93 and 94 Inf Bdes), 81 ID (with k.k. 161 and k.u. 162 Lst Inf Bdes) and the 220 Inf Bde which had been created from Col. Vittorelli's group. The force as a whole was designated "Armeegruppe Albania", less because of its strength than because of the rank and reputation of its commander.

Especially in the last days of August the spread of malaria was quite shocking, and caused great concern. In July there had been 3900 combat casualties while 2600 men were lost to illness; in August the respective figures were 2000 and 18,000 men! The disease reached its peak shortly after the end of the latest period of fighting. At the start of September there was no battalion with more than 150 riflemen, while most had fewer than 50; the strength of Storm Battalion 47, which had been so distinguished in the July battle, sank to nothing. Such was the effect of conducting a war of movement in the Albanian summer; it was small comfort that the condition of the Italians was no better.³¹⁶ On 6 September the Armeegruppe had 100,000 men but less than 10,000 combat troops; 161 Lst Inf Bde, for example, was holding a front almost 10 km long with just 408 riflemen. Because of the length of the lines of communication and the extreme difficulty of bringing up supplies, and because of the need to ensure that the population received a minimum amount of food, there was no chance that the unfavorable ratio of combat to non-combat soldiers would improve in the near future. Thus the nature of the theater of operations and our overall lack of resources limited the choices of the field commander.

But despite all difficulties the General Oberst had no intention of abandoning the initiative to the enemy; he was planning a third and greater offensive. The goal would be Valona, and based on the latest intelligence Pflanzer-Baltin had no doubt that he would succeed.

Once again preparatory orders were carefully avoided. But as a preliminary measure the 47 ID, and in particular its still-strong refused wings, were to move closer to the enemy. Thus on 11 and 12 September the front between the Osum and the Tomorica was advanced past the line Malesova-Ljubesici; some of the troops reached Abbas-Ali. On the next day the western wing kept pace by capturing Siupetra and Havaleas.

The plan was that as the reinforcements (9 CD) arrived gradually in mid-September they would at a certain time take over the front between the sea and 94 Inf Bde, relieving the groups currently

³¹⁶Veith, pp. 553 ff.

stationed here. These units would then be free to deploy in depth, supported by strong artillery, on the right wing; they would deliver the decisive thrust along the coast down to the Vojusa, enveloping the Italian left wing. In the center 94 Inf Bde would break through south to the bend in the Vojusa, then cross the river and push west toward Valona. The schedule would depend upon the actual arrival dates of 9 CD and the replacement personnel, which hopefully would be complete by the end of September.

For now some very thorough conferences were held, at which the lower-level commanders were given precise instructions but told nothing about the overall concept. The full plan of attack and underlying concept would be communicated to them later, and only by word of mouth, once the offensive was imminent.

Meanwhile comprehensive measures were taken to address logistical concerns. To safeguard the health of the troops, the March units and special reinforcements were held back for the time being in malaria-free areas; they wouldn't be used to build up the front-line units until the latest possible moment. Also the deployment of the attacking groups for the decisive push would begin as late as possible.

On the Italian side there were serious concerns, after the latest substantial setbacks, for the safety of Valona. Reinforcements were rushed to the scene. Shipment of the independent Puglie Brigade was already finished on 1 September, and by the middle of the month that unit was followed by 13 ID (with the Palermo and Barletta Brigades)³¹⁷. With these forces the Italian high command believed they had finally guaranteed that Valona was secure. The division held back in Epirus was now free to join the Entente forces in Macedonia. But on the Vojusa the initiative was still left to the Austro-Hungarians.

B. The Macedonian theater of operations in summer 1918

Deterioration of the Bulgarian Army

The success of the French and English in checking the great German offensives on the Western front, along with the arrival of strong American units in France, had eventual repercussions in the Macedonian theater. Faith in ultimate victory began to

317TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original text has been corrected here; it referred to the 16 ID rather than to 13 ID.

revive among the Entente forces in the Balkans, while their eagerness to fight was on the rise. Generals and troops alike wanted to play a part in deciding the war, just like their counterparts on the Western front. Furthermore, the prospects for a successful allied assault north of Salonika were never better than in the late summer of 1918. Bulgarian deserters, who came over every day, reported that the opposing army was suffering a very severe logistical crisis, while the troops' will to resist was constantly sinking.

In fact the Bulgarians, subjected to clever propaganda from the Entente, were wavering in their faith that the Germans would ultimately be successful. Their hopes to build a "Great Bulgaria" were also disappearing; it seemed that the heavy sacrifices would be in vain for a third time. The Army, which for years had been in the field, was depressed by the poverty and need at home, partisan politics³¹⁸, and the lack of military equipment as well as of food and clothing. Bolshevik insinuations kindled unrest within the simple souls of the Bulgarian soldiery and increased the confusion. There were incidents of resistance against individual officers and even of disobedience by entire units. Extreme weariness with the war was spreading. The men wished to return home, to their families and farms. There were ever louder and more frequent warnings from some troops that if peace wasn't concluded by mid-September they would lay down their arms and abandon their positions without a battle.³¹⁹ In vain the German and Bulgarian commanders tried to reverse the obvious decline in morale by lifting the spirits of officers and men and by distributing clothing and food provided by the German military administration.³²⁰ Thanks to such measures, at the end of summer the old military spirit was restored in some areas but the improvement didn't conceal the fact that the Bulgarian Army as a whole was worn out. The government did nothing to counter the black mood among both the population and the troops. A new cabinet under Malinov had "just one wish - to conclude peace as soon as possible." Thus the trust of the German leadership in Bulgaria's power of resistance was shaken; they believed that a serious enemy assault would lead to severe defeats. In anticipation the Bulgarian high command and the HQ of Scholtz's German Army Group were holding reserves

318The people were divided into two groups - one which wanted peace "at any price" and one which wanted to continue fighting.

319Marinov, "The Truth about the Collapse on the Dobropolje" (in Bulgarian; published in Sofia, date unknown), pp. 20 ff.

320Kirch, p. 99

in readiness while building entrenchments in the rear, hoping that breakthroughs could at least be contained.

In August the commanders were able to gather reserves at all points that appeared threatened; the average strength of these groups was seven to nine battalions plus some batteries. The reserves of 11th German Army were concentrated near Prilep and those of the 1st Bulgarian Army in the Vardar valley. The reserves of Scholtz's Army Group deployed in the area Gradsko-Veles, while the Bulgarian high command held theirs in the sector of 2nd Bulgarian Army behind the Struma. Because of the peculiar Bulgarian logistical system it was technically impossible to keep large (division-sized) units together behind the lines. Also, because of the serious situation on the Western front the OHL didn't heed the urgent request by Scholtz's HQ for a German division to hold in reserve in Macedonia. Six German Landwehr battalions were being moved from Romania and the Crimea to the Strumica valley, but since they consisted of troops from the oldest classes they had only limited combat value.³²¹

The Aus-Hung. high command also observed this serious situation in the Balkans with great concern. At the end of July they'd received from the Belgrade Military Government a very thorough report about the hostile sentiment of the Serbian population and the new upsurge in partisan activity. The same HQ also expressed worries about the attitude of Bulgaria, which they considered changeable and unreliable; they reckoned that revolution might break out in Sofia by mid-September.³²² It was known that Serbian officers and agitators from the Entente were at work in Serbia, preparing an effective secret organization. Thus an offensive against Bulgaria's southern front might be accompanied by uprisings in the rear, which would become a serious danger if the field forces were defeated. However, due to the tense conditions on the Southwestern front and the departure of two infantry divisions to the German Western front, as well as to a lack of manpower and equipment, the AOK could offer no assistance to supplement the Aus-Hung. forces already on the Bulgarian front. These were 1 combat battalion (the 6th Border Jaeger), 4 Etappen battalions, 30 guns and a few technical and supply units.

The plans of Franchet d'Esperey

The favorable conditions for the Entente troops were also noticed

321Dieterich, p. 23

322Kerchnawe, "Der Zusammenbruch der Öster.-Ungar. Wehrmacht im Herbst 1918" (Munich, 1921), pp. 9 ff. Arz, "Geschichte des grossen Krieges", pp. 297 ff.

by General Franchet d'Esperey, who'd arrived at Salonika on 18 June and was planning a decisive attack on the Bulgarian front in conjunction with the expected counter-offensive in France. The only questions were where to attack and with which forces. The heart of the Bulgarian defenses was the area around Gradsko, Kavadar and Negotin in the Vardar valley, which was also the center of the lines of communication and supply for the entire front. Here the only decent routes parallel to the line came together - from the western wing to the vicinity of Prilep and from the eastern wing to the Lake Doiran area. And from here the major communication routes led into the interior, to Belgrade and Sofia. All the Army's necessary supplies were stored in the sector. If it fell to the Entente the Bulgarian front would be split into two parts, each of which would be cut off from its communication and supply routes and easily defeated.

Until this time the Vardar valley and the Monastir-Prilep road had been the principal lines of attack by the Entente forces. Repeated attempts had been made along both routes but had always been unsuccessful - at the Cerna bend in the battles of autumn 1916 and May 1917, and around Lake Doiran in the spring fighting of 1917.

Because of the size of the garrison of the Bulgarians' Vardar sector and the strength of the defenses here - obviously the best and most carefully prepared along the entire front³²³ - General Franchet d'Esperey abandoned his predecessors' plans for a thrust up the Vardar valley. Therefore he welcomed a suggestion by the Serbian high command to make the decisive effort over the Moglena Heights (Dobro polje) south of Klinovo. After thorough discussions and careful study of the terrain, Franchet d'Esperey decided to attack the Bulgarian positions in this sector. He recognized that the thrust would lead through rugged and trackless high ground. However, in all probability the unexpected direction of the attack would take the Bulgarian commanders and troops by surprise. The fortifications on the Dobro polje were less well-constructed and more weakly held than those in other parts of the front and, above all, there was no proper second line of defense. Reliable reports also indicated that the combat value of the defenders had sunk to an especially low level. If the attackers could quickly pass the barren battlefield lying between the Serbian and Bulgarian trench networks, it was hoped that a reliable supply line could be established after the breakthrough. The Serbs, moreover, were eager to fight and to return to their homeland; they were familiar with the terrain and especially well equipped for mountain fighting. The dominant mountain massif in the area was the Kajmakcalan (2525 meters), from which Entente observers could direct effective artillery support in the area chosen for the breakthrough and farther north.³²⁴

The Serbian troops and high command heartily endorsed Franchet d'Esperey's plan of attack, but didn't believe that they could achieve a breakthrough with their own resources. By now the

323English Official History - "Macedonia" (Vol. II, p. 159).

324Pesic, "Vom Durchbruch der Saloniki-front 1918" (in Ratnik, May 1922 edition; pp. 5 ff.). Alimpic, pp. 35 ff. Gazeilles, "La rupture du Front Bulgare. La 17. Division Coloniale dans la bataille du Dombropolje" (Paris, 1929), p. 13. Gouin, "L'Armée d'Orient. Des Dardanelles au Danube" (Marseille, 1931), p. 22. Damjanovic, "Vor dem Durchbruch der Saloniki-front im Jahre 1918" (in Ratnik, September 1926 edition), pp. 4 ff.

Serbian Army had suffered too many casualties in each year of the war, and still hadn't shaken off the memory of their defeat in spring 1917 on the same battlefield. To address these reservations, General Franchet d'Esperey decided to have French troops break through the Bulgarian positions and then to have the Serbian Army carry out the pursuit.

On 9 July Franchet d'Esperey submitted his plan for approval by the allied Supreme Command. The goal was to win a decisive victory. The Bulgarian front was to be destroyed and the offensive continued to Sofia. A phalanx of five infantry divisions (two French and three Serbian), supported by a powerful group of 580 guns, would assault the Bulgarian position on the Dobro polje along a front of 9 km. They were supposed to reach the Kavadar-Negotin area as quickly as possible, separating the Bulgarians east and west of the Vardar from each other. To ease the task of the main attacking group and to keep the enemy in doubt about the primary objective, the neighboring armies on both sides would also move forward. One would advance toward Prilep and the other east of the Vardar and on both sides of Lake Doiran.

After the area around Negotin was secure, the allied units in the Vardar valley and on the lower Strumica were to push toward Sofia. On the left wing the French Army of the Orient in the area of Kalkandelen and Skopje would stand guard toward the north and northeast, while farther south the Serbs near Veles and the 1st French Divisional Group in the Vardar valley advanced in the direction of Kustendil. Finally the English Army near Strumica (town) and the Greeks on the right wing would advance east of the Struma in the vicinity of Demirhisar.

The main assault was scheduled to begin on 15 September, preceded by one day of artillery preparation. The attack on both sides of Lake Doiran was to commence on the 18th, and that of the French Orient Army toward Prilep on the 24th; this would increase the menace to the opposing lines of communication posed by the principal attacking group.³²⁵

Preparations took place promptly and with very great care; they were to be complete by 25 August. The substantial work (including the construction of roads to bring up batteries to the selected positions, and the transfer of ammunition), as well as

325Gouin, p. 236. Daskalovic, "Vom Durchbruch der Saloniki-front" (in Ratnik, October 1923 edition, p. 17). English Official History - "Macedonia", Vol. II (Appendix 11, on p. 327).

all the traffic, couldn't be concealed from the watchful defenders.

Counter-measures of the Bulgarian high command

By the start of September the Bulgarian high command had correctly ascertained their enemies' intentions. They expected the main attack to develop against the Dobro polje sector at the point where the wings of 2 and 3 Bulgarian ID (both under 11th German Army) came together. The daily report of the high command for 1 September stated that "The attack in the direction of the Dobro polje will take place in just a few days."³²⁶ Preparations by the Entente to attack near Monastir and east of the Vardar were correctly evaluated as diversionary measures. On the other hand, the Bulgarian HQ underestimated the strength of the enemy forces that were being committed to the assault on the Dobro polje. They didn't believe that this would be part of a decisive offensive with wide-ranging goals, but rather that their opponents just wanted to secure the line of heights that make up the Dobro polje massif so the Serbs would enjoy better quarters during the winter than they could on the steep slopes where they now were stuck. Scholtz's Army Group HQ, on the contrary, anticipated a larger attack on both sides of the eastern Cerna and on the Dobro polje.³²⁷ Toward mid-September, as Franchet d'Esperey's plans became ever clearer, some of the reserves of the Army Group and of 11th German Army moved closer to the threatened sectors. The Bulgarian high command shifted their reserves over the Struma into the zone of the 1st Bulgarian Army.

Because of the commitment of six more Greek divisions in the summer, the balance of forces had tilted further against the Bulgarians. In mid-September the 14 Bulgarian divisions, with 268 battalions and 1433 guns³²⁸, faced 29 enemy divisions with 291 battalions and 1522 guns.³²⁹ Moreover, the 4th Bulgarian Army which was guarding the Aegean Sea coast with 33 battalions and 312 guns wouldn't take part in the defensive battle. The Entente air forces had more and better planes (200 against 80 German), and thus would achieve superiority despite the courage of the German and Bulgarian airmen.

But despite all these negative factors the Bulgarian generals

326Nedev, p. 210

327Landfried, "Der Endkampf in Mazedonien 1918 und seine Vorgeschichte" (Berlin, 1923), p. 17

328Nedev, p. 181. TRANSLATOR's NOTE: Most Bulgarian divisions still had three brigades, so the number of battalions per division was considerably larger than the average for the Entente divisions.

329English Official History - "Macedonia", Vol. II, p. 133.

anticipated the upcoming operations with confidence. They hoped that, although the enemy might penetrate their fortifications here and there, the thrust would be checked along one of the rear positions.

Meanwhile Franchet d'Esperey was eagerly awaiting permission to attack from the inter-allied supreme command. He counted on sure success because at the decisive point he'd achieved considerable numerical superiority in troops and equipment for his surprise offensive. In fact, along the opposing lines on the Dobro polje there were 16 Bulgarian battalions with 54 guns against 46 Serbian and French battalions with 580 guns; in the adjacent sector to the west (between the Moglena and the eastern Cerna), the 33,000 Bulgarian riflemen were also outnumbered by 56,000 Frenchmen and Serbians.

Thus the situation was extremely tense in Macedonia by mid-September. Only the concurrence of the Entente's inter-allied war council was needed to unleash a desperate battle which would have extraordinary importance and effects.

C. Events in the East through mid-September 1918

1. The Eastern Army in Ukraine

a. Military developments from June to mid-September

Ukraine remained a tinder-box, where fighting never stopped completely. At the end of May a battle had developed on the lower Don between the Germans and the Bolsheviks; it lasted into June, and also involved the k.u.k. FJB 3. Then the enemy brought strong forces from Yeisk (east of the Sea of Azov) into the area held by Knoerzer's German Corps and shipped several thousand more men over near Taganrog. But by committing seven battalions, seven squadrons and nine batteries G.Lt Knoerzer inflicted an annihilating defeat upon the Red fighters on 13 June, and drove them back into the sea. FZM Braun sent Aus-Hung. detachments from Mariupol to support the Germans, but only the artillery arrived in time to see action.

The majority of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, including the best ships, had sailed to Novorossisk. The Germans issued an

ultimatum to the Soviet regime, demanding that the Fleet should return to Sevastopol. Here the vessels would be disarmed and eventually returned to the Russian state after a general peace was concluded. Parts of the force, in which the personnel still obeyed their officers, did re-enter the Sevastopol harbor on 19 June; some ships even were flying the old battle standard (the St Andrew's cross). The vessels which stayed at Novorossisk were scuttled, as the Bolsheviks had ordered in secret instructions which were supposed to be followed by the entire fleet.³³⁰ Thus ended the threat which the Russian Navy had posed to the Black Sea coastal areas occupied by the Central Powers.

All of the remaining Polish units were dissolved. But in the interior the occupation forces had to continue small-scale warfare against partisans or rebellious peasants; there was no rest for the command HQ. To end the uncertainty which was leading to the destruction of life and property, on 1 June the HQ of the Eastern Army followed the example of Eichhorn's Army Group by placing the Aus-Hung. territories under the authority of military courts; they imposed martial law in the Cherson and Ekaterinoslav Governments. Small detachments sent to disarm villagers or to protect food shipments were often attacked by resistance forces. Thus 70 men from a squadron of Hon HR 1 were massacred at the start of June in the sector of 5 Hon CD. Although such incidents were punished with bloody reprisals, the assaults upon officers, military police and patrols did not decrease. The HQ of 7 CD sent some battalions and batteries to clear the partisans out of the area north of Elizavetgrad. The HQ of XVII Corps, with help from the neighboring XXV Corps, carried out a full-scale encirclement operation against dissidents north of Olviopol in the second half of June, employing 10 battalions and 4 ½ batteries. But the results of such large operations, in comparison with the force exerted, were disappointing. Since it took some time to get the troops ready, the partisans meanwhile were able to escape or disperse; then they came together and resumed their mischief after the soldiers departed.

Substantial forces were still required to carry out the various tasks assigned to the garrisons. As promised, the high command returned to the Eastern Army the majority of the units which their divisions had detached for Assistenz service (Bn I/58, FJB 1, IR 66 and several squadrons). But these troops didn't

330Monasterev, "Vom Untergang der Zarenflotte" (a German translation of a Russian original text; Berlin, 1930), pp. 144 ff. Hopman, pp. 292 ff. Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", p. 528.

represent a substantial reinforcement, since other units meanwhile were departing. Thus in May FJB 15 of 59 ID had already been sent to Galicia. FJB 26 remained in the interior. In the extreme eastern part of the Aus-Hung. zone, the area around Bachmut had to be relinquished to the Germans at the end of June. To garrison the area which 34 ID left to move to the Italian front, in July GM Graf Lubienski's 4 CD arrived by train from the 4th General Command.³³¹ XII Corps was reduced to 15 ID and 5 Hon CD; the eastern half of the Ekaterinoslav Government, along with the coastal sector, was now placed under FZM Habermann's XI Corps HQ (re-created from the HQ of the defunct 7th General Command). On 17 July this general took charge at Mariupol, from which he led 59 ID and 4 Cavalry Division. An uprising broke out a week later in this harbor city, but was soon suppressed.

At the end of July and start of August, peasant unrest in western Podolia troubled XXV Corps and the neighboring 4th General Command. On 30 July GFM Eichhorn, commanding the German occupation forces, was assassinated at Kiev. His successor was the Prussian GO Graf von Kirchbach, whose HQ thereafter were called "Army Group Kiev." The Ukrainian railroad personnel went on strike for several weeks, until mid-August; complete disruption of the transportation network was prevented only by military force. Raids on stretches of track and moving trains, as well as the never ending partisan activity, again proved that the spirit of defiance and resistance against the Central Powers was constantly growing throughout the country and manifesting itself in a great variety of forms. Obviously representatives of the Entente powers had a hand in this. To limit their intrigue, the HQ of the Eastern Army expelled their consuls from Odessa. But Jassy, where Entente diplomats were still accredited to the Romanian court, was a hotbed of enemy propaganda, from which their emissaries could easily enter Ukraine.

At the end of August GdI Krauss found himself compelled to extend martial law against the enemies of the state to the entire area occupied by his Army. On 31 August a large Russian ammunition dump blew up in Odessa. This "accident", which apparently had been planned, caused the loss of 200 Aus-Hung. soldiers and an equal number of horses.

The unrest in our own ranks, which would have such a tragic impact on the Central Powers in autumn, was already starting to become apparent. When IR 95 of 11 ID began their journey to the

331IR # 93 of 34 ID, which had been detached at Kiev, stayed there and didn't accompany the Division to Italy.

Southwestern front at the start of August, there was agitation among the personnel (who mostly came from eastern Galicia). Soon afterwards men from the Stanislau SchR 20 refused to obey when their 43 Sch Div of the 4th General Command was ordered to leave the Bessarabian border for the Italian front. To suppress the disturbance, a battalion of the Hungarian 34 ID, passing through the area by train, had to be deployed against the mutineers. When the 43rd Div did depart for Italy, they had to leave behind the two regiments of 85 Inf Bde - SchR 5 (from the coastal lands) and 16 (from Cracow). These units traded places with SchR 29 and 30 and thus joined 54 Sch Div, which was staying in the Eastern Army. Southwest Battalions # 5 and 8 were sent from Wallachia to join 155 Hon ID.

For some time the high command had recognized that as the overall situation became more critical they would have to neglect the East. In mid-August GdI Krauss was ordered to move FJB 3 from Rostov to join the main body of his force; they were assigned to a group under Rtm. Archduke Wilhelm who was commanding the Ukrainian Legion of XVII Corps. At the end of the month IR 103 left 59 ID to transfer to the Southwest; they were to be replaced by IR 113, but until the arrival of the 113th a unit of 15 ID (IR 66) was attached to XI Corps. Wulff's naval detachment left the Black Sea to return to their normal station on the Danube River. Their vessels arrived at Braila on 12 September.³³²

b. The economic exploitation of Ukraine

Conclusion of peace with Ukraine offered the Central Powers an opportunity to take advantage of the country's rich natural resources and to alleviate their own economic problems. After long negotiations, in February Austria-Hungary and Germany had agreed to collect goods in a combined effort and to divide them according to pre-arranged plans.³³³ Naturally it would take some time before this measure could affect the economy. But meanwhile the food shortage was becoming an emergency in the interior of the Danube Monarchy. Responding to demands by the high command, after half of the allotted territory had been occupied but long before it had been pacified the HQ of 2nd Army instructed the

332Wulff, pp. 167 ff.

333Krauss and Glingenbrunner, "Die Besetzung der Ukraine 1918" in Kerchnawe's "Militärverwaltung", pp. 361 ff. Gratz and Schüller, "Die äussere Wirtschaftspolitik Österreich-Ungarns" (in the Carnegie publication, Aus-Hung. series; Vienna, 1925), pp. 169 ff. Landwehr, pp. 172 ff. and 196 ff.

troops under XXV and XVII Corps to start purchasing grain. Further negotiations took place at Kiev between the two Empires and Ukraine, leading to an agreement in April under which the new state pledged to deliver to the Central Powers by 31 July a million tons of grain (or baked products), legumes, linseed and fodder. They would also provide a fixed amount of other foods and raw materials. Some of these goods would also go to Bulgaria and Turkey in response to their demands. In return the Ukrainians would receive high-quality industrial products, but also coal and mineral oil even though the Central Powers themselves were short of the latter items. Germany and Austria-Hungary created a common "Central Economic Office" at Kiev which would obtain food from the Ukrainian agricultural ministry and pay for it under certain guidelines. Because this process was being centralized, 2nd Army HQ had to refrain from further efforts to procure food in their own area of responsibility. Meanwhile the population of the Danube Monarchy had gained no relief from the "bread-peace."

Emperor Charles had hesitated to march into Ukraine, and earnestly wanted the operation to bear fruit. When the Monarch sent GdI Krauss to Odessa as leader of the Eastern Army, he wanted him to have dictatorial power. The instructions issued to the Army commander granted him the following rights: "Unrestricted, complete power to meet his goals and decisive influence in all economic negotiations concerning Ukraine." But in fact the General's authority within the territory occupied by the Austro-Hungarians was far from unrestricted; it was limited by many considerations and stipulations.³³⁴ In the days after GdI Krauss' appointment the Viennese Foreign Ministry, under the pressure of economic necessity and the need to hold out until the next harvest, agreed in Berlin to a new treaty with the German Empire. This allowed our more efficient partner to play the leading role in exploiting Ukraine until 15 August. Thus the Germans secured access to grain here, and also in Romania.

After several weeks on the job GdI Krauss reported his observations to Baden and requested the high command to provide clear guidelines concerning the goals which the Monarchy was pursuing in Ukraine. After also getting input from the Ballhausplatz, GO Arz responded on 18 August. He pointed out the "domestic differences" between Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Germans had national solidarity and substantially larger economic strength, while we were handicapped by the competing aspirations of the nationalities and by a much smaller economic base. Thus the Monarchy was compelled to fight merely to maintain its

334Krauss, "Ursachen", pp. 256 ff.

current status and to take just gradual, systematic measures to enhance its strength. Any attempt to intervene in world-wide power politics was doomed from the start. Thus only realistic, short-range goals could be pursued in Ukraine. For political and economic reasons the principal objectives were:

- . to reinforce the concept of Ukrainian independence, so that no Great Power would again emerge as our eastern neighbor for a long time;
- . to redress some of our shortage of food and raw materials; and
- . to guarantee lasting economic influence (also after the war) in the southwestern parts of Ukraine and in Odessa.

Good relations should be maintained with the Germans. There was no question of setting up a military administration; the Army was to support the friendly Ukrainian government.

At the start of July the high command, which wanted to be forcefully represented at Kiev, sent GM Graf Spannocchi there as its "plenipotentiary General." Before the war he'd served as the k.u.k. military attaché in St Petersburg and was familiar with Russian conditions.

Since the Central Powers were treating the young and unstable Ukrainian regime as an independent state, they were always obliged to obtain their objectives through extended negotiations, whose results were enshrined in voluminous protocols. The Kiev government sought to gain advantages and increase their influence through these diplomatic contests. They offered to generously provide large quantities of goods, but couldn't fulfill their promises because their country lacked an orderly administration; the transportation network was ruined and the political situation was uncertain. These conditions made long-range planning impossible. In July representatives of Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Hetman's government established a Ukrainian "Food Council" and a "Council of Grain Control." Various branch offices and purchasing commissions were subordinated to these councils. If goods couldn't be obtained by voluntary purchase or exchange, they would be taken forcefully with the help of the occupying armies. The work began at the end of August. There were many difficulties in the way; the Bolsheviks and agents of the Entente were operating in secret and found considerable support among the population, especially since the prospects of the Central Powers in the East were now cloudy as their military fortunes sank on the decisive battlefields. As food was brought in, it was used first to supply the great cities and industrial area of the Donets basin, and then the occupying troops. The remaining amounts were to be shipped to the countries of the

Quadruple Alliance. The enterprise seemed to be efficiently established, but never was fully operational. Yet another economic agreement was signed in September and scheduled to last until mid-1919, but it too never came into effect.

Individual members of the Austro-Hungarian Army of the East bought food and sent it to families and friends back home in lively postal traffic. But only officers and the more affluent enlisted men could afford to do so, since the cost of living and of food products in particular was very high in Ukraine. Therefore this form of "help" to the homeland embittered the majority of the soldiers, who lacked the means to participate, and played into the hands of the agitators who were seeking to undermine military discipline.

According to official figures published by Graf Czernin in 1919, the total imports from Ukraine between spring and November 1918 included 46,225 tons of grain and flour, 11,157 tons of legumes, fodder and seeds, 55,421 cattle and 40,027 horses.³³⁵ Of course additional items on a smaller scale were sent home by individuals through the mail. A much larger amount of goods, around 150,000 tons, were brought over the Ukrainian borders by smugglers; this estimated total includes goods which went to all the lands of the Quadruple Alliance.

The hungry population of Austria-Hungary, as well as their governing circles, were disappointed by the results of the "Bread-Peace." Much more had been expected, based on the promises of the Ukrainians, and no improvement in the situation was noticed. In fact, however, the food from Ukraine along with items obtained elsewhere did help keep the Monarchy going. At first glance it seems that any advantage was dearly bought by the need to keep strong forces in the East as a garrison during the decisive year of the war. Furthermore, the assistance rendered to a friendly regime led to some painful casualties and exposed the Aus-Hung. divisions to the systematic propaganda of the Bolsheviks and Entente agents.

335The precise statistics can be found in Czernin's "Im Weltkrieg", pp. 345 ff., and in Krauss' and Glingenbrunner's "Die Besetzung der Ukraine", pp. 389 ff. These sources indicate that the economic benefits gained in Ukraine - at least statistically - were far less than expected based on the size and resources of the country. In 1916 (a year in which the harvest wasn't particularly good) the k.u.k. military government of a much smaller country, Serbia, exported 47,680 tons of food stuffs (not counting rough fodder), 50,891 cattle, etc.

Ludendorff nevertheless responded to critics that the only direction in which the Central Powers could break through the suffocating blockade was through the East. The Danube Monarchy absolutely had to find new sources of food. Germany also intended to secure a route through Ukraine to the oil of Baku, since the supplies available in Romania and Galicia were insufficient. The economic measures taken in 1918 weren't merely a temporary expedient but also were designed to address the needs of the following year. The economic crisis made it necessary to accept military disadvantages, such as the commitment of major forces.³³⁶ The German OHL were careful to station mostly units of the lowest quality in the East. The Aus-Hung. high command also took combat effectiveness into consideration when selecting divisions for this theater, and sent their heavy field artillery regiments to active fronts.

Thus after weighing the usefulness of the operation in Ukraine we come to the conclusion that its objectives were correct. But the Central Powers had incorrectly anticipated greater and quicker advantages, while underestimating the difficulties they faced. Thus their organization proved unequal to the task at hand.

2. Protection of the Monarchy's eastern borders and the Romanian question (June to mid-September)

Since mid-June the eastern border of the Monarchy in Transylvania was guarded by the 1st General Command. The adjacent border in Bukovina and Galicia was covered by the 4th General Command, to which part of the Military Government in Poland - the area in Volhynia around Vladimir-Volynsky - was also subordinated. It was possible to significantly reduce the number of field troops employed on border defense and in garrisons. In July the 4 CD left to join the Eastern Army in Ukraine, and 2 ID which had been serving just over the border on Volhynian soil moved to the Southwest. Also 49 Inf Bde followed the rest of the Vienna 25 ID. On the other hand, 4th General Command was assigned 1 CD, which had been unsuccessful on the Italian front and now was split up along the eastern border. Southwest Battalions # 1, 2 and 6 were still available for Volhynia, where they were placed under the "Etappen Group Command Vladimir-Volynsky." The 1st

336Ludendorff, "Kriegsführung und Politik", pp. 234 ff., and also "Kriegserinnerungen", pp. 503 ff. and 531. See also Kuhl, "Entstehung, Durchführung und Zusammenbruch der Offensive von 1918" (Berlin, 1927), pp. 16 ff.

Ukrainian Cossack Rifle Division had been formed here; at the end of August it was moved into Ukrainian territory and subordinated to the Hetman. Two other Ukrainian divisions, formed by the Germans, had meanwhile been dissolved.

When 43 Sch Div left the East in August, their former task of guarding against the Romanians in the corner of Bessarabia (from Novosielica to Mogilev) was assigned to the 187 Lst Inf Bde. This Brigade was reinforced by three more k.k. Landsturm battalions (39, 42 and 75); three others had already been relinquished by 4th General Command in July to move to Albania. IR # 203 stayed in Bukovina. In September eastern Galicia was re-assigned to the Lemberg [XI] District Military HQ; henceforth the 4th General Command controlled only the area south of the Dniester as far as the Transylvania border (including the corner of Bessarabia), plus the Vladimir-Volynsky Etappen Group in the north. At the end of September the high command ordered that the Ukrainian Legion should leave the area of the Eastern Army and move to Bukovina, but the Legion didn't reach Galician soil (on the Zbrucz) until the end of October.

In August the 1st General Command gave up 37 Hon ID for the Western theater of operations. The watch against Romania was maintained by IR 204, two Honved Trachom battalions, and two k.k. Landsturm Battalions (# 17 and 148) shifted from the 4th General Command. On 1 September the HQ of 1st General Command were abolished and their duties assigned to the [XII] Military District HQ at Hermannstadt.

Wallachia was still occupied by the Central Powers. Here in summer the 16th General Command was created to lead the Aus-Hung. troops, under FML Graf Salis-Seewis the former commander of the dissolved 92 ID. His HQ were established in Pitesci, and most of the troops were stationed in the surrounding districts. Separate from this group, the 143 Inf Bde held a sector on the western bank of the Sereth. The Austro-Hungarian part of the inter-allied garrison in Bucharest (the capital and the HQ of Mackensen's Army Group) consisted of the staff of the k.k. 121 Lst Inf Bde with Lst IR 409.

In the high summer the two empires hardened their attitude toward the Kingdom of Romania. Under the Bucharest treaty the Romanians were obliged to disarm their army, but were doing so only reluctantly.³³⁷ Furthermore, ratification of the treaty was delayed since Marghiloman's pro-German cabinet had little backing within the country. But the Central Powers had a variety of

³³⁷Kiritzesco, pp. 428 ff.

reasons to wish that the May agreement should soon come into full effect. Only then would the provisions about improvements in our eastern borders and the exchange of prisoners be implemented; both issues were of great importance to the Aus-Hung. high command. The setbacks suffered by the quadruple alliance since June enhanced the influence of the Entente at Jassy, as public opinion throughout the country swung markedly in their direction.

On 17 August GO Arz received a letter from Ludendorff, warning against the possibility of a surprise armed uprising by the Romanians. Mackensen and Prince Leopold were ordered to prepare for a concentric advance by strong forces against Moldavia and Bessarabia. On the 22nd Arz instructed the Eastern Army and 16th General Command to take the necessary precautions in conjunction with the German HQ. At the end of the month the OHL revealed their specific plan. About five divisions (4 infantry and 1 cavalry) were to deploy in Podolia on the middle Dniester, with a weaker group (2 divisions) around Czernowitz. GO Arz intended that 187 Lst Inf Bde would join the latter group, while the Eastern Army held 3 divisions (2 infantry and 1 cavalry) in readiness in the area around Tiraspol. Mackensen's HQ intended to thrust north over the Sereth with 6 divisions.

Transylvania, which had been denuded of troops, now needed not only enhanced protection along the border but also a mobile force which could advance through the passes into Moldavia. The inhabitants of the border counties, who remembered the enemy invasion of two years earlier, were very concerned by rumors about a Romanian mobilization. GO Arz, himself a son of this province, was asked in writing to take measures to guard his endangered homeland. First IR 113, which had been sent into Ukraine, was diverted to Transylvania where it arrived in the first week of September. 216 Hon Inf Bde, which had been stationed in Wallachia, left Mackensen's command and was sent into the Haromszek. 1 CD was sent from Galicia into the Csik.

Meanwhile the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Admiral von Hintze visited the Aus-Hung. Foreign Minister Graf Burian at Vienna; they agreed to send identical notes demanding that the Romanian government should immediately and completely implement the peace treaty. Soon afterwards the OHL suggested that GFM Mackensen should pressure the Romanians to immediately fulfill their obligations, but Burian wouldn't agree to such a "unilateral" approach by the Field Marshal. Anyway the German HQ were just starting the planned military measures which would be needed to back up a demand by Mackensen with force. The situation urgently required a final decision. Soon the first

German troop trains were heading toward the deployment areas, and the Aus-Hung. commanders in the East requested Baden to send them orders. But events would take an unforeseen turn in mid-September.

VII. The End Approaches

A. *The tide turns on the German Western front*

1. The last German offensive, 15-17 July

Since March 1918 the German Western armies had delivered some hard blows against the English and French fronts, but still hadn't gained the decisive victory they were seeking. The overall high command of the enemy coalition, which now finally had been created under the iron pressure of need, could in substantial measure replace the enormous loses of men and equipment suffered by the Western powers. Also, the long-anticipated assistance on a decisive scale from the Americans was imminent.

The German strategy

One result of the penetration of the enemy front in Flanders and between the Aisne and the Marne was the creation of new danger points for the German Western armies. Parts of the front had been pushed considerably forward; after the departure of the assault divisions these sectors were held by units which had been reduced by casualties and unable to create a firm defensive position. However, it would be necessary to hold them against the expected envelopment maneuvers by enemy reserves which could be shifted to the most sensitive areas.

In this situation the German OHL were forced to make fateful decisions in Jure 1918. Falling back onto the defensive would entail the abandonment of terrain which had been gained at the cost of extremely high casualties³³⁸ and the expenditure of priceless resources; it would also severely shake the confidence of both the combat troops and the home front. The German leadership didn't want to surrender the initiative to the enemy. They also may have felt that they would suffer no heavier

338From March to June 1918 the Germans had lost 460,000 men.

(Stenger, "Der letzte deutsche Angriff - Reims 1918"
[Oldenburg, 1930], p. 7.)

casualties if they continued attacking than they would if they stayed on the defensive and relinquished any chance of success. The weakened German Army was still a formidable weapon on the offensive but was no longer in a condition to resist massive assaults as it had in the great battles of 1916 and 1917.³³⁹ Furthermore it was already clear that a campaign of attrition, in which the Germans stayed on the defensive, would ultimately be to the advantage of the enemy coalition. Because of the enormous exertions of the Entente and the accelerated arrival of the Americans the balance of forces on the Western front would soon shift against the German armies. The German commanders couldn't count on the support of equal forces from their own partners, whose armies were tied down on other fronts. In the not-too-distant future there would no longer be any chance of implementing a decisive assault in the West.

Based on these considerations the OHL decided that in this period while the tottering balance of forces was roughly equal they would continue to hammer at the enemy's front. They hoped that thus Germany might still win successes that would shake the opposing coalition's confidence and thus in the last possible moment achieve an end to the war without suffering defeat.

The decision would be sought against the English in Flanders, where the ports on the Channel were nearby targets. Once they fell the English coast would be within range of German long-range guns, which would keep Britain under continuous pressure. But since the enemy had assembled strong strategic reserves in this sector, the first attack would be conducted at another point so as to draw units away from Flanders. The fronts on both sides of Reims were selected as the most favorable location, and the offensive was scheduled to start around 10 July. Orders for this new operation were issued on 14 June.

Aus-Hung. units come to France

The offensive on the Aus-Hung. Southwestern front began on the next day. As we explained earlier, it didn't achieve the desired results. Already as of 16 June it seemed to the German OHL that it would be useless to keep attacking the Italians; they asked the k.u.k. AOK to stop the operation and to give up any forces that wouldn't be needed for purely defensive purposes. Emperor Charles finally agreed to transfer six divisions to the German Western front; but at first only two ID (the 1st and 35th) would

339Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", pp. 516 ff. Ludendorff stresses that by this time the German Army resembled a militia.

move to France, along with heavy artillery and construction units. The other divisions would follow at a later date.

The following was the order of battle of the force sent to France in July:

- XVIII Corps HQ** (FML Ludwig Goiginger; C/Staff = Col. Matsvanszky)
- . "Lines of Communication Office in the West" (Col. Edmund Ritter von Wallerstain)
- . 1st ID (FML Metzger); had about 8400 riflemen
 - . 1 Bde (GM von Budiner) - IR 5 (3), 61 (3)
 - . 2 Bde (GM von Hellebronth) - IR 112 (3); FJB 17, 25, 31
 - . Sturm Bn 1; 2nd Sqdn/HHR 10; SB 1
 - . 1 FA Bde (Col. Hubitscha) - FAR 1, 101; Hvy FAR 1, Mtn Arty Bn 1 (total batties = 4 fld can, 6 fld how, 5 hvy how, 1 hvy can [without guns], 2 mtn can, 1 mtn how, 1 tm, 1 flak)
- . 35th ID (FML von Podhoranszky); had about 10,500 riflemen
 - . 69 Bde (Col Guha) - IR 62 (3), 64 (3)
 - . 70 Bde (GM Funk) - IR 51 (3), 63 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 35; 6th Sqdn/HR 4; SB 35
 - . 35 FA Bde (Col Ritter von Sostaric) - FAR 35, 135; Hvy FAR 35, Mtn Arty Bn 35 (total batties = 4 fld can, 6 fld how, 5 hvy how, 1 hvy can [without guns], 3 mtn can, 1 tm, 1 flak)
- . Hvy FAR # 11, 54, 59 and 72 (each of 3 hvy how batties plus 1 hvy can batty without guns)
- . 1st & 2nd Batties (30.5 cm mor)/Hvy AR 9; 1st Batty (38 cm how)/Hvy AR 1; 13th Batty (42 cm how)/Hvy AR 8
- . Two balloon comps
- . Also 35 March inf comps along with Ersatz formations for the artillery and sapper bns, and 15,000 Russian prisoners of war
- . Several supporting offices

The Aus-Hung. heavy artillery regiments began their journey by train on 4 July, followed by both divisions on the 8th. The latter joined Gallwitz's Army Group - 1 ID were assigned to the 5th German Army east of the Meuse and 35 ID to Army Detachment C southeast of Verdun. XVIII Corps HQ, which at first didn't have an assignment, came to Arlon. The German generals greeted the Aus-Hung. troops with respect, but the rank and file often called their allies "war-prolongers."³⁴⁰

The Second Battle of the Marne

Meanwhile the Army Group of the German Crown Prince were pressing forward energetically with preparations for the upcoming

340 Glaise-Horstenau, "Der Zusammenbruch" in Schwarte, Vol. V, p. 593.

operation on both sides of Reims. This attack presented a difficult challenge to the veteran troops. In the Army Group's center the 7th Army, whose western wing had been taken over by the HQ of 9th Army, were to cross the Marne upstream from Chateau-Thierry and to thrust toward Epernay. The 1st and 3rd Armies were stationed east of Reims; the western wing of their battle group also had Epernay as a goal, while the center would advance on Chalons-sur-Marne. With this pincers attack the German leadership hoped they could cause the fall of the strong enemy defensive installations around Reims and in the northern part of the Reims forest, which lay between the two sectors under assault, without striking them directly.

Based on intelligence received at the HQ of the French Generalissimo Foch, since the start of July he'd been expecting his opponents to strike the front between Chateau-Thierry and the Argonne Forest.³⁴¹ At this time the allied Western Powers were preparing for a large-scale counter-offensive.³⁴² The commander

³⁴¹Foch, Vol. II, p. 139

³⁴²The following summary of the units of the Western powers in France in mid-July 1918 is based on the French official history - Vol. VI, Part 2, p. 547 and Vol. VII, Part I, pp. 18 to 27.

. France - 103 ID and foot CD, 6 mounted CD. 76 of the ID and dismounted CD were at the front; 6 CD and 27 ID/foot CD were in reserve. Of the latter 27 units, 10 were fully battle-ready, 8 had just been rebuilt and 9 were being rehabilitated. The Polish and Czecho-Slovakian auxiliary troops are counted in the French total. Total French strength was 1,675,000 men, 5933 field guns, 5355 heavy guns, 3250 planes and 780 tanks.

. Britain - 59 ID and 3 CD. 37 of the ID were at the front; 20 ID and all 3 CD were in reserve, while 2 more ID were just arriving in France. Total British strength was 1,166,000 men, 4198 field guns, 2167 heavy guns, 1700 planes and 720 tanks.

. America - 23 ID, of which 8 were at the front, 9 in reserve and 5 in training; finally there was 1 Negro ID split up under French command. Total American strength was 618,000 men, 864 field guns, 528 heavy guns and 300 planes. (Tanks attached to the US forces are counted in the British total above.)

. Belgium - 12 ID and 1 CD; 9 ID were at the front, 3 ID and the 1 CD in reserve. Total Belgian strength was 123,000 men, 486 field guns, 273 heavy guns and 100 planes.

. Italy - 2 ID, both at the front. Numerical strength included in the French totals, above.

. Portugal - 2 ID, both in reserve. Numerical strength included in the British totals, above.

. GRAND TOTALS - 201 ID and foot CD, 10 mounted CD. At the

of the French armies, General Pétain, had already on 14 June received orders for a thrust into the area west of Soissons so that he could cut off this important railroad junction, through which most of the supplies traveled on their way to 7th German Army on the Rhine. At the same time the bulge in the German front by Chateau-Thierry would also be hit by a strong attack from the west, where the deployment would be covered by the woods of Villers-Cotterets, and by a thrust from the area southeast of Reims.³⁴³ Preparations for this operation weren't halted due to the imminent German offensive, since Foch was completely confident that he had taken sufficient measures to thwart his opponents. Between the Oise and the Argonne he'd assembled a strong strategic reserve of 38 infantry and 6 cavalry divisions, which would be sufficient not only for defensive purposes but also for the planned counter-thrusts. Foch now intended to start his assault, with its ambitious goals, immediately after the German offensive.³⁴⁴

Thus the German Western armies would operate under significant disadvantages during their great attack. The offensive wouldn't be a surprise, and it wouldn't be striking a weak sector which lacked reserves. These drawbacks would by themselves have sufficed to make success questionable. And the enemy would have another advantage, since they were implementing tactics for an elastic defense which General Foch had been advocating since the end of 1916.

East of Reims the 4th French Army in Champagne based their defense on the second prepared position, which was on average about 3 km behind the foremost line. During the first half of July the majority of the infantry and artillery pulled back, undetected by the Germans, to this principal defensive network.³⁴⁵ The units left behind in the first position and the intervening area to cover the withdrawal were supposed to delay the attackers' penetration for as long as possible. Mobile

front were 132 ID and foot CD; in reserve were 61 ID and foot CD, 10 mounted CD. 5 American ID were still in training and 1 other had been split up. 2 British ID were just arriving in France. Numerical strength was 3,591,000 men, 11,481 field guns, 8323 heavy guns, 5350 planes and 1500 tanks. At this time the German forces on the Western front had 209 ID and CD, 10,800 field guns, 7300 heavy guns, and 3000 planes (per Stenger, "Der letzte deutsche Angriff", p. 45).

³⁴³French official history, Vol. VII, Parts 1 and 2.

³⁴⁴Foch, Vol. II, p. 142

³⁴⁵French official history, Vol. VI, Part 2, p. 462

batteries, frequently rotated, fired from the original deployment points. The successful and large-scale deception measures proved that the troops in the area had high morale and knew how to keep secrets.

On 15 July the Army Group of the German Crown Prince attacked along a 120 km front with 47 divisions, supported by 2000 batteries.³⁴⁶ East of Reims the 1st and 3rd Armies remained pinned down in front of the French main line of resistance, which they were unable to overcome despite self-sacrificing assaults in which they suffered heavy casualties. Before being able to advance here the Germans would have to carry out time-consuming preparations, including above all a re-deployment of their artillery. And there was a possibility that afterwards the French would just once more dodge the blow with their new elastic tactics.

On the Marne the 5th French Army couldn't give up their front, which lay directly behind the river barrier, and thus they were also unable to implement the new tactical system. Here the 7th German Army managed to carry out the difficult passage of the river, despite heavy enemy fire, thanks to the self-sacrifice of the pioneers. The attackers penetrated deeply into the enemy's trench network, where they engaged in hard fighting with the II Italian Corps as well as French troops.

The crossing of the Marne and the advance of 7th Army toward Epernay on 15 and 16 July 1918 were undoubtedly among the finest achievements of the German Army in the World War. But despite this partial success, the Germans couldn't overcome the resistance of their opponents, which increased by the hour as substantial fresh forces entered the action. The battle had to be broken off on 17 July so that the shock divisions could be released for Flanders; not even the tactical objectives had been achieved.³⁴⁷ But the OHL were convinced that they'd succeeded in drawing significant parts of the French strategic reserves into the area on the Marne and in Champagne, so that the transfer of units to Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group for the planned offensive in Flanders could commence.

However, the OHL were acting under a fateful misconception. General Foch had indeed been obliged to request four divisions from the British commander-in-chief, but only two of them

³⁴⁶On this part of the front General Foch had available 42 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions; 4 divisions were coming up (Stenger, "Der letzte deutsche Angriff", p. 50).

³⁴⁷Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 382

actually moved to the south bank of the Marne. No other units left Flanders. And even at critical times during the battle the commanders of the Western Powers hadn't been obliged to keep the fight going on the heavily-engaged Marne front by committing many of the troops who were getting ready for the counter-thrust between the Aisne and the Marne.³⁴⁸ The next act would take place here rather than in Flanders.

348Just one infantry division had to be shifted from this force to the area south of the Marne (French official history, Vol. VI, Part 2, p. 507).

2. The Entente counter-attack, 18 July-14 August

Foch's thrust in the Marne sector

The planned offensive by Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group in Flanders never materialized because Foch started his counter-thrust on 18 July. The Entente plan featured a pincers attack against the advanced part of the German front between the Aisne and the Marne. On the western flank of this sector the French and Americans had already secured favorable jumping-off points in the last few weeks. From here the inner wings of the French northern and central army groups attacked on 18 July in two strong groups. American divisions had been incorporated into the attacking armies. The main assault was delivered by 10th French Army, which had 18 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions. The adjacent force to the south, 6th French Army, accompanied the attack with 8 infantry divisions.³⁴⁹ For the time being operations against the southern front of the bulge in the German lines were restricted to small-scale local thrusts, because the French armies of the Central Army Group between the Marne and Reims had just endured difficult defensive fighting and thus weren't in shape to sustain an offensive of their own.

In the western part of the endangered bulge in the German line were units of 9th Army and of the western wing of 7th Army, a total of 18 divisions; all of them were worn down and some were also weakened by the influenza epidemic. Despite offering very stubborn resistance, they weren't able to hold their incomplete positions against an overwhelming tank assault.³⁵⁰ In the first day of the battle the enemy penetrated the lines in some points to a depth of eight kilometers.³⁵¹ Contrary to their usual practice, the French had started to attack simultaneously with the fire of their heavy artillery. The creeping barrage was followed closely by infantry assault troops and many tanks.

To help the hard-fighting units build a new defensive front, the troops who were being transported to Flanders turned back. Nevertheless the situation of the Germans in the Marne sector was critical. This was especially true for 7th Army on the south

349Stenger, "Schicksalswende. Von der Marne bis zur Vesle 1918" (Oldenburg, 1930), pp. 14 ff. These two armies had 1100 field guns, 1005 medium and heavy guns, 493 tanks and 1143 planes.

350Krafft, "Der Durchbruch" (Hamburg, 1937), pp. 395 ff.

351Guderian, "Kraftfahrkampftruppen" in "Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau" (Berlin, 1936), 1st Issue, p. 62.

bank of the river, since on the first day of the battle it already was becoming questionable whether they could continue to get supplies through Soissons. Therefore the German leadership had to choose the bitter course of evacuating the territory between the Aisne and the Marne, which had been contested in so many bloody actions.

On 19 and 20 July the French and Americans continued their attacks with undiminished strength. Nevertheless the Germans were able to check the enemy after giving up just a little ground. At the same time the troops south of the Marne disengaged from their opponents and pulled back behind the river. In the night of 23-24 July the Germans began a retreat in stages north of the Marne; it ended on 3 August when they occupied their old position between the Aisne and Reims.

The French General Staff calculated that the German Western armies had lost 29,000 men as prisoners, plus 800 guns, more than 200 trench mortars, and 3700 machine guns.³⁵² Much more damaging was the fact that with this battle the enemy had seized the initiative. On 20 and 21 July the OHL ordered the cancellation of preparations for the attack in Flanders. The German offensives in the West came to an end, and "thus 18 July marked the fateful turning point of the war."³⁵³

Because of the sudden changes in the West, the German OHL increased their pressure on the AOK at Baden to release more units for the front in France. But on 19 July when Ludendorff asked which divisions would follow the ones already committed, the AOK replied that the situation in Venetia was so ominous that it was even impossible to rotate worn-out units out of the front lines; thus for now they couldn't give up any forces. They wouldn't consider sending more units to the West until mid-August. At this time the Army of the Aus-Hung. Monarchy was finding it much more difficult than the German Army to replenish the ranks with replacement troops. The critical shortage of food and clothing had assumed ever more dangerous proportions since winter. Losses suffered in the June battle couldn't be fully replaced. It's understandable that under these circumstances all forces on the Italian front had to stay there. Therefore on 23 July when the OHL requested that due to the crisis in the West the schedule for sending the next two divisions to France should be accelerated, they were again unsuccessful.

³⁵²But these figures included 181 guns and 393 machine guns which had previously been seized from the French (French official history; Vol. VII, Part 1, p. 161).

³⁵³Stenger, "Schicksalswende", p. 226

Enemy assaults expanded on a broad front

Heavy fighting in France continued in August, intensifying into great battles on a broad front.

General Foch was awarded a Marshal's baton for his success on 18 July. On the 24th he assembled the national commanders under his authority - General Pétain, Marshal Haig and General Pershing - at his HQ to tell them his plans for the continuing operations. He emphasized that the time had come when forces along the entire front, hitherto compelled to stay on the defensive due to numerical inferiority, could open a general offensive.³⁵⁴ Thus the German lines would be continuously battered. In a memorandum prepared to outline plans for attacking in the West, Foch designated as the next objective the freeing of two principal railroad lines (Paris-Avricourt and Paris-Amiens), which were still under German pressure and which would be needed as the fighting developed. The Americans, who now would concentrate at the front as a distinct army, were to capture the German positions at St Mihiel. The English would put an end to the threats against the Channel ports and, together with their allies, recover the industrial areas of northern France.

The most urgent task was to improve the situation near Amiens, where since April the Germans had continued to threaten the links between the British Army and the French front, while keeping the important railroad center of Amiens under fire. On 17 July Marshal Haig had already suggested a counter-thrust in this part of the front, between Albert and the Oise. The operation would be carried out, under the overall leadership of the British, by the 4th English Army and the adjacent 1st French Army to the south. Details were worked out on 26 July in a meeting between Foch, Haig and the army commanders.

All signs indicated that chances for success were favorable in the area chosen for this attack, the blood-soaked terrain where the Somme battles had been fought. Here since April the second class divisions of the German 2nd Army had been unable to construct substantial defensive installations to protect the ground that had been captured. These weakened units, engaged in constant skirmishes with enemy forces that were much larger and better equipped, were exhausted. As long as the Germans intended to shortly resume the attacks in Flanders, the situation didn't seem dangerous; Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group expected to be reinforced by well-armed shock divisions. But the Army

354Foch, Vol. II, p. 164

Group's prospects took a turn for the worse when the high command canceled the attack in Flanders while the heavy fighting between the Marne and Aisne consumed the majority of the reserve units. If the enemy attacked on the Somme there might be a crisis.

The enemy correctly noted the weakness of the defenders.³⁵⁵ They assembled strong forces - 19 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions with 2680 guns, 646 tanks and more than 500 planes - to attack on a front of 18 km. The high command of the Western Powers could look forward to certain victory over the 10 weak German divisions stationed here.

And the attackers would have psychological as well as material advantages. The 2nd German Army had been unsuccessful in various engagements in the last few weeks. This factor, plus the complete control of the air which the English had won, gave their troops a feeling of unconditional superiority. The attacking units included 4 Canadian and 5 Australian elite divisions.

The decline in German combat effectiveness which the enemy had observed shouldn't be considered a peculiarity or failure of this one Army.³⁵⁶ After the heavy sacrifices of four years on the Western front and after the disappointments at the end of the first half of 1918, it's understandable that German soldiers who'd overcome enormous difficulties in the past were now flagging. The enemy's secret propaganda, intensified by self-destructive subversive activity in Germany itself, began to flow from the interior to the front through thousands of channels. The chief carriers of the infection were the inadequately-trained replacement troops and the former prisoners of war returning from Russia. Starting on the lines of communication, in some units there were significant signs of disintegration.

The enemy offensive near Amiens

The English 4th Army attacked at 4:20 AM on 8 August. Aided by thick fog, which was further enhanced by employing smoke grenades, large tank formations broke into the German lines as soon as the hurricane bombardment began; they were accompanied by infantry and followed by cavalry. The defenders had no overall picture of the action and their command control was disrupted. The thrust was successful, and on the first day penetrated the defenses to a depth of up to 12 km, while inflicting heavy losses in men and equipment. On the next day the 1st French Army

355Bose, "Die Katastrophe des 8 August 1918" (Oldenburg, 1930), p. 21

356Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 406

widened the breach in the lines toward the south. The Germans combined their 2nd, 18th and 9th Armies into a group under GO von Boehn, and by 12 August were able to temporarily seal off the penetration. But on this day there already was no doubt that the only hope for sustained resistance would be to make a stand along lines farther in the rear.³⁵⁷

The setback had a fateful impact on the German leadership in the West which did far more harm than the loss of ground. Therefore 8 August was designated the "black day of the German Army in the history of this war."³⁵⁸

The heavy loss of weaponry³⁵⁹ could be made good from the supplies which the OHL had stocked. But it was no longer possible to replace all the men killed and wounded, especially since this time a large number had also been taken prisoner³⁶⁰; the Germans' manpower shortage was now becoming an acute crisis. They had to disband ten divisions and then call up the draft class of 1900 (i.e. eighteen year-old men).

The decline in combat effectiveness of the German Western armies, clearly evident in the latest fighting, meant that the overall situation had taken a fatal turn.³⁶¹ Ludendorff offered his resignation, although it wasn't accepted. There was no prospect of improving the situation substantially with new attacks. The enemy had the initiative and their superiority increased from day to day.

After a Crown Council at Spa on 14 August, which will be described in another context, it was clear to the men responsible for leading the German people that they could no longer count on a victorious conclusion to the war which had raged for four years. The only hope was that by an active defense they might "gradually wear down the enemy's will to fight"; meanwhile efforts

357As the tanks attacked, many were knocked out of action...

- . On 8 August, 100 of 415 engaged
- . On 9 August, 39 of 145 engaged
- . On 10 August, 30 of 67 engaged.

(Figures in Krafft, "Der Durchbruch", p. 404. See also Eimannsberger, "Der Kraftwagenkrieg" [Munich, 1934].)

358Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", pp. 547 ff.

359The losses included 300 guns (Foch, p. 176)

360On 8 August alone the enemy reported they had taken 13,000 captives (Foch, p. 176).

361"Our combat instrument was no longer fully trustworthy." (Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", p. 551.)

should be made to start diplomatic negotiations.³⁶² From Austria-Hungary the German OHL wanted more divisions as reinforcements.³⁶³

3. Intervention of the North American Army, 15 August-15 September

After the United States of America declared war on Germany (on 6 April 1917), they first substantially increased their shipment of supplies to their allies. They also expanded their financial assistance and provided badly needed shipping, primarily by placing at the disposal of the allies the German steamers which had taken refuge in North American harbors and were now confiscated.

But in the course of 1917 and of spring 1918 the Western Powers also increasingly needed direct military help in France. Despite all the calls for help, the Americans could only deploy a limited number of men; they needed a year of preparation before a massive force would be available to decisively influence the course of the war. The conscription and training of troops were carried out systematically; the draft included German-Americans and even, despite inter-racial hatred, the Negro population. At the same time the Americans began to build up enormous supplies of military equipment in France, since once the mass shipment of men began all the vessels would be devoted to this purpose.

When the American commander-in-chief General Pershing landed in France in June 1917, he was accompanied by 16,000 men; they provided a token of the United States' moral support and initiated preparations for the mass deployment of their countrymen. By March 1918 there were seven divisions in France, while the total of American troops reached 330,000.³⁶⁴ Urgent appeals for assistance, which arrived in Washington from Europe continuously after March, caused troop movements to accelerate. Between May and October 1918 an average of 200,000 to 300,000

362 Poll, "Deutsches Schicksal 1914-1918" (Berlin, 1937), p. 370. Schwertfeger, "Das Weltkriegsende" (Berlin, 1927), 2nd Edition, pp. 92 ff.

363 Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 283

364 A large percentage of the Americans served on the lines of communication, in labor detachments, and in training camps. Of the seven divisions, just one was at the authorized full combat strength; three others were serving in quiet parts of the front, and the rest were still being trained (Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 401).

Americans arrived each month in France; a total of more than half a million men crossed the ocean on the confiscated German ships alone. Shipping capacity was thus stretched to the limit; soldiers could sleep only in shifts while they were on board.

Despite the unrestricted offensive by German submarines, not a single transport vessel was lost. The allies' newly-introduced defensive measures, especially the guarded convoy system, frustrated the Germans' hope that they could interrupt or damage the mass movement of soldiers over the Atlantic Ocean. By June 1918 there were already 900,000 Union troops in France, and the total was more than a million by the end of July. The Americans wanted to have two million men available by November, and to assemble the maximum force of four million by spring 1919.

Nine American divisions were already involved in the fighting on the Soissons - Chateau-Thierry - Reims front in July 1918. The strength of their units (an American division had around 28,000 men plus lavish equipment) and their fresh spirit compensated for their lack of experience, which however caused them to suffer relatively high casualties.

While the battle in northern France raged in August, preparations were made to concentrate the Americans in one sector, as General Pershing had always demanded.

Course of the fighting after 8 August

After the successful battle on the Somme, Marshal Foch urged that the advance should continue with great pressure. On 10 August the 3rd French Army were instructed to join the attack by 1st Army in Picardy. The battlefield continued to expand in the days which followed - in the north because of the thrust by 3rd British Army (south of Arras) toward Bapaume and Peronne, and in the south because of the assault by 10th French Army (east of the Oise) into the area Noyon-Soissons. And so the fighting flared up anew.

On 18 August the French were attacking between the Aisne and the Oise, followed on the 21st by the English between Arras and the Somme. On the 26th the British and Canadians began a stubborn onslaught along the Arras-Cambrai road. This heavy fighting, which extended almost without a break along a front of 150 km, led to substantial new losses of ground by the Germans. Thus on 2 September their supreme command were forced to order that between Arras and Soissons the defenders would pull back in stages to the old Siegfried position from 4 to 8 September.

Since they were also evacuating the bend in the line on the Lys, the Germans thus lost all of the terrain they'd seized during 1918.

Since a large part of the defensive front had to be withdrawn, the OHL were also compelled to quickly construct lines to the rear. They planned to create the following positions:

- . The Hermann-Hunding-Brunhild line³⁶⁵ from Bruges through Tournai and Valenciennes, then through the area north of Laon and Rethel into the Argonne Forest and to the Meuse north of Verdun;
- . The Antwerp-Meuse line; and
- . A position along the pre-war border.

Between Lille and Cambrai there was another fortification, the Wotan position, in front of the Hermann line; this position was linked northwest of Cambrai to the Siegfried line. Due to a lack of laborers and continuing enemy pressure, little could be done to prepare the new fortifications; the border position existed only on paper.

The Battle of St Mihiel

The enemy had long planned to strike the front near St Mihiel, where the Germans blocked the valley of the Meuse south of Verdun and threatened the railroad leading to the border of Lorraine.

Marshal Foch originally intended to attack with a battle group of 18 or 19 divisions. But by the end of August the successes won in northern France made it seem more advisable to extend the area under assault in the main offensive east as far as the Meuse.

The operation would include a strong thrust north along that river, involving French units plus a substantial part of the American troops.³⁶⁶

365 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Per Beilage 28, the "Siegfried" position was the part of the line from Bruges to the area north of Laon (running north-south) and the "Hunding-Brunhild" position made up the rest of the line (running west-east).

366 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The summary of enemy intentions here is so brief that it is misleading. The original plan was for a decisive offensive northeast through the St Mihiel sector toward Metz. Under the revised plan the forces assembled south of Verdun would instead push due north as part of a pincers maneuver (the other arm of the pincers was Haig's force, moving east). In the original text the next paragraph also fails to note the great difficulty with which Foch "won" Pershing over to the change. See Laurence Stallings, "The Doughboys" (New York, 1963), pp. 240-241.

Thus the St Mihiel offensive was reduced to a secondary operation. It would precede the massive assault down the Meuse, which was scheduled to start between 20 and 25 September so that after the salient was reduced there would be enough time to shift forces from St Mihiel toward the north. On 2 September General Pershing was won over to accept this change in plans. Then preparations were accelerated so that the attack of the 1st American Army could start on 12 September.

The great danger to this part of the front had been a concern for a long time to the German leadership. Army Detachment "C" of Gallwitz's Army Group, stationed between Verdun and the Moselle, were instructed on 9 September to voluntarily retreat to the "Michael Position", which had been constructed along the chord behind the arc of the salient. When the Americans started to attack three days later the withdrawal of equipment was still in progress, so that the fighting took place under the most unfavorable of circumstances.

The enemy commanders attacked both flanks of the salient so as to exert maximum pressure. Nine American divisions thrust from the south, with their eastern wing along the Moselle; from the area southeast of Verdun a corps of three divisions (2 American, 1 French) advanced over the Combres Heights to the Woëvre Plain. Opposite the tip of the salient was the II French Colonial Corps of three divisions. One American division was in the Army's reserve.³⁶⁷

Army Detachment "C" could resist this powerful stroke with only weak forces. Besides the six German divisions³⁶⁸ in their sector they also had an Aus-Hung. division; thus the Battle of St Mihiel was the first large-scale action on the Western front involving k.u.k. units.

During August the Aus-Hung. forces in France had been deployed at the front. On 21 August the three regiments of 1 ID took over Sub-Sector "Brabant" (north of Verdun); the Division's three Jaeger battalions made up an *ad hoc* regiment attached to 15 German ID, the neighboring unit to the east. In the first half of August the k.u.k. 35 ID had relieved a German division on the Combres Heights (west of Dompierre), and thus occupied a key post

³⁶⁷French official history, Vol. VII, Part 1, p. 297.

³⁶⁸Three of the German divisions were Landwehr units; one of the Reserve divisions had been worn out in earlier fighting, and another was composed of Alsatian troops who weren't fully reliable. The only active division was still in the process of re-building. (Kuhl, Vol. II, pp. 434 ff.)

during the St Mihiel battle. On 22 August FML Ludwig Goiginger's XVII Corps HQ were assigned the Ornes Sector north of Verdun, where they commanded two German divisions.

The area held by 35 ID had been provided with defenses laid out according to the latest tactical doctrines. However, it was also filled with installations prepared earlier in the war, some of them in a ruined condition. Thus the sector was a confusing maze of trenches, barbed wire barriers, strong points and barracks. Visibility was restricted by the wooded, hilly terrain. These conditions made it difficult to control large-scale actions, and were compounded by the length of the Division's front (more than 9 km) and the fact that the men were spread out also toward the rear as part of the ongoing withdrawal.

As scheduled, the 1st American Army struck near St Mihiel at 5:00 AM on 12 September, after four hours of artillery preparation involving 3000 guns. In their first onslaught they achieved deep penetrations into the flanks of the bulge in the German line. On the next day the battle groups advancing from the south and from the northwest joined forces along the base of the salient. However, the Germans were able to avoid encirclement, though at the cost of heavy casualties.³⁶⁹ They had slipped through the arms of the pincers in time and were able to occupy the position along the chord of the arc before the attackers arrived.

35 ID had been engaged in the northern part of the battlefield.³⁷⁰ When the action started they had four battalions [I and II/62, II/51, II/63] in the first line and two more [I/51 and III/62] stationed in the artillery position. The other six battalions, some of them far in the rear, were under the direct control of Army Detachment "C" HQ. The Division's northern wing, just like the adjacent 13 German LW ID³⁷¹, were soon pushed out of their foremost positions; the center at first were able to stand their ground. An immediate counter-thrust to recover the lost positions was canceled while it was still developing, since the situation had deteriorated. The enemy were winning further successes against the 13th Landwehr to the north, while to the south the adjacent German 192 ID started to retreat. GM Funk,

369The Americans reported the capture of 13,215 men and 460 guns.
(Foch, Vol. II, p. 204)

370TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The Division was opposed primarily by the French 2 Foot Cav Div (made up of permanently dismounted cuirassiers).

371TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original text mistakenly refers to this unit as the 13 Bavarian LW ID.

who was temporarily in charge of 35 ID³⁷², therefore decided to shift his available reserves to a back-up position and to withdraw the battalions fighting at the front to this line. Heavy casualties were suffered during the dis-engagement, especially on the southern wing where the retreat of the 192 ID enabled the enemy to envelop some of our troops. In the evening the k.u.k. 35 ID, like the Germans, pulled back as ordered into the "Michael Position"; the enemy didn't interfere with their movement.³⁷³ Casualties were 99 officers and 3268 men; 18 guns and 79 machine guns had been lost in hand-to-hand combat.³⁷⁴

More k.u.k. units come to France

The heavy fighting on the Western front in August and September naturally caused the German OHL to once more demand that their allies should send further reinforcements to this principal theater of operations. In a message to Baden on 29 August GFM Hindenburg noted that losses in the West were very high, and that in the interest of the common cause the Austrians should leave just enough divisions in Italy to carry out a purely defensive role. All forces not needed for this purpose should move to France. FM Boroevic was asked for his opinion by the Aus-Hung. high command and replied that he expected an Italian attack along the Piave in the near future. But if it was judged absolutely necessary by his superiors, he might be able to give up three divisions. 13 Sch Div was immediately available; 34 ID and 37 Hon ID required some further training. Because of the tense situation in the Southwest and the reduction in the troops' combat value due to the continuing supply crisis, the HQ at Baden couldn't bring themselves to denude the Italian front of all its reserves. Therefore on 2 September they ordered just 37 Hon ID to leave Venetia for the West. They also sent 106 ID, which had been traveling from the Polish Military Government toward south Tyrol; the Division's trains were now diverted to France.

GO Arz took this opportunity to describe to the German OHL how the Monarchy's units were currently distributed. There were 78 divisions (66 infantry and 12 cavalry), of which 10 were in Ukraine, 4 in the Balkans, 2 in the Monarchy's interior, 2 in

372 Divisional commander FML Podhoranszky was on leave.

373 Franek, "K. und k. truppen im Westen" in Mil. wiss. Mitt. (Vienna, 1931 edition - May and June issues)

374 Although 35 ID received special praise in the German army report of 13 September, it was unjustly criticized by Ludendorff when he wrote his memoirs ("Kriegserinnerungen", p. 573).

France, 2 in Romania and 58 in Italy. Within the latter force, 19 divisions had only a quarter to a half of their authorized strength; 9 divisions were infected with malaria and 7 were being trained. Therefore only 23 divisions of roughly full strength were available on this front. They were facing virtually the entire Italian Army, which was reinforced by English and French divisions. After winning the defensive battle and rebuilding their forces, the enemy were only waiting for a favorable moment to deliver their own attack.

The OHL acknowledged the difficulty of their allies' situation and thanked them for the imminent arrival of the two divisions. In a letter to Baden on 5 September Ludendorff expressed hope for further assistance as soon as circumstances permitted. But no additional troops would ever be sent.

This was the order of battle of the last two divisions to serve in the West (their Field Artillery Brigades were supposed to join them later):

- . 106th ID (FML Kratky) (around 10,200 riflemen)
 - . 210 Lst Bde (Col von Nechwatal) - k.k. Lst IR 31 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 211 Lst Bde (GM Pischely) - k.k. Lst IR 6 (3), 25 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 106; Res Sqdn/UR 1; 2 Comp/SB 16
 - . 4th Batty/FAR 206, 6th Batty/FAR 306
- . 37th Hon ID (FML Haber) (around 11,000 riflemen)
 - . 73 Hon Bde (Col von Farkas) - Hon IR 13 (3), 18 (3)
 - . 74 Hon Bde (GM von Pogany) - Hon IR 14 (3), 15 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 37; 5 Sqdn/HR 4; 1 Comp/SB 37

In general, both divisions were very poorly equipped. They arrived in France around mid-September. 106 ID were assigned to the Ornes Sector north of Verdun. 37 Hon ID joined the Army Group of Herzog Albrecht of Württemberg in Alsace; as part of the reserves of the OHL, they continued their training until the end of October. Finally, the HQ of IX Corps (under FML Schneider Edler von Manns-Au) arrived in Strassburg with a skeleton staff; they didn't receive a command assignment.

B. The Southwestern front in the high summer of 1918

1. The situation after the June offensive

The difficulty of supplying the Aus-Hung. Army became greater each day during summer 1918, thanks to the domestic-political and

economic decline of the Danube Monarchy. Nevertheless the k.u.k. high command didn't bend to the pressure which beset them on all sides after the failure of the June offensive. The AOK at Baden still didn't want to completely surrender the initiative to the enemy and therefore considered mounting a new attack between the Brenta and the Montello, perhaps in late autumn. Hopes that German troops might participate may have kept these plans alive. It was dubious whether a new offensive against Italy would ever take place. But it was expected that talking about an attack might keep up the spirit of the troops, who wouldn't be deprived of all hope that the situation would improve.

"This was also the reason," writes GM Pitreich³⁷⁵, "why the higher HQ in the field openly discussed such plans for the future. But they were quite cautious in their private deliberations and resolved not to elaborate these schemes until they were sure of the necessary logistical support. They weren't willing to embark on any more or less risky venture. They were fully aware of the seriousness of the situation."

Such was the attitude of the AOK when on 27 June they asked FM Boroevic's Army Group HQ to report on all the supplies which were available for the immediate future. At this time the staff in Udine, after the sad experience of the Piave battle, were certain that only an offensive with a restricted objective could offer any chance of success. Thus for example 6th Army might be able to advance past Mt Raniero if they operated in close coordination with a thrust east of the Brenta. Or perhaps a two-pronged attack might finally secure the contested Grappa massif. No consideration was given to repeating an assault over the Piave downstream from Nervesa.

On 2 July the AOK staff began to meet at Baden with the chiefs of staff of the two army groups regarding the future goals of the Southwestern armies. GM Waldstätten, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, explained that the Monarchy's political situation was untenable. What was to be done? We couldn't cease all operations along the fronts. The Chief of Staff of Boroevic's Army Group asserted that for now the main task was to give some rest to the worn-out and hungry troops. Any further plans would be dependent on the extent to which the armies received the necessary supplies. GM Waldstätten concurred with these observations and noted that a new offensive between the Brenta and the Montello couldn't be contemplated before late autumn. Austria-Hungary had 82 divisions available (70 infantry and 12

³⁷⁵At the time Anton Pitreich was Chief of Staff to Boroevic's Army Group (the quote is from his manuscript, "Piavefront").

cavalry). Of this total, at the start of July there were 10 divisions in Ukraine, 3 in Albania, 2 in Romania, and 1 in Volhynia. Six divisions were supposed to be placed under the German high command. The other 60 divisions were in the Southwest. GM Waldstätten calculated that of these 60 units, 15 were needed on Tyrol's western and southern fronts, 10 for the Piave front between Susegana and the sea, and 5 to serve as strategic reserves or occupation troops in Venetia. Thus 30 divisions could be available for an attack between the Brenta and the Montello, which the AOK believed was feasible.

Boroevic's Chief of Staff responded correctly that the issue was the condition rather than the number of divisions available for the attack. Their allotment of heavy artillery, ammunition, machine guns and modern trench mortars would have to be substantially increased, and the supporting airplanes reinforced. Above all sufficient food must be procured for the suffering soldiers. It would also be necessary to place the entire sector between the Brenta and the Piave under a single command. The AOK promised to supply the units as much as they could.

The Italian high command also had serious concerns after the Piave battle came to an end. Italy already was reaching the limits of its strength. Of the 5,000,000 men sent to the field, more than 470,000 had been killed since the war began, and more than 1,000,000 were wounded. In the last major action the Italian Army had lost 90,000 combatants. Nine-tenths of the divisions returning from the battlefield were worn out. It was becoming so hard to find replacement troops that the ranks could be filled only by revoking exemptions hitherto granted to men eligible for military service. The Italian high command also had recourse to drafting the class born in 1900, although they couldn't bring themselves to send the young soldiers to the front before their training was complete. Instead they wanted to use these recruits as replacements in spring 1919 if, as was still possible, the war lasted that long. The General Staff also believed that the Army's supplies had been so diminished in the recent fighting that a wide-ranging operation was precluded. Thus for now the main objective was to maintain the psychological edge that had been won on the Piave. The greatest concerns of the Italian high command were to replace the manpower they'd lost, to improve the logistical situation, to replenish the ammunition supplies and to reinforce the artillery. This would bring their capability of attacking to the highest possible level so they could carry out a decisive thrust. During this period of preparation the Italian commanders felt they should restrict their efforts to local operations. Hopefully they could thus pin

down and wear out their opponents while winning small-scale victories.³⁷⁶

2. Italian pinning attacks in the second half of July

10th Army sector

On Tyrol's western and southern fronts, the main battle grounds of FM Krobatin's k.u.k. 10th Army were subject to often quite destructive artillery bombardment. The guns of the Italian 7th and 1st Armies, firing day and night and switching their targets, pounded the lines on both sides of the Tonale Pass, in the Judicarien, near Riva and south of Rovereto. Enemy patrols also made numerous thrusts, most of them carefully prepared. But the only major Italian attacks were in the Tonale and Adamello sectors.

Here, within the command of GdI Archduke Peter Ferdinand's group, GM Richard Müller's 22 Sch Div guarded the positions on both sides of the Tonale Pass after 1 ID departed for the Western front. The northern wing of XX Corps (GdI Edler von Kalser) was still held by FML Edler von Steinhart's 49 ID, which defended the areas around the Presanella and Adamello glaciers as well as the Judicarien.

In the morning of 19 July the Italian artillery opened a heavy bombardment on both sides of the Tonale Pass and south of the upper Val di Genova; as the hours passed their fire was directed primarily against the positions of 22 Sch Div on the Pta. d'Albiolo, at the Tonale Pass itself, on the Monticello and on the crest of the Presena. Also targeted was the northern wing of 49 ID on the Stablel, the Crozzon di Lares and Corno di Cavento. Around 9:00 AM Italian detachments tried to attack the Presena crest, the Segni Pass and the Stablel, but were repulsed by our artillery fire. On the Corno di Cavento, however, their thrusts led to bitter infantry combat.

Here the principal cavern was damaged by heavy fire from trench mortars. The collapse of this cavern left the garrison - High Mountain Company 29 - without any protection from the ongoing bombardment, and they suffered heavy casualties. Nevertheless,

376 Dupont, "Vittorio Veneto" (Rome, 1929), pp. 9 ff. See also the "Report of the Italian High Command concerning the final offensive in the Southwestern theater of operations" (translated into German by Kerchnawe in "Zusammenbruch", pp. 182 ff.).

in stubborn fighting the defenders at first were able to hold off the Alpini detachments which advanced from the west and north. After renewed artillery fire and the commitment of fresh infantry the Italians were finally able to subdue the strong point on the summit and the remnants of the gallant garrison. Because of the prevailing fog and the heavy barrage it wasn't possible to bring reinforcements to the endangered sector for a quick counter-attack. GO Archduke Joseph, who on 21 July took Conrad's place in command of the Army Group, didn't think that the Corno di Cavento was an important enough position to justify continued fighting and the heavy casualties that it would entail.

On Tyrol's southern front, in the second half of July there were numerous minor actions in the Val di Daone, the Val dei Conci, the Riva sector, the Pasubio area and the Laghi basin, as well as on Mt Cimone. On 20 July some stronger Italian assault detachments attacked the positions of 56 Sch Div on the Zugna Torta ridge after an hour of artillery bombardment. The defenders checked the first enemy wave with hand grenades, and then forced them to fall back. The following waves were defeated by our artillery.

11th Army sector

In the sector of GO Scheuchenstuel's k.u.k. 11th Army the fighting didn't end with the loss of the Col del Rosso and Mt di Val Bella. On the Asiago plateau the Italians and especially their English and French allies attempted on an almost daily basis to win local successes in both small- and large-scale operations. Thus on 16 July, after strong artillery fire south of Asiago, two English companies temporarily penetrated the foremost lines of 10 CD. Two days later (early on 18 July) other English scouting groups, as well as French detachments, thrust forward between the Assa ravine and Mt Sisemol against the positions of III and XIII Corps. Some of the enemy troops were checked by the quick fire of the defending artillery; the rest had to be thrown back by a counterattack. In the Brenta valley, on 16 July storm troops from the Upper Hungarian IR 34 advanced into the enemy trenches near Rivalta; on the 18th Italian scouting detachments struck the positions of 27 ID. On 20 July English and French assault troops once more were probing our lines on both sides of Asiago. Early on the 25th the enemy made a surprise assault between Canove and Asiago and were able to temporarily set foot in the positions of 52 ID and 10 CD. Also the troops of VI Corps on the eastern part of the plateau had to fight aggressive Italian patrols during these days - north of Mt di Val Bella on the 24th and on the western slope of the Sasso

Rosso in the night of 26-27 July. Here storm troops from 36 ID operated against the enemy outposts in front of the Sasso Rosso on the 30th.

The Aus-Hung. troops guarding the trenches on the Asiago plateau were never allowed to rest. Besides having to deal with the numerous infantry skirmishes, they were hit every day by sudden bursts of enemy artillery fire. Italian, French and English planes flew constantly over the Vicentine Mountains and swooped down on the Adige and Sugana valleys. They also bombed Matarello, Grigno and Primolano. The allies' air superiority was becoming ever more burdensome; their active and wide-ranging patrols led to many dogfights. Bomber squadrons of our own 11th Army attacked enemy camps in the forested area south of Asiago on 30 July.

After the end of the recent major fighting, the eastern wing of 11th Army enjoyed relative quiet around Mounts Asolone and Pertica, and on the much-contested Tasson Ridge and Mt Solarolo. Nevertheless, here also there were fights against probing Italian patrols; the roar of Italian artillery could be heard almost every day in the mountains east of the Brenta, just as on the Asiago plateau. That the enemy batteries had much more ammunition available than did the Aus-Hung. artillery was clearly evident from a report by 11th Army. They estimated that on the Asiago plateau the allies were firing 14,615 rounds a day against our 5730; between the Brenta and the Army's eastern border (by Mt Spinuccia) the Italians were firing 5581 rounds against our 4273.

Army Group Boroevic's sector

After the unfavorable end of the fighting on the lower Piave (described earlier), the entire front of Boroevic's Army Group became markedly quieter toward the middle of July. Here for a long time both sides mostly stayed in their positions, although their artillery occasionally opened sudden disruptive fire (sometimes with gas shells), as did the trench mortars. Italian patrols occasionally probed the islands in the Piave or crossed the river, sometimes in considerable strength. Air units were also active.

In the area of 6th Army (now commanded by GdK Schönburg), enemy patrols sought to cross the Piave near Pederobba in mid-July, but were driven back by fire from 20 Hon ID. At the end of the month the 11 Hon CD engaged in short but lively skirmishes with Italian assault detachments on the Piave islands south of Moriago. And our own troops didn't remain inactive. Thus on 24 July a storm

patrol from XXIV Corps captured supplies on an island in the Piave southeast of Falzé. Sudden bursts of fire from the Italian artillery were directed mainly against the fronts of II and XXIV Corps north and northeast of the Montello. The area north of Susegana was repeatedly stricken by enemy bomber planes.

At the end of July the outposts of the Isonzo Army, just like those of 6th Army, defeated enemy reconnaissance groups who were trying to establish themselves on the Piave islands or cross the river. These small actions took place mainly in the sector of XVI Corps by Spresiano and in front of XXIII Corps' lines near the mouth of the river. At many points the Italians built plank bridges to reach the islands, but our alert artillery destroyed most of these structures.

The air forces of both sides were very busy along the entire Piave front. As in other sectors, enemy planes operating far behind our lines attacked the garrisons of defensive installations with machine gun fire. On the 30th our naval air units carried out a successful operation against the Stabilimento Balneare. In the night of 31 July an Italian air squadron (eight Caproni bombers covered by twelve fighters) attacked and damaged our airfield near Mansuè.

Troop movements of the k.u.k. forces

The combat activity of the Italians and their allies, which continued long after the end of the June battle, at first made it very difficult for the k.u.k. armies to carry out the urgently necessary troop rotations. The Isonzo Army were finally able at the start of July to pull from the front the 10 ID and 1 CD, along with the divisions of VII Corps (14 ID and 44 Sch Div) which had been worn down in crossing the Piave. At the end of the month it was possible to relieve 201 Lst Bde of XVI Corps with 29 ID, which had been in reserve at Cordognè. 10 ID and 44 Sch Div moved to the area around Codroipo to recuperate. In mid-July the 14 ID entered the front in the Piave delta to replace the Orient Korps. Two units entrained to leave the sector of the Isonzo Army - 1 CD on 7 July (for the 4th General Command) and the Orient Korps on 24 July (for Albania).

Under 6th Army, at the start of July the 35 ID were relieved at the front by 41 Hon ID and left for the Western front. Now in the sector of XXIV Corps near Susegana the 41 Hon ID were stationed next to 51 Hon ID (which had relieved 17 ID). From 18 July the parts of 20 Hon ID near Pederobba still under II Corps were re-assigned to XV Corps. The sector from which the Honved

Hussars departed was given to 31 ID, which hitherto had been resting near Vittorio.

New units joined FM Boroevic's Army Group in the second half of July - 34 ID from the Eastern Army, 2 ID from 4th General Command and 7 ID from the interior. The first elements of 40 Hon ID, also coming from the interior, arrived at Sacile on 30 July; they were to be assigned to GO Archduke Joseph's Army Group. From 11th Army's sector the troops of 26 Sch Div arrived at Sedrano toward the end of July after marching on foot.

Thus since the end of June FM Boroevic's Army Group had received six divisions (2, 7 and 34 ID, 26 Sch Div, 41 Hon ID and 12 Reit Sch Div), while giving up three units (35 ID, the Orient Korps and 1 CD).

Under 11th Army the remnants of the Edelweiss Division assembled in the Sugana valley and in mid-July moved to the area around Kaltern (near Bozen). 18 ID pulled back to Trent to rebuild at the start of July. On the 12th, after fighting ended around the Col del Rosso, the half of 16 ID deployed there were relieved from the front; this entire sector was given to 5 ID. 16 ID stayed in the Army's reserve north of Asiago.

Under 10th Army, on 1 July the 3 CD replaced 19 ID in the Adige valley. The latter unit first moved to Trent; at the end of July most of the Division took over the former sector of 159 Inf Bde on Mounts Sellugio and Cimone. Four Landsturm battalions which had transferred from 11th Army were assigned to the 159th Bde, now stationed as reserves of the Army Group in the Adige valley.

During July the Army Group in Tyrol gave up four divisions - 1 and 32 ID, 26 Sch Div and 38 Hon ID. As reinforcements, Archduke Joseph's force was to receive two units from the interior - 39th and 40th Honved Divisions. At the end of the month the former were moving by train through the Sugana valley toward Borgo; 40 Hon ID came first to Vittorio in 6th Army's area.

3. Plans and concerns of the Aus-Hung. leadership

After the great turning point on the Marne, the Western powers sought to drive the German armies from French and Belgian soil with a series of blows by individual forces, each one quickly followed by another. Along almost all of the Southwestern front, however, the Italians restricted their activities after mid-July to purely local skirmishes. The AOK at Baden believed this was a

sign that their opponents were preparing for a large-scale imminent offensive. The enemy's very lively and wide-ranging air operations were impressive. Their artillery made free use of fully-restored ammunition supplies, and under this prolonged fire many of the defending divisions got the impression they were suffering bombardment preliminary to an offensive. The enemy also fired many gas shells. It was ascertained that some Italian divisions had returned to their old sectors after rebuilding. Although the number of units holding positions at the front wasn't increasing overall, it seemed quite possible that the reserves behind the enemy lines could be shifted within a few days to their selected starting-points for an attack.

Although an Italian offensive was expected with certainty, the AOK at Baden were unsure where the blow would fall. Thus it's understandable that even while the fighting was still raging on the lower Piave they had warned FM Boroevic about enemy reserves that hadn't been committed and ordered him to move his own reserves closer to the front. FM Boroevic, who didn't view the situation with exaggerated pessimism, was able to dispel the concerns of the AOK and to justify the way he'd grouped his reserves. This became easier for him to do as five infantry divisions came to Venetia to reinforce his Army Group.

FM Boroevic evaluates the situation

The AOK asked FM Boroevic to report how he analyzed the situation; he did so in a long study which he submitted on 20 July. He estimated that the enemy opposite both Army Groups (in Venetia and Tyrol) had 56 Italian, 2 French and 3 English divisions plus some American units of undetermined strength. He anticipated that if his opponents attacked over the Piave they would have to leave 5 divisions opposite the Tyrolean western front as far as Lake Garda, 11 more between that Lake and the Brenta, and 6 between the Brenta and the Piave. Therefore he had to prepare to deal with 39 battle-ready enemy divisions on the Piave with his own 25 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions, many of which were at only half-strength.

Not only were the enemy forces larger than the defenders by a ratio of at least 3:2; they had more weapons, ammunition and military equipment. Nevertheless, FM Boroevic didn't believe that a large-scale Italian attack was imminent, for two reasons.

1. The Italian commanders would wait to observe the further development of the situation in France, which would affect their decisions.
2. Based on the lessons of the Piave battle, the Italian high command knew that they couldn't expect the inner cohesion of the k.u.k. armies to disintegrate; they knew that they weren't facing a beaten opponent.

Therefore the Italians would wait until they had strengthened the organization of their own Army, replaced the casualties from the recent battle and - above all - completed the material preparations for a major offensive. This would take until around the second half of August, a time at which the water level would be low in the Piave. Until this point there had been no clear signs of an impending Italian assault. The enemy were hard at work building their positions. The grouping and movements of their strategic reserves didn't seem to be leading up to a great attack over the Piave. But we would always have to be ready to meet an offensive and energetically take all necessary counter-measures.

Field Marshal Boroevic also addressed the important question of where the enemy could attack with the best prospects. He believed that a thrust between Mt Tomba and the Montello would threaten the vital communications between our two Army Groups and offer the enemy a favorable opportunity of rolling up the entire Piave front. He expected the enemy to open smaller operations between the Brenta and the Piave as a preparation for this great blow; the Italians had already recovered all the positions they'd

lost in other sectors during the June battle and could try to do the same in the Grappa sector against I and XV Corps.

FM Boroevic went on to state that a thrust from the Grappa massif into the Feltre basin would also assist an offensive over the Piave, since it would cover the northern flank of the major Italian assault and make it very difficult to shift troops between the two Aus-Hung. Army Groups. An enemy thrust south of the Montello would be very dangerous for us, but also very difficult for the enemy since if they advanced here their own northern flank would always be endangered. FM Boroevic felt that a large-scale assault over the Piave (against the Isonzo Army) was improbable, since here the enemy couldn't target any important strategic points and since as they attacked east they would increasingly find themselves menaced from the north. He also didn't anticipate any decisive Italian thrust west of the Brenta or on Tyrol's western front. Any operations there would be of only local importance.

FM Boroevic was convinced that the most likely direction of a major Italian thrust over the upper Piave would be toward Vittorio and Belluno. Therefore the defenders must concentrate on the area between the Brenta and the Montello. At this time there were six divisions stationed between the Brenta and the Piave, with two more in reserve near Feltre. This was the minimum amount of units that should be available in this very sensitive sector. To make it possible to shift reserves from the plains into the upper Piave valley it would be necessary to station at least one further division in the area southwest of Belluno as soon as there were signs that an Italian offensive was imminent. The difficult process of getting supplies to the area between the Brenta and the Piave had to be addressed by committing all available laborers. This necessary project would also be advantageous to us if we eventually mounted an attack of our own from this sector. Hope for such an offensive must be kept alive in our troops; thus encouraged, they'd be protected from the adverse psychological effects produced by prolonged stationary warfare.

What this report had to say about the condition of the troops of Boroevic's Army Group was true also of the Army Group in Tyrol. It had been impossible to relieve the majority of the divisions after the recent heavy fighting so that they could be brought back in orderly fashion for rehabilitation. This was due mainly to the fact that none of the reinforcements coming from the Eastern Army or the interior were fit for deployment at the front. It would take four to five weeks to train them for

mountain warfare and provide them with the necessary arms, and then they would first be deployed only in quiet sectors until their troops could be trusted in battle.

This report of FM Boroevic warned urgently that the amount of food available to the armies would have to be drastically increased prior to the next battle. Under-nourished troops quickly became exhausted and were prone to discouragement and panic. But the desperate economic and political situation on the home front was having an even greater impact at the front. The HQ of the Isonzo Army had already reported: "Because of the economic crisis and the length of the war, everyone at the front wants leave to go home to address their families' concerns, to alleviate their poverty, or to secure some advantage in the interior. By no means is the war considered a fight for existence. Exasperation between the nationalities has progressed so far that troops from one group no longer fully trust those of another. In all sincerity, Hungarian units have complained that a Czech artillery brigade intentionally fired upon them from behind. Personnel of a Polish division (which also includes some Czechs) have levied a similar charge against some Honved batteries. The Croats are quite bitter because Honved troops of Magyar nationality are stationed in Croatia to requisition food while they [the Croats] must do the fighting. The firm foundation of our Army, the excellent active officer corps, no longer exists. All of the reserve officers, as well as the enlisted men, have been politicized. All the signs of disintegration at the front, the treason and desertions, are consequences of hunger or of national strife which in turn are products of conditions within the state. The Army is still performing its duty. But this will become ever more difficult if the state itself isn't brought back to order."

In conclusion, FM Boroevic noted: "Current intelligence indicates that for the time being the front will stay quiet, which will soothe and strengthen the nerves of both commanders and troops. It will also be possible to restore necessary order within the units, tighten discipline and complete training. Thus the troops' self-confidence will increase to the point where we can anticipate a major Italian offensive with some prospect of success. We must always be ready for small attacks, for which the enemy may be able to mass superior forces undetected."

The situation of 6th Army

On 27 July, a few days after FM Boroevic submitted his thorough report to the AOK, a courier from Baden brought to Udine a letter

to be forwarded to GdK Schönburg's 6th Army HQ. It asked them to state what they would need to prepare for an offensive between the Brenta and the Montello. This correspondence from the k.u.k. high command stated that "We don't want to have to spend the upcoming winter once more in the Grappa area." Only the parts of 11th Army which could absolutely be spared from other missions would join this thrust just west of the Brenta. The first objectives would be the foot of the high ground north of Bassano and the southern edge of the Montello massif. Continuation of the offensive would be dependent upon the course of events. Since the water level in the rivers would be highest in late autumn, the AOK wanted to carry out this operation at latest in the second half of September or at the start of October. The German high command would be asked to help with some units, especially from the air forces. But the AOK warned that the planned thrust could only take place if the enemy didn't open a major offensive of their own in the meantime, since this would force us to undertake large-scale defensive measures. The letter closed with a request to have 6th Army HQ submit a plan of attack to Baden.

Boroevic's Army Group HQ had little hope that this attack would ever take place. They knew that conditions in the interior of the Monarchy, which were making the material situation of both the home front and the Army ever more desperate, also would make it extremely difficult or impossible to carry out another major offensive. Nevertheless, preparations for a possible offensive would entail the concentration of a quantity of weaponry and supplies behind 6th Army and thus improve the chances that we could successfully deal with an eventual enemy thrust here.

GdK Schönburg soon submitted his operational evaluation (on 3 August). He felt he'd need 13 divisions (with 8 in the first line) between the Montello and Poderobba and another 11 (with 8 divisions in the first line) in the area between the Brenta and the Piave, supported by a total of 3918 guns. The Isonzo Army on the Piave should also join this attack, since 6th Army HQ were of the opinion that we could only strive for a decisive success. The limited objective of reaching the foot of the heights north of Bassano and the southern edge of the Montello wouldn't be helpful since our troops would then be deployed with the mountain wall of the Grappa massif directly in their rear, making it even harder to supply them than was the case in the current position. 6th Army HQ reckoned they'd need at least three months for the wide-ranging preparations. They added that an enemy offensive or bad weather in autumn might make it necessary to postpone our own assault until the next spring. In closing they noted that in the

Monarchy's current situation a major offensive without German help could hardly be implemented in the foreseeable future.

On 3 August the AOK responded from Baden to these comments by 6th Army HQ; they concurred about the desirability of continuing the offensive up to the Brenta. But the available resources, artillery in particular, could no longer support such a large thrust. Restricting the operation to a limited objective, such as the railroad line Treviso-Castelfranco, wouldn't satisfy the AOK since we couldn't hold this front with our current human and material resources against continuing attacks by larger enemy forces. The AOK also fully concurred with 6th Army's assertion that it wouldn't be advisable to halt the thrust along the line between the foot of the heights north of Bassano and the southern edge of the Montello, since this sector was unfavorable for construction of a permanent position. Just as in the June battle, troops stationed on the Montello would be dependent on a precarious supply line over a few bridges, which especially near Falzé were vulnerable to fire from enemy artillery. With our limited resources, the only feasible choice was to aim for an even more limited objective, the edge of the heights north of Bassano, Asolo and Cornuda. An attack here would bring our troops to an area which could serve as an effective starting point for a second thrust, to be launched later between the Brenta and the Piave. 6th Army HQ were instructed to initiate preparations and request the necessary supplies for the first thrust to the edge of the heights north of the line Bassano-Asolo-Cornuda. The AOK went on to state that the parts of the front not involved in the attack should be weakened in order to build up the striking group as much as possible. But the high command couldn't provide as much artillery, in particular heavy batteries, as desired by 6th Army. In fact the number of heavy guns requested by Army HQ exceeded the total strength on the entire Southwestern front. It was also impossible to increase the air forces to the desired level. At the end the AOK noted that the planned thrust should be implemented only if 6th Army HQ were fully confident that it would succeed.

While the Austrians engaged in theoretical arguments about a new attack against Italy, at the end of July the German OHL urged the AOK at Baden to send the promised four additional k.u.k. divisions to the Western front. GO Arz responded evasively on 1 August. He let his allies know that there were still 16 Aus-Hung. divisions on the Southwestern front that hadn't been relieved from the front line since the June battle. In the high mountain positions there were even some battalions which hadn't left the front for a single day in the last two years. The

divisions coming by train from the interior to Venetia and Tyrol would first need to be trained for four to six weeks before they could be deployed. Furthermore a strike by railroad workers was making it impossible to state how long it would take for all the troops of 2 and 34 ID to arrive behind the Southwestern front. GO Arz moreover expressed reservations as to whether the Aus-Hung. armies would be able to withstand an attack by the Italians and their allies. He asked the OHL to let him decide for himself the point at which the four Aus-Hung. divisions would be able to move to France as promised. He was contemplating a new attack between the Brenta and the Piave in autumn.

Meanwhile in the first days of August the staff at Baden received reports which again indicated that the Italians might soon begin a major offensive. Gripped by feelings of uncertainty and unsure where the main enemy blow might fall, on 5 August the k.u.k. high command ordered FM Boroevic to provide reinforcements for 6th Army. A week later, on 12 August, they instructed FM Boroevic to "initiate all necessary measures to build up resistance at the front." They added that for the time being defensive measures should take precedence over any plans for an attack.

4. Plans of attack are abandoned; the Belluno meeting of 21 August

After the Piave battle ended and until mid-August the k.u.k. high command still hoped that in a short time, perhaps as little as three months, they could again attack in the sector between the Brenta and the Piave. And hopes that German forces would also participate allowed them to develop new plans for an offensive.

Impact of the German defeat in France

But meanwhile in mid-July the great turning point had occurred in France. In the meetings which GO Arz attended with GFM Hindenburg and GdI Ludendorff at Spa in mid-August, the Aus-Hung. Chief of Staff declared that to him it seemed very desirable to carry out a new thrust from the Piave to the Brenta. But he had to openly acknowledge that the resources of the Aus-Hung. Army were no longer sufficient to carry out such a wide-ranging operation. The assistance of eight German divisions would be necessary. He had considered whether to seek a more limited objective by pushing the front ahead from the Grappa massif into the plains around Bassano; considering the logistical limitations, this was the most that could be achieved. However, such an operation wouldn't substantially improve the situation

since the new sector would be very difficult to supply during winter with the barren Grappa area in its rear.³⁷⁷

GFM Hindenburg and GdI Ludendorff made it clear to their ally that he could no longer count on getting any help from German troops in the fight with Italy. Both of the most prominent German generals insisted that the Central Powers must now concentrate all their strength to hold onto the Western front. They thanked GO Arz for the two k.u.k. divisions which he'd already placed at their disposal, but stressed that the four additional divisions which had been promised should be sent to France as soon as possible. In the opinion of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, these troops could first be trained in the rear areas or deployed in quiet parts of the front to relieve more battle-ready German divisions.

GO Arz, on the other hand, said he was certain that there would be an enemy attack on the Italian front and that he must be able to fend off this assault. Thus for the time being he would be able only to send replacement troops to France to keep the k.u.k. units already there up to strength. GO Arz forcefully referred to the great difficulties encountered in finding replacements for men and equipment. The high attrition rate of the armies in the field could no longer be redressed by the men returning from Russian captivity. But above all Austria-Hungary lacked food, coal and raw materials. The inner political circumstances of the Monarchy were quite critical. Because of the tense situation on the Southwestern front GO Arz once again asked the German OHL to leave it up to him to decide at what point it would be feasible to send more k.u.k. divisions to France.

The meeting at Belluno

The desperate conditions in the interior of the Danube Monarchy were discussed at a meeting in Belluno on 21 August; in attendance were the Deputy Chief of the General Staff (GM Waldstätten) and the chiefs of staff of the front and army HQ. The representatives of the armies complained about the inadequate rations and equipment of the troops, and about the destructive influence of domestic politics. War-weariness was spread, and the remaining discipline undermined, by the ever more inflammatory tone of the newspapers, by letters from home, by troops returning from leave, and lastly by the "Heimkehrer." The representative of the AOK at this meeting was forced to concede that Baden could no longer reverse the decline of the military spirit. GM Waldstätten pictured conditions at home in the

377Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 281 ff.

darkest colors, adding that the developments on the German Western front had been a severe disappointment. He declared that the Central Powers could no longer count on continuing the war through the coming winter. Despite all the brilliant successes of the years gone by, the situation had now deteriorated so far that any peace offer would have to be accepted as quickly as possible. We would be very content if in fact the enemy were still prepared to make such an offer. Our opponents were fully aware of our current predicament and presumably not willing to begin negotiations.

Unfortunately the AOK couldn't master the tragic problems on the home front, but could merely try to influence the various central government bodies with suggestions. Government officials often lacked the insight and will to carry on with the war; in many cases they were beholden to political parties and too often failed to consider the justified concerns of the high command to the desired degree. The officials of the Austrian [cis-Leithanian] government in particular were weak. Even the military men who occupied high administrative offices were guarding their own positions by failing to unconditionally support the efforts of the AOK. Thus the high command were not in a position to protect the interests of the Army as much as necessary. This was true not only regarding the supply situation, but also of efforts to protect the Army against anti-war elements. All attempts by the AOK to limit the destructive influence of the press had little effect. Newspapers were and remained the undisputed shapers of official opinion within the Monarchy, and systematically were working against the dynasty and the Army. Measures such as censorship and a ban on sending newspapers to the front had proven to be insufficient. The press corps wrote as they pleased rather than as the state wanted. The Emperor and AOK were helpless and powerless against this ferment.³⁷⁸

Even gloomier were the descriptions of the Monarchy's economic situation by the Deputy Chief of Staff and the Chief of the Quartermaster Detachment.

Austria-Hungary suffered a critical shortage of food and raw materials, which was exacerbated by the inability of most officials to control and distribute the supplies that were available. For example, in 1917 the Slavic districts of the Austrian half of the Monarchy provided just 30 to 40% of the foodstuffs that were expected based on the results of the harvest. In most of Hungary the comparable figure was 60 to 70%,

378Anton Pitreich, "Piaveschlacht"

in the Alpine lands about the same, and in the German districts of the Sudeten land it was over 90%. The Lublin Military Government was also unable to meet the expected goal, as was the occupied territory of Romania. Only the Serbian Military Government had provided more food than expected.

During 1918 these distressing conditions had substantially worsened. The difficulty of scraping up food and other supplies increased as the war continued to take on the character of a battle for economic existence; naturally this was a burden not only to the Army but to the entire population. Economic warfare posed the most difficult questions to the state and the business community and created a revolutionary situation. It was urgently necessary to establish a centralized authority over the entire economy, but no longer possible to do so. The interrelationship between the battle- and home-fronts was so complex that a compromise between their interests hadn't been achieved. Instead their opposing points of view were leading directly to a fight for existence between the Army in the field and the population in the interior, which the AOK could no longer mediate.

The calculations of the AOK's Quartermaster Detachment clearly illustrated the shocking consequences of this miserable situation. In August 1918 alone the infantry strength of the Southwestern front declined by 198,000 men. There was also a real personnel crisis within the artillery; some brigades no longer had enough personnel to man all their guns, and there was a danger that they'd no longer be able to fight. Since summer 1917 the imposition of an "emergency table of organization," driven by the lack of fodder, had reduced the number of horses in the batteries; teams were assigned only to the guns, not to the ammunition carts. Thus it was difficult for the batteries to simply shift position upon the same battlefield; naturally they would be even less able to cope with a major operation.³⁷⁹

The superiority of the enemy air forces was particularly great. It wasn't possible to protect our air companies, which suffered serious losses of men and planes. The limited number of technical troops and the withdrawal of the labor detachments composed of Russian prisoners also had a negative impact along the front. The combat troops held in reserve were only able to work on improving our positions and lines of communication to a very limited extent because of their exhaustion and small numbers.

There were no longer sufficient replacement troops in the

379Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 27

interior to meet the Army's needs. Although in theory there were enough able-bodied men, the growing chaos behind the lines made it impossible to get them to the front. The hidden groups of draft-dodgers and deserters were starting to come out into the open. And the number of men exempted from service rose in summer 1918 alone from 1½ to 2 million. The lack of veteran officers was shocking. Although it was still possible to fill the numerical quotas, the quality of the officer corps had suffered irreparably due to the heavy losses of the prior four years. No more than a pitiful remnant remained of the reliable old-time officers, and the capacity of those who could still serve in the field was stretched to the limit. The new men weren't able to completely fill the gaps, at a time in which the influence of the officers on the rank and file was more important than ever.

Note - the post-war observations of GM Pitreich

After the war GM Pitreich addressed the issues outlined in this section, and in particular the lack of replacement troops, as follows:

"For example, in June 1918 69,000 men were exempted from active duty; on the other hand, only 12,000 previously excused were returned to service. The intention had been to excuse no men belonging to the seven youngest draft classes, but so many dodges and subterfuges had been found that this measure remained only on paper. The latest directive - that no one currently in the field forces could be exempted - also wasn't implemented. All efforts by the AOK to ensure that replacements continued to come up from the interior were insufficiently successful because even the military authorities behind the lines didn't provide sufficient assistance, mostly due to fear of exercising any political authority. Thus an ever-increasing number of men managed to stay behind the lines by various means. A large proportion of the soldiers returning from Russian captivity were no longer returning to the front after their leave at home. Their example was followed all too willingly by men who'd gone on leave. The authorities resorted to a form of hostage-taking; they decreed that units couldn't send more troops on leave until their comrades from the same communities returned to the front. The long duration of the war and the increasing general misery caused some soldiers to feel that it was unjust that they should serve while so many others were setting a bad example. The ranks of front-line troops thinned from day to day. At the same time large areas of the Monarchy were becoming insecure due to robber bands. Corruption and greed within government offices were

clear signs that authority was becoming ever weaker. The tools necessary to restore order were still available, but no one was making the slightest use of them. Instead everyone was patiently awaiting a miracle that would somehow liberate them from the horrors of the war in the easiest possible fashion. Thus any improvement of the situation could no longer be expected."

5. Local Italian attacks in August

Under these distressing conditions, it's understandable that in August the AOK were anxious about the outcome of the major offensive which they expected their opponents to undertake. But in this month the assault again failed to materialize, even though in July the Italians had already begun preparations to carry out the operation on the Asiago plateau which had been planned in spring but canceled due to the Aus-Hung. offensive. The Italian high command had been asked by Marshal Foch to assist the decisive campaigns unfolding in France with an attack in the Vicentine mountains, which would prevent Austria-Hungary from sending troops to the Western front.

But G.Lt Diaz had serious grounds for avoiding a hasty attack. He believed that Austria-Hungary had numerical superiority on the Italian front. Furthermore, an Italian corps had been sent to France to reinforce the Entente troops. The prolonged resistance which the Italian 6th Army had encountered in the latest fighting around the Mt di Val Bella and the Col del Rosso clearly indicated that the Aus-Hung. divisions still possessed considerable combat strength, and that they held favorable positions along the mountain front. Therefore an assault would be a difficult undertaking. For these reasons Diaz didn't want to take any chances; he wouldn't support the offensive of his allies in the West with a diversionary attack, but rather would wait until their success in France was assured.

Now it's true that the great change in the balance of power was already taking place in France in August. But until deep into September the Italian high command were still concerned that the Germans would again solidify their Western front and that their OHL could then be able to quickly send troops to the Piave where they'd fall upon the rear of any Italian offensive on the mountain front. The Italian HQ were receiving intelligence indicating that despite the failure of the Aus-Hung. offensive in June their opponents might make another attempt.

Although the Italians did continue their preparations on the Asiago plateau, they were thinking only of a preparatory attack leading to the capture of the Pasubio and the Col Santo rather than to a decisive thrust. The Italian high command intended to seek a decision against Austria-Hungary in spring 1919, simultaneously with a general offensive by their allies in France. Thus they'd wait until the interior disintegration of the Danube Monarchy proceeded so far that the final battle would be easier. There was no doubt that this battle was unavoidable, since Austria-Hungary's Army would have to be destroyed before the fate of the Monarchy was sealed.

But Diaz was also preparing a top-secret plan. At the moment when the German Western armies were no longer capable of springing to the assistance of Austria-Hungary, all available Italian units would quickly assemble for a decisive stroke. Their opponents would be taken by surprise in an important area where the collapse of the entire front must inevitable follow. Attacks on the Asiago plateau would divert the attention of the Austrians in this sector from the point chosen for the breakthrough. The situation seemed hopeful. The continuing successes of their allies in France strengthened the conviction of the Italian high command that the day would soon come when they could deliver the death blow to the Aus-Hung. Army, which was worn down by hunger and hampered by internal confusion.³⁸⁰

380 Tournes, "The report of the Italian high command about the final offensive." Rocca, "Vittorio Veneto" (Milan, 1934), pp. 23 ff. Dupont, "Vittorio Veneto", pp. 9 ff. Valori, "La guerra italo-austriaca 1915-1918" (Bologna, 1920), pp. 417 ff. Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie del Piave", pp. 101 ff. Tosti, pp. 305 ff.

Actions involving 10th Army

But before plans for this annihilating onslaught could be implemented, during August the Italians were very active along the entire western and southern fronts of Tyrol. Almost every day the enemy artillery delivered disruptive fire on the high mountain positions of the k.u.k. 10th Army. Our infantry were kept on the alert due to a series of thrusts by patrols. But the enemy also carried out some larger operations.

Thus on 3 August a sudden Italian attack against the Dosso alto, which was defended by High Mountain Company 24, led to heavy fighting in the Riva Sector. Strong fire from trench mortars started early in the morning; it was reinforced after 11:00 AM by fire from artillery of all calibers, which blanketed all positions in the area. During this preparatory bombardment the Italian storm troops penetrated the main position on the summit of the Dosso alto. The garrison had taken shelter from the firestorm in a cavern and didn't realize that the Italians had entered the defenses and then pushed past the summit to the northern edge of the mountain. The remnants of High Mountain Company 24 fought stubbornly; together with the Riva Sturm Battalion which hurried to the scene they sought to recover the Dosso alto in repeated counterattacks. The garrison of the position at the summit were still holding out in the cavern, though surrounded. But they finally had to surrender, as the fight ended in the evening with the final loss of the mountain to the Italians. The defenders had suffered heavy losses. Therefore GdI Kalser, commanding XX Corps, decided not to renew the counterattacks. On the other hand, when the Army commander FM Krobatin visited the Riva Sector HQ at Ceniga on 4 August he decided that an attempt to recover the Dosso alto with a carefully-prepared operation was necessary. Thus we wouldn't give the enemy the impression that we were weak, and the fighting spirit of our troops would be lifted. This was also desirable because by occupying this mountain the enemy had also recovered the last of the high ground which they'd lost in the June battle.

On 13 August the Alpini groups of 7th Italian Army initiated a well-prepared operation on both sides of the Tonale Pass. Here the Italian generals apparently wished to open the route into the upper Noce valley by capturing the summit of Pt S Matteo, Mt Mantello, and our positions on the glacier east of the F di Montozzo and Pt d'Albiolo. Also, by occupying the Monticello they'd make it impossible for us to retain the positions at the Tonale Pass. Furthermore the enemy would attack in the Presanella, between the Passo dei Segni and the Menicigolo, to

open the Val di Genova.

After two hours of powerful bombardment, this ambitious operation opened in the morning of 13 August when about two Italian battalions attacked the defensive positions of 22 Sch Div which extended over the peaks of Pt S Matteo and Mt Mantello. These positions could be reinforced only by difficult climbing over ridges and walls of rock, and it was impossible to do so during the day because of the heavy artillery and machine gun fire. After bitter fighting with the weak garrisons (a total of just two high mountain companies and one mountain guide company) the Italians took over the strong points on both peaks during the day. Most of the defenders of these very isolated glacier positions met a heroic death.³⁸¹

On the southern wing of 22 Sch Div, Italians attacking from the F di Montozzo and Pt d'Albiolo finally were able to penetrate the Austrian positions lying below the ridge-line. But although the Alpini detachments tried to continue their attacks on 14 August, in hand-to-hand combat they were thrown out of the parts of the trenches they'd occupied by the brave garrisons, who'd been reinforced by some of 22 Sch Div's reserves. The only strong points we couldn't recover were those on the Pt S Matteo and Mt Mantello.

The efforts by the Italians at the Tonale Pass were completely unsuccessful. Here about seven battalions attacked in the afternoon of 13 August after very strong artillery fire, but were pinned down and suffered heavy casualties under fire from 163 Inf Bde and from our accurate artillery. In the night of 13-14 August a few Alpini detachments were able to enter the trenches on the Monticello, but were soon hurled back by two companies of SchR 26.

In the high mountain sector of 49 ID, on 13 August the Presena summit and the Paso dei Segni had to be relinquished to the enemy, along with parts of the Marocche position and of the Menicigolo, after the garrisons suffered heavy casualties. However, on the 14th our troops were once more in possession of these glacier positions.

In anticipation of the enemy attack, at the end of July the 18 ID had already been shifted from Bozen into the area around Malé, from which they moved on 14 August to Fucine. However, this

381 "Kaiserschützen, Tiroler Vorarlberger Landsturm und Standschützen," published by the Kaiserschützen-bund für Österreich (Vienna, 1934), pp. 134 ff.

Division actually wasn't needed, since our garrison troops meanwhile had recovered a series of strong points. With the exception of some positions east of the F di Montozzo which the Italians captured in the next few days, they had to be content with the occupation of the Pt S Matteo and Mt Mantello. These two peaks did give them a complete view of the Noce valley and the area behind the battle lines of 22 Sch Div as far as the Pt d'Albiolo. They also provided the enemy favorable starting points for a future thrust against our positions in the upper Noce valley which, if successful, would lead inevitably to the loss of this sector of the front. Therefore the commander of 22 Sch Div, GM Müller, decided to begin preparations to recover both of these important mountains.

Heavy snow storms prevented the counterattack from starting as planned on 29 August. But on 3 September the storm groups were able to climb the cliffs undetected by the enemy and to reach the ice caverns of the Pt S Matteo. Despite the Italian artillery fire, from this point they continued to climb in a bold maneuver over walls of ice and granite, and recovered both of the summits (Pt S Matteo and Mt Mantello) overlooking the glaciers. In mopping up the enemy trenches they also took a substantial number of prisoners plus many machine guns and trench mortars. This brilliant victory, a masterpiece of Alpine combat, proved clearly that the attacking spirit of our high mountain troops had been maintained despite the exhausting positional warfare.³⁸²

The continuing battle-readiness of our units from the Alpine lands was also demonstrated in a defensive action at the end of August involving troops of the Kaiser Jaeger Division. In the morning of 30 August, after several hours of destructive artillery fire, an Italian assault battalion attacked the summit of Mt Majo, which was held by two companies of KJR # 3. The enemy were able to conquer this strong point only after the majority of the garrison had been killed, wounded or buried alive in their shot-up positions. Other Kaiser Jaeger from the 3rd Regiment, supported by parts of the Kaiser Jaeger Storm Battalion, counterattacked twice and took back the mountain summit. The Italians fell back to their starting-points, having suffered extraordinarily high casualties under our effective artillery fire during their defeat.³⁸³

382 First Lt Wilhelm Licka of K.SchR 1, who'd commanded half of the 3rd Company of Sturm Battalion 22, received the Knight's Cross of the Military Maria Theresia Order for this successful operation.

383 Schemfil, "Das k.u.k. 3. Regiment der Tiroler Kaiserjäger im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Bregenz, 1926), pp. 557 ff.

In other sectors of the Kaiser Jaeger Division's front - at the Borcola Pass and in the Laghi basin - the enemy noticeably increased their artillery fire, but there were no infantry assaults. The numerous small-scale Italian operations during August against the k.u.k. 10th Army were almost all equally unsuccessful.

Actions involving 11th Army

In August there was heavier fighting along the mountain front held by the k.u.k. 11th Army. Here our divisions were stationed where their positions could easily be observed by the enemy on the ground and in the air; they were hit by continuous fire from the Italian artillery (which sometimes used gas shells) and trench mortars.

In the morning of 1 August some patrolling English storm troops had to be driven away from the eastern wing of the k.u.k. III Corps near Canove. Here in the night of 1-2 August our soldiers had to repulse several assaults by strong enemy detachments. Early in the morning of the 3rd strong artillery fire was followed, along the entire front between the Assa Ravine and Mt Sisemol, by new English and French reconnaissance thrusts. Around 3:00 AM an English company penetrated the trenches of 52 ID, but was soon driven back. Enemy thrusts against the front of the XIII Corps' 10 CD and 74 Hon ID near Asiago and on Mt Sisemol were defeated by our defensive artillery fire and by infantry throwing hand grenades. Only at Zocchi (southeast of Asiago) were the enemy temporarily able to enter the positions of 10 CD.

There was heavier and costlier fighting on 9 August. This time several English battalions in thick waves attacked the eastern wing of 6 ID as well as the sectors held by 52 ID and 10 CD. Near Canove and Asiago the enemy storm troops entered our trenches and could only be driven out after long and costly hand-to-hand combat. In the night of 9-10 August the badly damaged positions of III and XIII Corps were assaulted again; the English renewed their thrusts at Canove and Asiago while the French struck against Mt Sisemol. At the same time Italian assault parties advanced from Mt di Val Bella and the Col del Rosso toward the front of the k.u.k. VI Corps. At Asiago our artillery halted the English infantry opposite 10 CD, 6 ID and 52 ID. On Mt Sisemol (the sector of 74 Hon ID) and on the northern slopes of Mt di Val Bella and the Col del Rosso (held by 5 and 53 ID), local penetrations by the enemy led to stubborn fighting and heavy casualties.

During the next day destructive artillery fire continued against the positions of XIII and VI Corps. Enemy planes cruised over the Asiago plateau and flew over the Brenta valley, dropping bombs on Levico and Pergine. In these actions on the plateau the 11th Army lost almost 1000 men (dead, wounded or taken prisoner). Since the strength of the defending divisions was melting away as they held the battered and repeatedly-attacked forward line south of Asiago, it was decided to implement a withdrawal that had long been planned. In the night of 16-17 August most of 52 ID, 10 CD and 74 Hon ID pulled back to a position already established in the rear, which curved in a half circle north of Asiago. Only some strong outposts were maintained in the old trenches, which were to be evacuated if the enemy opened a large-scale attack.

In the second half of August small actions against enemy scouting patrols continued on the Asiago plateau. Almost every day our opponents maintained their destructive artillery fire against the Aus-Hung. fortifications and approach routes. The Entente air forces also stayed active. On 19 August a small detachment from 39 Hon ID penetrated a forward Italian position on the Sasso Rosso and brought back some prisoners, but suffered substantial casualties themselves. On 27 August enemy storm troops repeatedly assaulted the Asiago - Mt Sisemol sector after a heavy bombardment. The losses of the defenders on this day totaled almost 700 men.

East of the Brenta, in the Grappa area, the Italians restricted their activity in August to firing artillery and scouting with infantry patrols. The primary target of their operations was Mt Asolone. Thus on 9 August it was necessary to drive back Italian assault troops who'd entered the trenches of 28 ID on this mountain after a systematic bombardment. On the 25th storm troops of 4 ID made a successful attack on Mt Asolone, entering and destroying part of the enemy trench network.

Actions involving FM Boroevic's Army Group

In the areas guarded by the k.u.k. 6th Army and especially those of the Isonzo Army, major scouting operations were precluded by the barrier of the Piave River, so in August the Italians restricted most of their activity to artillery duels. However, there were frequent skirmishes with company-sized enemy detachments in the Alano basin in front of 50 ID's lines. Occasionally there were also lively actions on the banks of the Piave. Italian patrols repeatedly dug in upon the inlands or sought to reconnoiter the opposite side of the river on boats.

The majority of these small-scale operations took place on the Piave islands near Pederobba (in front of 31 ID), near Nervesa where 41 Hon ID held positions on the river bank, or around the crossing point at the Susegana railroad station in XXIV Corps' sector. Italian detachments and patrols also sometimes skirmished with the neighboring IV Corps at Ponte di Piave and XXIII Corps at Passarella. From time to time Italian destroyers and torpedo boats appeared off the coast to bombard the Caorle sector. The airplanes of the Italians and their allies engaged our flyers and bombed our defenses and rear-area installations with increasing regularity.

Troop rotations in August

As positional warfare thus took its course, the Army Groups of Archduke Joseph and of Boroevic were gradually able to replace their worn out divisions with units which had received at least a little rest. On 11 August FM Krobatin moved the exhausted 159 Inf Bde, which had been relieved in the Laghi basin by half of 19 ID, to the Stenico-Tione area as a reserve of 10th Army. On 14 August the 18 ID, which had already moved from Bozen to the area around Malé because of the fighting in the Tonale sector, shifted to Fucine and Madonna di Campiglio.

All the divisions guarding the sectors of 11th Army also needed long periods of rest. Because of the shortage of units, however, it was only possible to relieve those which had been most severely depleted. 4 ID, which had been relieved on Mt Asolone by 28 ID in mid-July, already had to change places with the latter division again at the start of August. In mid-August the 55 ID on Mt Spinuccia gave up their position to 17 ID, which was under Boroevic's Army Group. On the Sasso Rosso 36 ID were replaced by 39 Hon ID; soon afterwards, in the latter third of the month, 27 ID in the Brenta sector were relieved by 40 Hon ID (which had arrived at the start of August). On Mt Pertica half of 60 ID took the place of 48 ID. The 36 ID came to the area around Bozen in the Army Group's reserve. The 55 and 48 ID were finally able to rest near Belluno as reserves of the AOK. 21 Sch Div arrived from the interior and were also stationed by Belluno from mid-August. On the 29th the first troops of 38 Hon ID (who also were returning from the interior) came to Borgo and were placed at the disposal of 11th Army.

Under 6th Army the 12 Reit Sch Div, which had been in the Cison area at the start of August, took the place of 11 Hon CD at the front in the Moriago sector. 13 Sch Div, which had been resting

near Aviano, moved to Belluno where together with 48 ID, 55 ID and 21 Sch Div they now made up the reserves of the AOK. At the start of August the 25 ID, which had come from the 4th General Command, arrived in Venetia (by Fontano Freddo). This division was inserted in the front of II Corps at the end of the month near Vidor, between 31 ID and 8 CD. In the last days of August further reinforcements arrived in Venetia by train from the 4th General Command - the 43 Sch Div at Sacile.

In the Isonzo Army's sector, GdI Kletter's XXII Corps HQ on 29 August took control over the Piave sector closest to the sea, including the coastal area as far as Can. Nicesolo; they had the 14 and 57 ID. The 10 ID, in reserve in the area west of Vittorio, were re-assigned on 19 August to 6th Army.

The following table shows the organization of the Southwestern front in mid-August and summarizes all the troop movements on and behind the Southwestern front between that time and 24 October.

* FM Archduke Joseph's Army Group *

- . 10th Army
 - . V Corps
 - . 164 Inf Bde
 - . 22nd Sch Div (with attached 163 Inf Bde)
 - . In reserve - 18th ID (by Malé, Pucine and Madonna di Campiglio; at the end of September moved to Borgo to relieve 5th ID)
 - . XX Corps
 - . 49th ID (with attached IR 50 from 19th ID)
 - . Riva Sector
 - . In reserve - 159 Inf Bde (near Stenico)
 - . XXI Corps
 - . 3rd CD
 - . 56th Sch Div (with attached IR 111 from 19th ID)
 - . XIV (Edelweiss) Corps
 - . Kaiser Jaeger Div
 - . Half of 19th ID (37 Inf Bde with IR 35 and 75)
 - . In reserve (under Army Group HQ, not the Corps) - Edelweiss Div
- . 11th Army
 - . III Corps
 - . 6th CD
 - . 6th ID
 - . 52nd ID
 - . In reserve - 42nd Hon ID (near Pergine; at the start of September marched to Feltre and in mid-September relieved parts of 4th ID)

- . XIII Corps
 - . 10th CD (in mid-October relieved by 27th ID and assembled near Pergine)
 - . 74th Hon ID (at the start of October relieved by 38th Hon ID and moved to Bozen)
 - . In reserve -
 - . 16th ID (in the Val di Nos and around Mt Zingarella; parts reinforced 10th CD at the start of October but returned to reserve in mid-October)³⁸⁴
 - . 38th Hon ID (arrived near Borgo in the Val Sugana from the interior at the end of August and relieved 74th Hon ID at the start of October)
- . VI Corps
 - . 53rd ID
 - . 5th ID (relieved at the start of October by 18th ID and moved into the Val Sugana)
 - . 36th ID (relieved in mid-August by 39th Hon ID and moved to Bozen to recuperate; starting on 19 October entrained for Sacile)
 - . In reserve - 39th Hon ID (had arrived from the interior at Borgo in the Sugana valley at the end of July; in mid-August relieved 36th ID)
- . XXVI Corps
 - . 27th ID (at the end of August relieved by 40th Hon ID, and assembled northwest of Feltre; at the start of September moved to Pergine; in mid-October relieved parts of 16th ID and 10th CD under XIII Corps)
 - . 4th ID (with attached BH IR 7 from 28th ID; in mid-September relieved by 28th ID and 42nd Hon ID; on 20 October returned to the front still under XXVI Corps)
 - . In reserve -
 - . 40th Hon ID (had arrived at Sacile from Venetia in mid-August; marched through Vittorio to Feltre and Lamon; relieved 27th ID at the end of August)
 - . 28th ID (most of Div was by Caldonazzo and Vattaro, but BH IR 7 were with 4th ID and IR 28 were near Cismon; in mid-September relieved parts of 4 ID)
- . I Corps
 - . 48th ID (parts relieved in mid-August by half of 50th ID)
 - . 17th ID
 - . In reserve -

384 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The information about 16th ID in the original was discrepant, but has been corrected here from other parts of Beilage 23.

- . 60th ID (in mid-August one brigade relieved parts of 48th ID)
 - . 55th ID (near Sedico and Belluno)
- * FM von Boroevic's Army Group *
 - . 6th Army
 - . XV Corps
 - . 50th ID
 - . 20th Hon ID
 - . In reserve -
 - . 13th Sch Div (marched from Aviano to the area east of Belluno; in mid-October relieved parts of 60th ID under I Corps)
 - . 21st Sch Div (came from the interior, arriving near Sacile in mid-August; then marched to Belluno)
 - . II Corps
 - . 31st ID
 - . 8th CD (at start of September relieved by 11 Hon CD and moved to the Isonzo Army)
 - . 12th Reit Sch Div
 - . In reserve -
 - . 25th ID (arrived at Sacile from the East at the start of August; at the end of the month entered the front near Vidor between 31 ID and 8 CD)
 - . 11th Hon CD (rested at Cison di Valmarina until start of September, then relieved 8th CD)
 - . 34th ID (arrived at Pordenone in late July and early August from the interior, then moved to Vittorio)
 - . XXIV Corps
 - . 41st Hon ID
 - . 51st Hon ID
 - . In reserve -
 - . 43rd Sch Div (arrived at Sacile from the East at end of August)
 - . 26th Sch Div (stayed near Sedrano, north of Pordenone)
 - . Army of the Isonzo
 - . XVI Corps
 - . 29th ID
 - . 9th ID (at start of September relieved by 7th ID and assembled north of Motta di Livenza; at the end of September entrained for Macedonia)
 - . In reserve -
 - . 201 Lst Inf Bde (at Codognè)

- . 7th ID (arrived north of Motta di Livenza from the interior at end of July; relieved 9th ID at start of September)
- . IV Corps
 - . 64th Hon ID
 - . 70th Hon ID
 - . In reserve -
 - . 9th CD (near Cordovado; at the start of September entrained at Portogruaro to move to Albania)
 - . 10th ID (at Basagliapenta and Tolmassons, east of Codroipo; re-assigned to 6th Army)
- . VII Corps
 - . 33rd ID
 - . 12th ID
 - . In reserve -
 - . 44th Sch Div (resting at Codroipo)
 - . 24th ID (at Cinto di Caomaggiore)
- . XXIII Corps (half of sector re-assigned to XXII Corps at end of August)
 - . 46th Sch Div
 - . 58th ID
 - . 14th ID
 - . 57th ID (in mid-September relieved by 2nd ID and moved to Portogruaro)
 - . In reserve - 2nd ID (arrived at Portogruaro from the East at end of July; relieved 57th ID in mid-September)

6. The k.u.k. Army is kept on the defensive

Thus as August ended the anticipated Italian offensive hadn't developed. The local attacks which the enemy undertook in the Tonale sector in mid-August had been successfully thwarted by our 10th Army. In the most endangered sector (near Asiago) security had been achieved by stationing a strong garrison in the main line of resistance, which was covered by an outpost area. The high command believed that the situation of Archduke Joseph's Army Group had improved. On the other hand they noted that the Piave front had been weakened due to the departure of 13, 21 and 43 Sch Divs (now stationed in Boroevic's reserves in the area around Belluno) and the rapid spread of malaria among the units of the Isonzo Army. This Army had lost almost 33,000 men due to sickness during August.

The AOK at Baden calculated that to defend against a major Italian offensive on Tyrol's western or southern fronts - which admittedly was improbable - they'd need to take the necessary reinforcements from the reserves of XXVI and I Corps in the Grappa sector. If the enemy followed up such an operation with attacks between the Brenta and the Piave, the lost reserves could be replaced by the high command's own units assembled around Belluno. On 25 August the AOK created a tactical Group HQ under FZM Ritter von Goglia to lead the corps of 11th Army stationed between the Brenta and the Piave. Goglia was placed under 6th Army HQ; the Belluno Etappen Group HQ were still responsible for supplying and supporting the area.

6th Army HQ had been studying a possible thrust between the Brenta and the Piave, which wasn't to extend beyond the edge of the heights north of Bassano and Corduna; on 31 August they presented their evaluation to the high command. They'd need 16 divisions for this thrust, plus 4 more to maintain the defenses near Susegana. VI Corps of 11th Army, stationed on the Asiago plateau west of the Brenta, would only need to support the assault with artillery; participation by the Isonzo Army wouldn't be necessary. 6th Army HQ calculated that even if the AOK provided reinforcements the preparations would take three months due to the lack of labor units. They also noted that the offensive could be carried out in 1918 only if the autumn weather was unusually favorable.

The high command then asked Boroevic's Army Group HQ to comment on the plan of attack from 6th Army. FM Boroevic spoke forcefully against implementation of this concept. He insisted

that achievement of the objective envisioned at Baden - the edge of the heights north of Bassano and Cornuda - wouldn't be worth the expenditure of men and resources because

- . this line could hardly be held permanently, and
- . the expected casualties during the attack would be greater than the losses which the troops would suffer if they spent the winter in the Grappa mountains.

FM Boroevic emphasized that for now the available forces should above all be used to fortify the front so that it could be reliably held against an enemy assault. Only after our opponents were repulsed should we start preparing for our own offensives - at first for a counter-thrust in the Grappa area and later for a general assault as far as the Brenta, which was the only worthwhile goal.

During the conference at Spa GO Arz had already been forced to give up the idea of a new blow against Italy because participation of German forces would be impossible for the foreseeable future; now he concurred with FM Boroevic's suggestion. On the other hand, on 30 August the AOK ordered that preliminary measures should be taken to prepare for a counterattack between the Brenta and the Piave. At the same time they stated that the current military situation didn't preclude the possibility of a future operation to seize the Venetian mountains as far as the Brenta.

Already on 16 August, immediately after the Spa conference, the Entente armies in France opened a new onslaught against the German front between Arras and Soissons. Because of the heavy and unfavorable fighting against enemy forces that were constantly being reinforced, on 29 August the German OHL (as we already mentioned) renewed their request for more Aus-Hung. divisions. Therefore on the 30th the AOK asked Boroevic's Army Group HQ how many units they could release immediately and how many in the future. At the same time the War Ministry ordered that the 22 battalions detached from the field armies to serve as garrisons in the interior should be made ready for action as soon as possible. FM Boroevic declared that he was ready immediately to provide four divisions (counting 106 ID, which was coming to Venetia by train from the Polish General Government). But Emperor Charles, who for political reasons was opposed to committing Aus-Hung. units to the Western front, ordered the AOK to inform FM Boroevic that if he gave up these forces he couldn't expect any further reinforcements in Venetia. Troops were also needed to guard against a surprise attack from Romania. FM Boroevic responded that the AOK themselves must decide if they could spare troops for France. But the situation on the Western

front was so tense that despite all the reservations of the Aus-Hung. high command they finally decided to divert the trains carrying 106 ID to Montmedy. They ordered that 37 Hon ID (stationed in Transylvania) should also move to France. But on 1 September they let the OHL know that these were the last units which they could provide.

The new defensive tactics

After the failure of the Piave offensive, the k.u.k. Southwestern armies found themselves forced onto the defensive. The higher-level HQ now expected a major Italian attack, for which they trained the troops on the Italian front about the new general guidelines for defensive fighting which had been issued in June. As we already mentioned in the section "New Tactics", the troops would no longer concentrate in long lines of trenches (using the "linear defense"), but would conduct a mobile action over a deep fortified area. Occasionally at some points ground would be voluntarily abandoned with the intention of recovering it later in a counterattack, which is why the new system was called an "elastic defense."

The "forward zone" would consist of an "outpost position" lying mostly in no-man's land followed by two or three lines of trenches; the enemy would be forced to commit strong artillery and expend large amounts of ammunition against this zone, which was also expected to delay the advancing infantry and their supporting arms. The "main position", consisting of several more lines, would be located far enough from the forward zone that it wouldn't be possible for the opposing artillery to bombard both networks simultaneously. The elastic defense was to be conducted on the terrain between the forward zone and main position, specially prepared for this purpose. Construction was to include numerous sturdy machine gun nests covered by strong barricades plus dispersed infantry strong points which could support each other with their fire. Troops in this "intermediate fortified area" would harass the advancing enemy with sudden bursts of fire and threaten them from the flank and rear, providing favorable circumstances for the counterattacking units.

The "intermediate fortified area" and "main position" together made up the "principal battle zone"; the forward zone plus the principal battle zone made up the "1st battle zone" (or 1st position). At least 4 km behind this 1st battle zone a 2nd zone or position would be built, based on the same concepts (with its own forward zone, intermediate area and main position).

Capturing and securing the intermediate fortified area would cause the attacker great difficulties, consuming their time and costing them casualties. Only after this task was accomplished would the already weakened foe be able to move against the main position. They'd have to re-deploy their artillery to deal with this installation, using up still more time. This would give the defenders the opportunity to start firing the majority of their

own guns, assembled behind the main position, and to initiate the counterattacks of the reserve infantry. The objective of the counter-thrust would be to drive the enemy back through the fortified intermediate zone to their starting points, while they suffered further damage from any machine gun nests which they had failed to either detect or capture.

The new tactics, based on the extensive lessons of the war, had evolved gradually and were constantly being refined. Elastic defense would minimize casualties, take advantage of the latest weaponry, and offer many chances of success to well-disciplined troops and capable leaders after they were properly trained.

The roles of the combat arms

In the new defensive tactics, the infantry remained as always the main combat arm, but they now had available a larger range of equipment. The entire defensive system would have been unthinkable without machine guns, which now were the principal infantry weapons. But the small trench mortars and grenade launchers had also become indispensable. Opinions were still divided as to the usefulness of very light artillery pieces to provide direct support. In hand-to-hand fighting hand grenades became important; they were effective as well as popular weapons.

The artillery were equally essential, and were of incomparably more importance for providing long-range fire. Everyone was convinced of the need for large caliber guns, and so the number of heavy and very heavy batteries fighting at the side of the field artillery units was always growing; nevertheless Austria-Hungary's opponents usually enjoyed considerable numerical superiority. Improved methods of plotting fire made it possible to open a sudden bombardment from batteries spread over a wide area on a single, especially important target. Since artillery was more powerful than ever on the offensive, the importance of defensive counter-fire continued to grow also.

Alongside the two principal arms engaged on the ground the young air force was becoming ever more significant as a third component. They were still the most effective - and almost the only - means of scouting the enemy. But the air units were also playing a combat role, spreading confusion and causing casualties among the opposing troops on the ground with bombs, machine gun fire and hand grenades. Despite the usefulness and importance of the air arm, for reasons discussed earlier the Aus-Hung. Army had been unable to deploy enough planes. However, despite lack of numbers the airmen knew how to contribute to the new tactics and

performed worth-while service.

Naturally a defensive system spread over a large amount of ground made great demands on the technical troops. Both the sappers and the technical companies serving with the combat troops had more than enough tasks to perform, and the technical offices assigned to the mid-level and higher HQ also were performing functions that they wouldn't have dreamed of in earlier periods of the war. The same was true of the communication services, whose reliable and continuing function was necessary for success. In defenses that had now grown so large the telephone was the principal tool for delivering messages from commanders at all levels of authority. When the lines were broken, recourse was had to radio, carrier pigeons or messenger dogs. Also, as in times that seemed so long ago, fearless and death-defying messengers were still the most reliable - if not the quickest - means of delivering orders.

Naturally the wide expanse of the fortification system also made it more difficult to supply the troops with the necessities of life and of combat. This was the responsibility of the various quartermaster HQ, which oversaw the supply trains and motor columns. Their problems were multiplied by the growing shortage of both food and military equipment.

Adapting the new tactics to the Italian theater

This practical but by no means simple tactical doctrine wasn't employed in the Northeast where the course of events made other tactics more appropriate. Also in the mountainous portions of the Southwestern theater of operations there were no substantial changes, since after the high mountains had been chosen as a battlefield they offered no opportunity for experiments and forced the combatants to adopt a conservative approach. The strong points in the mountains, connected to create the first line, had been built up like fortresses during the course of the years. Bitter fighting raged around these strong points since even a small loss of territory to the enemy could have painful consequences, including perhaps the withdrawal of an entire sector to the next line of ridges and heights. And this in turn would make it necessary for the troops to work for months to build a new line, since there was a shortage of labor detachments. This shortage and the geographical problems precluded the construction of more than one line; fortifications in greater depth were established only in some particularly important areas where envelopment assaults were feared.

In the Venetian plains, on the other hand, the new defensive tactics were facilitated by terrain which was covered with densely cultivated fields of wheat and other crops, vineyards, groves of mulberry trees and an extensive road network, often accompanied by deep canals. But preparing the defenses and training the troops required considerable time and effort. The permanent positions had been neglected and in places allowed to deteriorate during the preparations for the June offensive. Although afterwards they were systematically rebuilt, there still had been little progress in creating deep defensive zones as of the start of August. In no sectors was the "main position" completed or a second position ready. Finally in mid-September the Isonzo Army began to trace out and build a second position behind the Monticano, the so-called "King's Zone." Due to the lack of laborers, the planners had to be content merely to decide where to place the lines in the zones toward the rear, to improve the transportation network, and to create a skeleton of barriers and installations to be fleshed out later.

And there was a danger inherent in the involved process of establishing a new fortified system in the densely covered terrain of the Venetian plains. Only troops who were completely familiar with an area could fight with success in the complex maze of fortifications, which would give them an advantage over the enemy - who'd be operating in unknown terrain - while carrying out the counterattacks. Thus it was necessary to create standing garrisons for the various sectors and to rotate them as little as possible. This not only complicated the process of providing units with the necessary rest periods, but also made it necessary to divide the armies into "positional" and "reserve" divisions; units in the latter category had to be prepared to intervene at any part of the front. The complications placed great demands on commanders at all levels.

All the Aus-Hung. divisions which were given prolonged rest-periods in the Venetian plains after the June offensive were kept busy learning the new defensive tactics. The storm troops in particular took courses on the subject so they'd be familiar with the concept of elastic defense. But the most important question remained - would all the troops be proficient in their new tasks? There was great danger involved in giving such new instructions to ordinary soldiers who were accustomed to the tactical guidelines they'd followed in the past. Now they were being told:

"You shouldn't fight in the forward lines, but around them. When there is a major enemy offensive you should evacuate the outposts systematically and withdraw to the main line of

resistance a considerable distance in the rear. You are avoiding the destructive rain of fire in the forward zone not to permanently give up this area but so that you can recover it with a counterattack."

The old dogma of maintaining a continuous line was being replaced by the concept of defenses arranged in checker-board fashion around individual outposts spread over a wide area. Fighting in such dispersed fashion required that the lower-level commanders of small units should display the same talents - ability to think independently and energetically carry out assignments - that had earlier been expected of company and battalion commanders.

The necessary goal of teaching every single soldier to fight independently couldn't possibly be achieved. In the first place, it was impossible for the divisions at the front to completely retrain their men in the new tactics while still engaged in positional warfare. There was already a lack of manpower to garrison the first line, as well as a lack of guns, trench mortars and machine guns. Many units also lacked intelligent lower-level commanders who could make independent decisions. Reports from general staff officers who'd visited the front clearly indicate that the intellectual level and technical capabilities of units from various parts of multi-national Old Austria varied considerably. Officers accustomed to the linear tactics didn't have the necessary confidence in new and thus untested instructions. Study of the lessons from the German Western front remained confined to the upper levels of the command structure. But even some of the higher-ranking leaders didn't appreciate the new concepts. Aware that maintaining an elastic defense increased the weight of their responsibilities, they anticipated the next battle with trepidation. For example, they didn't want to risk leaving just a few men in the forward line of resistance, since they feared that larger casualties would be suffered in counterattacks to recover it than would have been incurred by keeping it strongly garrisoned. And they believed that the temptation to keep heading for the rear once a withdrawal started would be too much for the less-motivated troops, leading perhaps to a premature and irretrievable abandonment of the main line of resistance.

It was undoubtedly a gamble to introduce new tactics at a time when the inner strength of the Aus-Hung. Army had already long been in decline. Abandoning long-held tactical doctrines in the middle of a war was indeed difficult. The attempt to implement an elastic defense without running great risks was possible only because the substantial barrier of the Piave protected the front. This obstacle prevented the enemy, who were aware that the

fortifications held by certain divisions were inadequate, from carrying out any disruptive thrusts. Thus there were no major actions in the Venetian plains in the summer of 1918, so that a significant number of our divisions could learn about the latest defensive tactics. But when the new defensive system was finally tested by the major enemy offensive in October, the components of the multi-national Aus-Hung. Army - tired of the war, suffering from hunger, and distracted by the rapid political disintegration - no longer all had the will to resist, regardless of casualties, which is necessary to carry out any successful defensive operation.

7. Events along the Southwestern front in September

Despite the continuing successes of the allied powers in France and the increasing disparity in strength between the Italian and the k.u.k. Armies, in September G.Lt Diaz continued to await a "favorable moment" for his decisive offensive, while continuing to make preparations. But the Italians were active with local operations on all parts of the front, designed to pin down Aus-Hung. combat troops. And they did in fact make it very difficult to relieve worn-out divisions from the line.

Events in the mountain sectors

In September the enemy artillery, air units and storm detachments continued their lively activity along Tyrol's western and southern fronts. Among the glaciers of the Ortler sector, Col. Freih. von Lempruch's 164 Inf Bde repulsed Italian patrols which probed toward the Trafoia Eiswand summit on 6 September; on the other hand, the enemy were able to capture one of the Brigade's forward positions south of the summit on the 27th.

As already narrated, on 3 September storm troops in 22 Sch Div's defensive sector recovered the two important peaks (Pta S Matteo and Mt Matello) which had been lost on 13 August. There were numerous minor actions in September around the Tonale Pass, in the Adamello sector, in the Judicarien and in the Riva Sector. Outposts of 49 ID in the Val di Genova, Val di Daone and Val dei Concei were the targets of many operations by Italian patrols.

Also during September the enemy continued to undertake small-scale operations against the defenses of XXI Corps in the Adige valley near Mori, on the Zugna ridge and the Corno; all of these efforts were checked. The Italians were equally unsuccessful when they tried to attack the Edelweiss Corps in the Pasubio - Borcola Pass area, on Mt Majo, from the Laghi basin and toward

the Cimone position. On 3 September patrols of storm troops from 56 Sch Div thrust against the southern Corno peak and inflicted substantial casualties on the enemy. Near Nago on the Dosso alto the storm troops of the Riva Sector, defying Italian artillery and trench mortar fire, penetrated some trenches held by Czechoslovaks. The enemy suffered heavy losses.

Once more in September the fighting was heavier in the zones held by the k.u.k. 11th Army on the Asiago plateau and in the Grappa area. The Italians and their allies continued to heavily bombard our positions on the plateau. Usually such bombardments were followed by infantry assaults at dawn. Thus after a sudden burst of gunfire English and French storm troops struck the left wing of III Corps and the front of XIII Corps early in the morning of 6 September. The French entered the positions of 74 Hon ID west of Mt Sisemol but were thrown out by a counter-thrust. Along the other parts of the front targeted by the enemy our own fire forced them to retreat before they reached the barricades.

In the night of 9-10 September the enemy made new attempts, after heavy artillery preparation, to attack parts of the front of 6 and 52 ID (III Corps) near Canove; they were repulsed. A simultaneous thrust by English storm troops against the advanced positions of 16 ID collapsed under the defenders' fire south of Asiago.

Already in the night of 14-15 September English and French storm detachments once again attacked on both sides of Asiago after strong artillery and trench mortar fire. They were repulsed by 52 and 16 ID. Italian attempts to attack the eastern wing of VI Corps in the Frenzella ravine were equally unsuccessful. On the eastern part of the plateau Italian infantry attacked on 19 September; their targets were the positions of 53 ID north of Mt di Val Bella and of 5 ID north of the Col del Rosso. After very heavy artillery fire the enemy achieved two small penetrations; however, a counter-thrust by the nearest reserves (parts of IR 131 and of IR 1) soon completely restored the situation.

Early on 23 September powerful artillery fire opened against the entire front from Canove to Mt di Val Bella, and continued throughout the day. However, the only serious infantry attack was directed against Mt Sisemol. The French broke into the position of 74 Hon ID on the western slope of this hotly-contested mountain but were thrown out by a counterattack. In other areas the attacks broke down in front of our barricades.

There was also heavy local fighting in September in the sector

between the Brenta and the Piave. Early on the 10th the enemy directed strong artillery fire against 4 ID's positions on Mt Asolone. After repeated attempts, Italian assault parties using smoke projectiles broke into the main position of 4 ID. The south Moravian and Lower Austrian soldiers of IR 99 recovered the lost trenches up to the outposts. On the next day (11 September) the enemy once more attempted to enter our main position on Mt Asolone but were shot to pieces by fire from artillery and machine guns. Further thrusts by weaker Italian detachments collapsed on the same day in front of the defenses of 48 ID on Mt Pertica, and during the night in 17 ID's sector on Mt Solarolo. Enemy casualties in both places were quite severe.

On 14 September the Italian artillery once more fired along the entire front between the Brenta valley and Mt Asolone. In the valley the enemy, supported by planes which ranged far behind the lines, drove back the outposts of 40 Hon ID by Rivalta. The situation couldn't be restored with a counterattack. Therefore the troops had to pull back into the forward position. The defenders refrained from further attempts to recover the outposts but were content because they still held the main position between Mt Allesi and the Col Caprile.

On 16 September the enemy tried to intensify their local infantry attacks along the entire front between the Brenta and the Piave. Early in the morning the 4th Italian Army, after an intense artillery bombardment which increased to drumfire, sent strong assault detachments forward. Their advance was checked by the defensive fire of 40 Hon ID in the Brenta valley and in front of the Col Caprile. The artillery on Mt Asolone, defended by 4 ID, were also on the alert. They laid down a barrage on the enemy troops concentrated in the forward trenches and prevented them from advancing. Also the 48 ID were able to check the Italian detachments heading for Mt Pertica. Finally, the enemy failed in their assault troop operation against 17 ID's positions on Mt Solarolo.

Especially bitter fighting occurred along the eastern wing of the 48th Division. Here the Italians drove into the Division's positions on the Tasson ridge and the slopes of the uppermost Stizzone valley early on the 16th. Toward evening they tried to widen their local penetrations. But in the night of 16-17 September the troops of 48 ID were able to wrest back the parts of the trenches that had been lost on the Tasson ridge. Only the front southwest of the Col dell'Orso, the so-called "Pez position" remained in Italian hands. On the 17th the enemy tried all day to once again seize our entrenchments on the Tasson

ridge. The Italians stormed forward five times, but the gallant defenders refused to budge from their ruined positions, while inflicting heavy casualties on their opponents in fighting with hand grenades. There were further fruitless assaults on the Tasson ridge during the 18th. On the next day (19 September) the Italians once again tried in vain to penetrate the lines of 40 Hon ID on the Col Caprile. Their efforts were equally unsuccessful against 55 ID on Mt Solarolo. After a final assault against the Tasson ridge was shattered by the stout 48 ID on 20 September the Italians lost their enthusiasm for continuing operations in the Grappa area. On 24 September the enemy pushed back the outposts of 4 ID in the Cesill valley, but soon afterwards they were once more driven out of our positions.

In connection with these actions, Italian artillery delivered very strong disruptive fire against the right wing of the k.u.k. 6th Army (between Mt Spinuccia and the Piave) in the morning of 16 September. Enemy assault troops penetrated the outpost line of 50 ID north of Mt Tomba in the afternoon, but returned to their starting points in the evening. The villages in the Quero basin were bombarded by the Italians' heavy high-trajectory guns. The advanced positions of 20 Hon ID near Faveri were targets of repeated operations by many Italian patrols and assault troops on 16 September and the following days. Similarly the 50 ID had to repulse persistent enemy patrols south of Mt Spinuccia during September.

Thus in the weeks and months since the end of the great battle in June the Italians had seized the initiative almost everywhere with local attacks. The Aus-Hung. troops were forced ever more onto the defensive. At first this was very depressing to the gallant soldiers, but then they gradually became resigned to playing merely the role of defenders.

The heightened Italian activity on the mountain front coincided with a series of unit rotations within the k.u.k. 11th Army. At the start of September the 42 Hon ID, which had been resting in the Pergine area, exchanged quarters with 25 ID which had interrupted their march near Fonzaso. On 20 September GO Scheuchenstuel relieved 4 ID, exhausted from the fighting around Mt Asolone, with 42 Hon ID and with 28 ID (assembled in the Cismon valley). At the same time Archduke Joseph's Army Group HQ ordered 18 ID to move from the Val di Sole into the Sugana valley as a reserve for 11th Army. Although the Edelweiss Division had just started recuperating, they were sent from Kaltern to the area around Trent, from which the Division's IR 114 moved forward on 30 September to Folgaria-Serrada. At the end of September the

38 Hon ID, which had gathered around Borgo, marched to the Asiago plateau behind the front of III and XIII Corps.

Events in the Piave sector

In the upper Piave sector, only minor fighting developed in September along the fronts of II and XXIV Corps. This occurred mainly in 25 ID's area near Bigolino, and included the repulse of enemy patrols which sought to cross the Piave on the 2nd and the 8th plus a storm troop raid on the Italian trenches by IR 84 on the 18th, in which prisoners were taken.

In 6th Army's sector the 8 CD near Moriago were relieved on 7 September by 11 Hon CD. 21 Sch Div, which had arrived from the interior, were stationed in the Belluno area, where the 13 Sch Div and 55 ID were also encamped in the AOK's reserves.

Numerous Italian patrol operations interrupted the quiet of positional warfare on the Isonzo Army's front. But thrusts by Italian units over the Piave opposite XVI Corps were soon defeated on the Piave islands east of Spresiano, as were attempts by enemy assault troops to cross opposite IV and VII Corps by Ponte di Piave and Noventa di Piave. Especially in XXIII Corps' sector near S Dona di Piave the enemy alternated landing attempts with artillery bombardments around mid-September. Minor combat also flared up on the lowermost stretch of the Piave in front of XXII Corps.

Sudden heavy bursts of fire by the Italian artillery occasionally developed into infantry operations on a small-scale, in which the enemy apparently were trying to pin down the opposing units. The Italian air force was active throughout September. Thus bomber squadrons attacked our 6th Army and Cordignano in the evening of the 16th, and struck the S Vito railroad station on the 17th. In retaliation our naval pilots bombed the Italian airfields near Venice and the Stabilimento Balneare in the evening of the 18th. Raids by enemy squadrons against the villages and railroad stations behind the front led to another operation by our naval air force on the 23rd, which targeted the supply depot at Casa bianca (on the Piave vecchio) as well as the Stabilimento Balneare.

Under the Isonzo Army's XVI Corps, the 9 ID were relieved at the start of September by 7 ID (which had been resting behind the Livenza in the Pasiano area) and were re-assigned to 6th Army. In mid-September the 57 ID of XXII Corps, stationed where the Piave flows into the sea, changed places with 2 ID which had been

in reserve at Portogruaro. At the same time the 8 CD and 26 Sch Div left 6th Army and were placed on the Livenza behind the Isonzo Army. 9 CD had left by train for Albania at the start of September.

Analyses of the overall situation in Italy

As is evident from the narrative above, enemy activity on the front between the Adige and the Piave increased considerably after mid-September. Boroevic's Army Group HQ reported to the AOK on the 20th that "There is no doubt that the Entente is urging Italy to attack, whether the purpose is to pin down our forces or to win military successes that will make Austria-Hungary's political situation more difficult. The Italians will have to rely mostly on their own strength. Since they aren't capable of attacking along the entire Southwestern front, they might make their main effort between the Brenta and the Piave, with simultaneous local thrusts west of the Brenta and at points along the Piave. Preparations for the offensive have already been under way for months, so we must anticipate that the operation could start any day now."

FM Boroevic calculated that the Italian commanders had seven divisions at the front between the Brenta and the Piave, with four in reserve; on the Piave they had nine and a half divisions with five in reserve. Their strategic reserves consisted of five divisions east of the Brenta and three west of that river. Also available, according to this estimate, were about three American divisions³⁸⁵ and three Italian cavalry divisions. We had seven divisions of our own between the Brenta and the Piave with two in reserve; on the Piave were fifteen divisions with five in reserve. The strategic reserves were three divisions in the Belluno basin and four behind the Piave front. Thus the enemy had a total of 36 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions to oppose 36 Aus-Hung. units.

The report concluded as follows: "Based on the number of units, the relative force of the two sides seems equal. However, the balance is upset by the factors of supply and of unit strength. In the latter area our position is unfavorable; because of malaria and dysentery we estimate that our divisions, especially those of the Isonzo Army, are at only half strength. We can't calculate the extent to which the enemy have been able to replace their own losses due to illness. Before we can carry on an

385TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually the Americans never had more than one infantry regiment in Italy, and it was engaged only in the very last days of the war.

extended battle, we desire above all to increase our reserves of artillery ammunition and of rations."

Expecting a major Italian offensive, on 21 September the k.u.k. AOK placed the strategic reserve units stationed around Belluno at the disposal of FM Boroevic. On the next day (the 22nd) the I and XXVI Corps of 11th Army plus XV Corps of 6th Army were placed under the "Belluno Armeegruppe"; it was commanded by FZM Goglia who was subordinated to FM Boroevic. The newly-formed group would ensure that the especially threatened sector between the Brenta and the Piave would be defended by one HQ.

In the midst of the increased tension on the Southwestern front, on 20 September the German high command once again approached the k.u.k. AOK with a request for more Aus-Hung. divisions for the Western front. It seemed hardly possible to honor this request due to the dispersal of our units among five fronts (plus the interior) and their limited manpower, and because the strength of the troops was sapped by illness and insufficient food (especially on the Southwestern front). After carefully considering all these circumstances, GO Arz found himself compelled on the same day (20 September) to reply to GFM Hindenburg with a telegram explaining the painful situation; the Aus-Hung. Southwestern front had just 280,000 riflemen to face larger enemy armies that were much better supplied with weaponry and (particularly) ammunition of all sorts. Almost all of our divisions in Venetia were more or less infected by malaria. The artillery and supply trains were almost immobile because of the shortage of horses. The front now held was the shortest and tactically strongest possible line, so all efforts must be devoted to keeping it. If it had to be evacuated under enemy pressure the situation of the Aus-Hung. Army would deteriorate with unforeseen consequences. Irreplaceable military equipment would be captured and the armies would lose their remaining power of resistance. Political factors also made it impossible for the Monarchy to endure any military setback in Italy. GO Arz declared that he could weaken the Southwestern front by one division at most; if any more departed the damage to the overall situation would outweigh any help they might render in the West.³⁸⁶ No troops could be spared from Albania and just one division (30 ID) from Ukraine. To pull more forces from the East

386Because of the latest demand by the German plenipotentiary general with the AOK for Aus-Hung. divisions, the original intention was to send 32 ID and 1 CD from the interior to France. But as will be narrated below, both units had to be employed elsewhere (in the Balkans and in Transylvania, respectively).

wasn't advisable because of the attitude of Romania.

The AOK was thus willing to part with two divisions (30 ID plus one from Italy). However, the Bulgarian high command also urgently needed help due to the catastrophic developments in Macedonia we'll describe later. On 22 September GFM Hindenburg also urged the AOK at Baden to support Bulgaria before that country collapsed. GO Arz finally informed his allies that he could make just two divisions available (9 and 30 ID), which had 26 battalions and 34 batteries. He could do no more due to the tense conditions elsewhere. The AOK asked the Germans to decide whether they wanted the two divisions in the Balkans or in France. GFM Hindenburg decided in favor of the Balkans. On 23 September the 9 ID entrained for Macedonia.

C. The overall military-political situation in summer 1918

1. The enemy's political and military goals

In spring 1918 the Entente had recognized the failure of their efforts to separate Austria-Hungary from the leading military power of the Quadruple Alliance, Germany; therefore the tentative peace feelers between the two sides were ended. A decision to the World War would be sought by force of arms. Clemenceau, Lloyd-George and Foch felt justified in their capability to keep their peoples willing to fight on until final victory. At the side of these men stood the rigid idealist President Wilson, who felt he was in a position to judge the entire world; his ideas provided a powerful spiritual weapon in the fight against the Central Powers. Wilson was increasingly convinced that the cause of the Quadruple Alliance was immoral because it was composed of monarchies!

The Germans' great offensive in the first half of the year was driven by their need to overthrow the military power of France and England on the battlefields in the West before the United States of America could commit all of their fresh forces to the war. The German dilemma - the need to exploit the superiority which they'd won by exerting all their strength within a certain time limit - was apparent to the Western powers. Thus the objective of the French and English was to survive this critical point in time, since they knew that with American help they would be equal in strength to their opponents around the middle of the

year and thereafter would have the upper hand.³⁸⁷ The waiting period was a severe test for political and military leaders, but they were aware that victory or defeat was merely a question of the strength of their will.³⁸⁸

The front was substantially shaken by the weight of the German blows; Paris and the English bases at the Channel ports appeared to be endangered. Defensive fighting consumed many troops, so that the primary concern of both the French commander-in-chief General Pétain and of his British counterpart FM Haig, who no longer had sufficient replacements, was how to replenish their ranks.³⁸⁹ Only the flow of men from America offset the Western Powers' lack of troops. But the American soldiers weren't available immediately after they were shipped over; they required a long period of training, especially since the units didn't receive the majority of their guns, planes and other military gear - mostly from English or French factories - until they reached Europe.³⁹⁰ And General Pershing, the American commander-in-chief, resisted every attempt to break up his forces.

Until mid-June the powerful and successful German assaults in France deeply impressed the Entente with their opponents' military strength. The overall commander Foch was concerned not only about resisting the next onslaught, but also about how to prepare for his own attacks at certain points.³⁹¹ Successful local thrusts were necessary to increase the self-confidence of the allied troops and to restore their skill at mobile warfare. The generalissimo, who'd been planning a major future offensive since January, hoped that he could strike in about two months when the Americans would be able to cooperate on a large scale. Based on this idea, on 27 June he asked the Italian commander General Diaz to continue to develop the plans for an attack which

387Foch, Vol. II, p. 15. Haig, "England an der Westfront" (German translation; Berlin, 1925), p. 253.

388Lloyd George, "War Memoirs", Vol. VI (London, 1936), p. 3084.

389Foch, Vol. II, pp. 75 ff. Haig, p. 250. A number of British divisions had to leave the front to be rebuilt after the costly spring battles.

390Churchill, "Weltkrisis 1916-18" (German translation; Leipzig-Vienna, 1928), Vol. II, pp. 187 ff. One reason why the units were equipped with weapons of European origin was to save room on the ships to transport as many men as possible; also the industries of the United States weren't geared toward producing armaments to the extent of those in the Old World.

391Foch, Vol. II, pp. 123 ff. French Official History, Vol. VI, Part 2, p. 405.

had been canceled in the middle of the month because of the Aus-Hung. offensive; thus the Italians could take advantage of the failure of Austria-Hungary's breakthrough attempt. They should seek to win favorable positions from which they could join the Entente assault on all fronts which would "probably" start in September.³⁹²

While the generalissimo was still preparing for the next trial of arms, at the start of July a major war conference took place at Versailles to discuss the situation on all fronts. The conferees approved the plan for the principal battlefield in France which Foch had developed the month before, and asked that President Wilson should send a hundred divisions to Europe by 1 August 1919. This number was believed necessary to provide enough superiority to be absolutely sure of success.³⁹³ The British armaments minister Churchill was told to prepare enormous supplies for the next year.³⁹⁴ The leading figures of the Entente also contemplated an offensive of their Army of the Orient in Macedonia.³⁹⁵ Finally they discussed whether to increase their intervention on the Arctic coast near Murmansk and in Siberia, for which purpose American troops could be used.³⁹⁶

Progress of the Slavic independence movements

Immediately after this military conference, on 30 June, a ceremony took place in Paris that had great significance for the future of Austria-Hungary - the president of the Republic presented a standard to the first Czecho-Slovakian regiment that had been created in France with former prisoners of war who'd come from Russia.

In his first official appearance in Switzerland in the summer of 1915 Professor Thomas G Masaryk had long ago demanded that the sons of his nationality should gain an independent state by openly fighting at the side of the Entente armies. Soon "legions" were formed from Czechs and southern Slavs who were in

392Foch, Vol. II, p. 137. French Official History, Vol. VI, Part 2, pp. 362 and 405 ff.

393Foch, Vol. II, pp. 128 ff. However, Lloyd-George later wrote (Vol. VI, p. 3060) that this "exaggerated" demand was designed to ensure that the Americans would send at least 50 divisions.

394Churchill, Vol. II, pp. 183 ff.

395Tournes, pp. 225 ff. French Official History, Vol. VII, Part 1, p. 3.

396Foch, Vol. II., p. 132. Lloyd-George, "War Memoirs", Vol. VI, p. 3192. French Official History, Vol. VII, Part 1, p. 39.

Russia either as colonists or (mainly) as prisoners of war, although the organizers encountered considerable official resistance. By the end of 1916 the Czechs had two regiments available. In the same year two volunteer divisions were created from Aus-Hung. prisoners who spoke Serbo-Croatian; they suffered very heavy casualties in the Dobruja campaign. The men who joined the legions didn't all do so out of conviction. Hope of better living conditions, and also strong pressure, certainly were motives of at least equal importance.

Immediately after the fall of the Tsarist regime Masaryk, who'd been traveling around the world, appeared in Russia. On 13 June 1917 he signed an agreement in St Petersburg with the visiting French minister of armaments Albert Thomas; they envisioned the shipment of 27,000 Czech and 3000 south Slav volunteers to the Western front. But creation of the south Slavic legions was hampered by the indifference of the Croats and by disputes between the Serbian government and the emigre leaders. These arguments hadn't been resolved by the Corfu Pact, and broke out again at the end of 1917. The "Yugoslav corps" of barely 20,000 men was stationed briefly on the Romanian front before it was moved to the Murmansk coast and then shipped through England and France to Salonika.

Meanwhile at the start of July 1917 large Czecho-Slovakian units entered battle for the first time on the side of the enemies of the Habsburg Monarchy, at Zborow. Afterwards there was no major hindrance to the expansion of the legions. In late fall of 1917 a corps of 35,000 to 40,000 Czecho-Slovakian volunteers gathered around Masaryk in the Kiev area. After November the Czechs were drawn into the turmoil of the second Russian revolution.³⁹⁷ At the same time Clemenceau gave the General Secretary of the Paris National Council, Dr Eduard Benes, permission to create a Czecho-Slovakian army in France. On the other hand, Benes couldn't get the Italian government to let him recruit among the numerous Czech prisoners being held in Italy. Attempts to recruit Czech and south Slavic immigrants in America after Wilson declared war were also of limited value. Only the Poles were able to find a large number of volunteers (nearly 20,000 men) in the USA during the winter of 1917-18.

The adventures of the Czech Legion in Russia

³⁹⁷See the war memoirs of Masaryk and Benes, as well as the very extensive Czech literature. In German the major sources are Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe" (pp. 172 ff.) and Klante, "Von der Wolga bis zum Amur - Die tschechische Legion und der russische Bürgerkrieg" (Berlin, 1931), pp. 52 ff.

Masaryk concluded an agreement with the Russians at the start of 1918 so that they'd let the Czecho-Slovakian troops travel through Siberia and Vladivostok to the West. The Czechs would carry only enough weapons to ensure the safety of the train transports. The Czecho-Slovakian regiments began their journey from Kiev and Poltava on 20 February 1918. In mid-March they fought rear-guard actions near Bakhmut against the Germans who were advancing into Ukraine. The first Czech units had already reached Vladivostok by the end of April, but their main force was still spread out in three groups between Lake Baikal and Pensa. As time went on relations between the Czechoslovaks and the mistrustful Soviets considerably worsened, and in mid-May open fighting broke out on the railroad east of the Urals between the Legion and the local Russian authorities. Concerned about keeping open the way to Vladivostok, the Czechs first seized the stretch of the rail line as far as Lake Baikal; farther east the Bolsheviks for the time being still held the upper hand against Cossacks from the Trans-Baikal and other Hosts under Semenov. Thus despite the wishes of their leader Masaryk (who had moved to America some time earlier) the Czechs had become allies of the White Russian counter-revolution, and especially of the "west Siberian government" whose leading figure in the summer of 1918 was the Tsarist Admiral Kolchak.

Even after the Moscow government were forced to conclude peace with Germany, for reasons of self-preservation they also wanted to maintain acceptable relations with the Entente. Nevertheless the counter-revolution was by no means unwelcome to the Western Powers and - above all - to Japan which had already occupied Vladivostok in April. The Entente saw the anti-Bolshevik parties not only as a means to keep pressure on Russia, but also to form a new Eastern front against Germany's expansionist policies. It was more difficult to gain Wilson's consent, but by August there were around 70,000 Japanese and 9000 American troops, plus English, French and Italian contingents numbering between 1000 and 1500, guarding the Manchurian railroad to back up the White Russians and the Czechs who'd been supporting them since the end of June. Now the entire Trans-Siberian Railroad was wrested from the Soviets. In western Siberia and the Urals the counter-revolutionaries, aided by the Czechs, gained significant successes; a thrust toward Moscow was no longer outside the realm of possibility. Here the Czechs' front made a 90 degree turn at Kazan; to the north it extended to the cities of Ekaterinburg³⁹⁸

398Just before the Czechs entered Ekaterinburg the fate of Tsar Nicholas II and his family was sealed; in the night of 16-17 July they were cruelly murdered by the local Soviet with the

and Tobolsk (facing east) and to the east it stretched to Simbirsk and Samara (facing south). Although the Czechoslovakians, with a maximum strength of 60 to 70,000 men, were just part of the counter-revolutionary forces, they were the backbone of this part of the front. Thus to both the Entente and the Russians it was useful to legitimize the fiction that they were a new military power.

Farther south the Orenburg and Astrakhan Cossacks were engaged against the Bolsheviks down to the Caspian Sea. The Russian territories southeast of Ukraine had also broken free of Moscow and were divided among a group of weak, poorly organized governments. After a frightful winter, Tsarist generals organized a "Volunteer Army" on the lower Don and in the steppes of the Kuban region. Simultaneously, during the spring the Germans and Turks - operating more as rivals than as allies - had appeared in the Caucasus territories, which had rich resources of oil and minerals and were controlled by several republics.³⁹⁹ After the Turks occupied their old provinces of Erzerum, Batum and Kars they concluded the "Peace of Batum" with the Caucasian republics. Later, in September, the Ottomans occupied the oilfields of Baku after driving the British from the area. The latter had relieved the Russians in north Persia after the fall of the Tsar and then extended their operations around the Caspian Sea; after they lost Baku they still maintained a presence on the western coast of this land-locked sea and in the southwestern parts of Turkestan, so in a certain sense they also were part of the counter-revolutionary front.

consent of the central authorities at Moscow. See Jagow, "Die Schuld am Zarenmord" (in the "Berliner Monatshefte" for 1935, 13th Issue, pp. 363 ff.)

399 In mid-summer the German forces in the southern Caucasus were reinforced to the strength of about one division plus a cavalry brigade. GO Arz promised to send two battalions, but was unable to do so (Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 282; Landwehr, p. 253).

For the countless Austro-Hungarian and German prisoners of war who'd hoped to quickly return home after the collapse of Russia the intervention of the Czecho-Slovaks was a bitter disappointment.⁴⁰⁰ The prisoners speaking Czech or Slovak were incorporated into the Czecho-Slovakian regiments; the Poles, South Slavs, Romanians and Italians were supposed to join new national legions alongside the Czecho-Slovakians. The Germans and Magyars - except for a small minority which sought salvation at the side of the Bolsheviks - were often driven back into the prisoner camps, where they again suffered a hard fate due to the national hatred of the Czechs.

Events in the Murmansk area unfolded similarly to those along the Czecho-Slovakian front. The British had landed here in spring 1918 at first with the justification that they were guarding the coast from intervention by the Germans and Finns. But in summer they attacked on the side of the counter-revolution; together with detachments from other powers plus local militias they advanced toward St Petersburg, Vologda and Kotlas. In mid-August their troops in Kotlas were 600 km away from the Czechs in Kazan. The situation of Soviet Russia seemed all the more ominous because of unfavorable developments in the interior, due in large measure to the attitude of the Socialist Revolutionary party. The latter group sought to force a break with Germany by assassinating the German ambassador Graf Mirbach-Harff (on 6 July) and the commander-in-chief in Ukraine GFM Eichhorn (on 30 July). Nevertheless, on 10 August the German Empire signed a supplement to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty; the Russians once more renounced any claim to Livonia, Estonia and Georgia (in the Caucasus) and promised to pay compensation of six million rubles

400Per Elsa Brandström, "Unter Kriegsgefangenen in Russland und Sibirien 1914-1918" (Berlin, 1922; p. 8) the numbers of soldiers placed in Russian captivity during the war were:

. From the German Army - 2,082 officers and 165,000 men

. From the Aus-Hung. Army - 54,146 officers and 2,050,000 men

. From the Turkish Army - 950 officers and 90,000 men

. From the Bulgarian Army - A total of 200 officers and men

On the other hand, the number of captured Russians was as follows:

. Imprisoned in Germany - 14,050 officers and 1,420,479 men

. Imprisoned in Austria-Hungary - 5,000 officers and 1,365,000 men

in gold. On the other hand, Germany promised

- . to evacuate the territories on the Black Sea at the completion of peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine,
- . to stop creating independent states on Soviet Russian soil,
- . to not support the Turks in the Caucasus, and especially
- . to hinder the latter from attacking Baku (which the Turks did nonetheless).

This treaty upset Germany's allies. For Moscow it was a moral reinforcement, which played a considerable part in Soviet efforts to overcome the summer crisis. In mid-August Trotsky, who had built the Red Army into a reliable weapon, was already able to counterattack his opponents; since the Entente offensive in the Murmansk area had come to a standstill anyway, he only had to direct his efforts against the Czecho-Slovakian front. In September the Bolsheviks recovered Kazan, Simbirsk, Sisran and Uralsk; in October they reached Samara. At the same time the collapse of the Turks in Palestine relieved the Communists' situation in the Caucasus, so that for the time being they'd weathered the most difficult storm.

The fighting carried out by the Czecho-Slovaks in Siberia and the Urals in spring and summer 1918 made a strong impression on the Western powers and considerably aided the work of the National Council in Paris. On 30 June the French informed the General Secretary of the Council, Dr Eduard Benes, that they recognized the right of the Czechs to self-determination and considered the Council to be "the principal representative and forerunner of a future Czecho-Slovakian government." This statement was consistent with the verdict against the Habsburg Monarchy which Clemenceau had delivered in May before a committee of the National Assembly; he asserted that the Monarchy's destruction would lead to a decisive attack on Germany's rear.⁴⁰¹ It was especially significant that the British Foreign Minister Balfour now finally stopped resisting the parties which were demanding the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary; this was evident in a British declaration on 9 August. Moving beyond the French position, the English government declared that the Czecho-Slovaks were an allied nation, their forces an allied army and their National Council "the present embodiment of a future Czecho-Slovakian government." Now Wilson also quickly supported this policy of the Western powers, thus renouncing the tenth of his own "Fourteen Points." On 3 September Washington recognized the Czecho-Slovakian National Council "as a *de facto* government which has the right to conduct military and political business during the war." The Italians had already deployed the first formations

⁴⁰¹Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 215 ff.

of Czecho-Slovakian troops on their front in May and thus indicated their agreement with the Czech policy of the Western powers.

Progress of the other Slavic groups

In a military convention signed on 28 September, the Polish National Committee easily secured for their army in France the same rights which the Entente had granted to the Czecho-Slovaks. Command of the Polish forces was assumed by a former brigadier of the Polish Legion, General Haller. However, the Western powers left political questions open out of consideration for the Warsaw government, which was hardly concealing its opposition to the Central Powers.

During the summer the Yugoslavian emigres had to be content with continuing expressions of sympathy. The first recognizable reward for their efforts came on 8 September when the Italians published a note (with the concurrence of the Western powers) stating that the government in Rome now no longer objected to the "striving of the South Slavic nations to win independence and to create one free state." But the Serbian Minister President Pasic continued to demand that the Croats and Slovenes weren't to be treated as equal partners but as conquered enemies; he maintained this position even after the collapse of Bulgaria.

Development of military plans

In the Western theater of operations the Entente commander-in-chief Foch greeted victory in the Second Battle of the Marne, which finally freed Paris from the German menace, as the long-awaited turn of the tide.⁴⁰² He was determined to exploit the initiative and to exert all his strength to ensure that his opponents didn't get a pause to rest. On 24 July the generalissimo expounded his plans to the allied generals who'd assembled at his headquarters. The splitting of the German Army into two components - attack and positional divisions - proved that they could no longer maintain all of their military machine at the same high level. The air and tank units of the allies, on the other hand, were already superior; soon the artillery and infantry would also have the upper hand. Psychological as well as material strength was increasing. The time had come to switch from defensive fighting (which had been necessary when the Germans were the stronger party) to the offensive. Foch wasn't striving yet for decisive victory, but first wanted to wear down

⁴⁰²Foch, Vol. II, pp. 160 ff. French Official History, Vol. VII, Part 1, pp. 107 ff.

his opponents with limited but continuous blows. Partial successes would serve as the foundation for future, larger-scale offensive operations. Foch wanted to seek a decision in 1919 by exerting all available strength. Pétain and Haig objected that their troops were already greatly exhausted. Pershing declared that his army was eager to fight but not yet completely ready. Finally all three generals agreed with the opinions of their commander-in-chief.

At this time the British Imperial Chief of the General Staff, General Wilson, didn't have the same confidence when he reviewed the situation. In his opinion the Germans would still be able to hold onto a defensive position in the West, and to shift substantial forces against Italy or to the Salonika front. He even believed that in the future they could carry out major operations in the Orient, threatening Iraq or India.⁴⁰³

At the end of August Foch was satisfied that his analysis was correct and that the moment had come to implement his planned general offensive.⁴⁰⁴ A French historian has been unable to determine whether the Generalissimo was already convinced that he could defeat the Germans by the end of 1918.⁴⁰⁵ But it's clear that since July Foch had been advocating a vigorous prosecution of the war so that the decisive fighting envisioned for 1919 would be brief. The orders he issued at the start of September called upon all the allied armies in France to mount a powerful offensive.⁴⁰⁶ The two prime ministers, Clemenceau and Lloyd George, had also agreed that the Army of the Orient should attack the war-weary Bulgarians.⁴⁰⁷ The British commander in Palestine was ready to advance against the exhausted Turks.

Thus the ring of besieging forces was prepared to storm almost all parts of the already brittle fortress held by the Central Powers. The only exception was in Italy. Despite repeated urging from Foch, General Diaz kept referring to the casualties which had been suffered in the June battle. Because of the shortage of replacement troops he didn't want to prematurely commit the youngest class of draftees, preferring to be as strong as possible in the decisive year of 1919. France promised to send the poison gas shells and armored vehicles which he

403Lloyd George, Vol. VII, pp. 3112 ff.

404Foch, Vol. II, p. 195. French Official History, Vol. VII, Part 1, pp. 265 ff.

405Tournes, p. 247. See also Churchill, Vol. II, pp. 230 ff.

406Foch, Vol. II, pp. 205 ff.

407Tournes, pp. 223 ff. Lloyd George, Vol. VI, p. 3208 ff.

requested. Nevertheless, until the start of September the Italian high command still believed it was advisable to hold back their forces so they could resist any renewed onslaught of the Aus-Hung. Army, reinforced by German divisions.⁴⁰⁸

2. The outlook for the Central Powers

a. The domestic political situation

In Germany

When the great battle began in France in March, the fate not only of Germany but also of its allies was riding on the outcome of this enormous trial of arms. Everything was bet on this "one card", and all the more so when Austria-Hungary's June offensive failed completely.⁴⁰⁹ By that time the German Army, displaying admirable *elan*, had won a string of victories, which however hadn't gained the desired impact on the enemy forces, their commanders, or their peoples. When the German leaders compared their own resources with those of the opposing coalition, they had to face the question of whether they would exhaust themselves rather than the enemy in their efforts to achieve a decisive victory by continuing to attack. Such thoughts were expressed in a letter which Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria sent Imperial Chancellor Hertling on 1 June, while the third offensive was still in progress. "Now," wrote the Prince, "we still have a trump card in our hand - namely the threat that we can soon begin some new attacks; later, once we've shot our bolt, we'll no longer hold this card." In his opinion it was time to open peace negotiations; the Germans should be content with their gains in the East while restoring the pre-1914 *status quo* in the West, including the restoration of Belgian independence.

This suggestion touched upon a problem that had long troubled the German people and split them into opposing camps - the openly debated issue of war aims. The advocates of a "victorious peace" hoped that afterwards they could dictate the terms. They wanted to reward the nation for the enormous sacrifices of blood and treasure by securing borders which would place the Empire in an improved economic and military position, while extending its political influence in neighboring countries - particularly in

408 French Official History, Vol. VI, Part 2, pp. 361 ff.; Vol VII, Part 1, pp. 165 and 224. Tournes, p. 297. Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie del Piave", pp. 101 ff. Rocca, pp. 30 ff.

409 Schwertfeger, p. 55 and pp. 67 ff.

the East where the German soldiers had planted their victorious colors. The enthusiasm of this circle had been re-kindled by the recent successes. The advocates of a "compromise peace", on the other hand, had seen the fortunes of war swing violently back and forth and were ready to seek an accommodation with the enemy. The social classes which had suffered the most during the war, and which longed the most for its conclusion, were very susceptible to the slogan "Peace at any price" which was bandied about by the pacifists, socialists and communists. The advocates of revolution were finding fertile soil in their efforts to undermine the authorities and to destroy determination to continue the war. The country's political leaders were increasingly unable to steer public opinion into believing that the only issue was a struggle for existence. And the conflict between the high command and the civilian leadership continued.

The German OHL, which naturally considered the situation from the military viewpoint, felt that they didn't receive sufficient understanding and support from the Imperial Chancellery and the Foreign Service. But once the decision was taken to mount the great offensive Chancellor Hertling had adopted the standpoint of the team of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who promised that the operation would decide the war. In January a confidant of Ludendorff, Col. von Haeften, had suggested that the activities of the English propaganda minister Northcliffe should be countered by a similar effort directed against the enemy home fronts; a political offensive should accompany the military operations.⁴¹⁰ The OHL recommended this idea to the Chancellor, as they did a second suggestion on 8 June which stated that a political "peace offensive" was needed. This memorandum also indicated that military success alone wouldn't bring peace. Pauses between offensives - one of which was just beginning - offered an opportunity for systematic efforts by diplomats to exploit the victories. And at home the government should control the peace movement with a firm hand.

The State Secretary for External Affairs, Kühlmann, had already extended peace feelers toward England. He believed he was acting in accordance with the beliefs of the OHL when on 24 June he declared to the Reichstag that because of "the enormous size of this war of coalitions" and the number of the states involved there was hardly a chance to reach "a final conclusion solely by military decisions, without any diplomatic negotiations." This speech was a response to a rather moderate statement by the British General Smuts, but was also intended to warn official

⁴¹⁰Schwertfeger, pp. 70 ff. Ludendorff, "Urkunden der Obersten Heeresleitung" (Berlin, 1920), pp. 475 ff.

circles within Germany against exaggerated hopes of victory. The OHL, then confidently preparing for an offensive in July⁴¹¹, were enraged by Kühlmann's words, which they believed would severely damage the population's will to win. They demanded that the statesman should resign. The "peace offensive" never developed.⁴¹² On 9 July Emperor William appointed Admiral von Hintze, hitherto the ambassador to Norway, as the new head of the Foreign Office.

On 18 July the OHL suffered their first great disappointment, and on the "black day" of 8 August lost their last hopes that they could defeat the larger enemy coalition by force of arms. After Hindenburg and Ludendorff explained the entire gravity of the situation to their Emperor at Avesnes, on 11 August William II declared, "I see we must strike a balance. We are at the limit of our strength. The war must be ended."⁴¹³

The ruler then summoned the political and military leaders of his Empire to convene at the general HQ of the OHL in Spa.

In Austria-Hungary

In Austria-Hungary the painful outcome of the June offensive was almost as depressing to the peoples in the homeland as it was to the armed forces themselves.⁴¹⁴ The groups who saw their fates as identical with that of the Habsburg Monarchy - such as the Germans and some of the Magyars - angrily rebuked those responsible for the setback. The groups whose hearts were already in the enemy camp received fresh encouragement that they could achieve their goals, which were attainable only if the Central Powers were defeated. Persons who'd been sitting on the fence lost their remaining faith in the Austrian cause and any reservations about opposing it. In all circles there was a determination to put an end to the bloody military adventure. Despite all the efforts of the censors, the Slavic and Socialist press, along with some of the extreme Hungarian newspapers, were advocates of revolution.

411Ludendorff later asserted ("Kriegsführung und Politik", p. 295) that at the start of June longing for peace within the Entente was increasing as it never had before during the war, so that "the hope that the enemy might give in after further attacks was not unjustified."

412Schwertfeger, pp. 75 ff.

413Niemann, "Krieg und Revolution" (new edition; Berlin, 1928), pp. 42 ff.

414Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 262 ff.

After long preparations, the Czechs in Paris brought into existence their National Council on 14 July; they declared that an independent state under their own administration and rule was their inalienable right. The Yugoslav leaders who created an assembly at Spalato were hardly more moderate. Soon afterwards calls were heard in Laibach for a national assembly to represent all the Austrian and Hungarian South Slavs. The Poles had also been opposed to the positions of Minister President Seidler since the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. On 17 July he tried to at least find support among the Germans by announcing that Austria would follow a "German course", but in the current political climate this was a meaningless gesture. Six days later the former education minister Dr Freih. von Hussarek became Seidler's successor and was able to win a slim parliamentary majority for his new government.⁴¹⁵ A Socialist newspaper felt that the lackadaisical fashion in which the Reichsrat approved the change of administration proved how public opinion was turning away from the Monarchy. The true feelings of the representatives of the people were expressed more clearly in the secret sessions at the end of July in which they discussed the failed offensive. The Slavs had already abandoned the old state, while the Social Democrats were joining all the attacks against the current system and promulgating pacifism. But even the middle-class representatives of the Alpine and Sudeten Germans were becoming merciless critics of the government and administration. The policy of appeasing dissidents hadn't succeeded in winning over the nationalities which were striving to leave the Empire, and had antagonized large numbers of Germans who hitherto had been loyal.

In both halves of the Monarchy the tide of public opinion, nourished by numerous rumors, was running with astounding strength against the ruling house. Anger over the Piave battle was rampant in Hungary, as was rancor against the Austrian sister-state. Belief that the two states shared a common destiny was fading. At the same time there was growing hostility to the alliance with Germany.

415 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Despite Seidler's gesture toward the Austro-Germans, a group of German-speaking politicians responded with a program that was essentially anti-dynastic. This was the last straw for the Prime Minister, who "persuaded Emperor Charles to let him quit." His successor Hussarek still imagined it might be possible to appease the Slavs, and thus was opposed by all the major German parties except for the Christian Socialists. See May, "Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy", Vol. II, p. 738.

During July the disastrous turning point in the war in France had an even greater impact within the Danube Monarchy than the recent misfortunes of our own Army. The reports of the German OHL were designed to conceal the extent of their setbacks from both their own population and the allied governments and headquarters, but it wasn't possible to deceive the masses for long. Although there were still circles in Austria-Hungary which placed their last hopes for a favorable outcome of the war upon the German Army, all the groups which had no interest in the continued existence of the great old fatherland saw through the euphemistic German reports. Information flowed over the border through many channels. The forces laboring for the destruction of Austria-Hungary no longer had any doubt - their cause was in the ascendant because Germany was also in decline.

For several weeks the staffs at the Ballhausplatz and at the Imperial residence in Laxenburg had been searching the possibilities of attaining peace. To the misery of the ongoing shortages of the basic necessities of life, which pressed heavily upon the inhabitants of the declining realm, were added the changes caused by Entente policies toward the "oppressed" nationalities; these policies, viewed with alarm from Vienna, were clearly aimed against the existence of the state. Every advance made by the national leaders in the emigration was an ominous sign to the leaders of the Danube Monarchy. During the celebration of America's Independence Day on 4 July, President Wilson made a seemingly conciliatory address in Washington; its wording was pleasing to both of the warring coalitions, which drew their own conclusions from the speech. Aus-Hung. Foreign Minister Burian's reply was contained in a statement entitled "Information about the Monarchy's Situation", which was actually addressed to the two prime ministers (Hussarek and Wekerle) but published by the press on 15 July; however, this step was hardly noticed by the enemy powers.⁴¹⁶ But based on Wilson's ideas, Burian prepared a memorandum containing a plan to invite representatives of all the belligerents to a non-binding, exploratory preliminary conference at The Hague. Perhaps this method would bring the enemy to the bargaining table. When Emperor Charles received this suggestion at Eckartsau on 23 July he gladly endorsed it. Now it was necessary to gain the support of his allies; the Monarch was ready to win over Emperor Wilhelm.

Growing uncertainty in eastern Europe

⁴¹⁶Burian, pp, 278 ff. and 330 ff. Opocensky, "Umsturz in Mitteleuropa. Der Zusammen-bruch Österreich-Ungarns und die Geburt der Kleinen Entente" (Dresden, 1931), pp. 143 ff.

The Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest hadn't gained the Central Powers the full freedom from threats in the East which they'd expected. Relations with the Bolshevik government remained an "armed peace" with a highly uncertain future. It is true that Soviet representatives agreed to details of the ratification at Berlin on 4 July, and signed another treaty on 10 August (as narrated above). But such apparent diplomatic triumphs and the accommodating attitude of the Soviet leadership couldn't conceal the fact that Communism wore two faces. The murder [of the German officials] in Moscow and Kiev was a warning signal. In the fall the German Eastern Command and OHL were still considering whether they should restore order with a thrust to St Petersburg and the installation of a more reliable regime.⁴¹⁷ It wasn't possible to divine the intentions of the Entente or the attitude of the Czechoslovakians in Russia. And so uncertainty prevailed in the East.

The Danube Monarchy also had gained little in Ukraine. The fact that Austria-Hungary had signed another peace treaty in the first half of 1918 - with independent Finland on 29 May - went almost unnoticed. The deterioration of relations with Romania in mid-summer has already been described.

Like war-weary Bulgaria, the Turkish Empire was now a half-hearted ally. The Turks were allowing their armies in Palestine and Iraq to waste away while pursuing ambitions among the Mohammedan mountain peoples of the Caucasus, where they collided with the plans of the Germans. The wide-ranging pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian dreams were far beyond the actual capabilities of the Ottoman state.⁴¹⁸

b. The second meeting of the Emperors at Spa, and Austria-Hungary's peace initiative

After Germany's political and military leaders thoroughly discussed the altered situation at the HQ in Spa on 13 August, the nation's principal figures convened on the next day in a Crown Council with Emperor Wilhelm presiding. The conferees decided that the war could be continued only on the "strategic defensive." Meanwhile the government would seek an accommodation with the enemy through neutral parties - such as the King of Spain or Queen of the Netherlands - "at an appropriate moment",

417Nowak, "General Hofmann", Vol. I, pp. 205 ff.

418Burian, p. 149

i.e. after the next military success.⁴¹⁹ At the end, GFM Hindenburg exhorted the group not to lose all confidence, since he was hopeful that they'd succeed in remaining on French soil and thus force the enemy to bend to "our will."

Because of military and diplomatic developments in the past few weeks, Emperor Charles felt it necessary to meet with his allies.⁴²⁰ Accompanied by Foreign Minister Burian and GO Arz, he appeared in Spa on 14 August. The visitors noticed the ominous atmosphere which prevailed there.⁴²¹ The Monarch and Burian explained their plan for inviting the enemy powers to meet in a neutral state for preliminary discussions about peace. Austria-Hungary couldn't possibly survive another winter campaign. Wilhelm II and his advisers were fundamentally ready for this step toward peace, but first wanted to solidify the German front which at the time was still in retreat.

In military discussions regarding future measures to be taken against Romania, the Aus-Hung. Chief of the General Staff insisted that the war shouldn't be continued to the point of total exhaustion. The Danube Monarchy would need an intact Army after any eventual peace to settle foreign and domestic political questions. The depressing tone in which the discussions took place was further deepened by disturbing news that England had recognized the Czecho-Slovakians as a belligerent power. The Ballhausplatz sent a telegram to Minister Burian with this information, which was so dangerous to the Habsburg Monarchy, although no official announcement was issued for several more days. Finally on 17 August, the Emperor's birthday, the newspapers reported the enemy's intention to destroy the state.⁴²²

The rulers of the two Empires would never meet again. Emperor Charles left the German HQ with serious misgivings. However, the fact that the Germans were ready to seek peace provided some satisfaction. Until now Vienna and Berlin hadn't agreed at all about this subject. Although there still wasn't complete unity, a future exchange of ideas should be able to resolve the remaining differences.

⁴¹⁹Schwertfeger, pp. 91 ff. Ludendorff, "Urkunden", pp. 499 f. Poll, pp. 370 ff. Kuhl, Vol. II, pp. 415 ff.

⁴²⁰Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", pp. 174 ff.

⁴²¹Burian, pp. 281 ff. Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 281 ff. Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 269 ff.

⁴²²Opocensky, pp. 60 ff. Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 286.

The German foreign office immediately sought to establish contact with the enemy through their connections in Holland. Admiral Hintze made significantly more conciliatory offers than the OHL regarding Belgium. But the enemy coalition recognized that they had the upper hand on the battlefield and weren't willing to diminish their great objective - victory over Germany - through diplomacy.⁴²³

After returning from Spa Emperor Charles was more determined than ever to put an end to the hopeless war. The Monarch's conviction that speed was essential was further strengthened by a glimpse into internal conditions in Germany which he gained during a visit to the courts of Munich and Dresden at the end of August.⁴²⁴ King Ferdinand, while traveling through Vienna at the start of September, left no doubt that the changes in Bulgaria's government had created a dangerous situation both inside and outside the country's borders, despite the King's own loyalty to the alliance. Ferdinand was asking Emperor Wilhelm for German reinforcements for the threatened front in Macedonia.⁴²⁵

From 3 to 5 September the German State Secretary Hintze visited Vienna to again discuss with Burian the questions raised at Spa, such as the Polish problem and the attitude to be taken toward Romania. The k.u.k. Foreign Minister had the impression that the Germans would no longer oppose the "Austro-Polish" solution which he'd been advocating; perhaps a decision about Poland would be reached soon. But in further negotiations at the end of September it turned out that Germany still wasn't willing to make the concessions regarding the border which the Poles desired or to abandon their leading role in the affairs of the neighboring country. These concepts were basic to Burian's plan. Since Wilson's program included independence for Poland, most of the leaders of the emerging state on the Vistula believed their prospects were much brighter with the Entente than with the declining and still divided Central Powers.⁴²⁶

But the most important topic discussed when Hintze visited Vienna

⁴²³Schwertfeger, pp. 98 ff. Kuhl, Vol. II, pp. 422 ff.

⁴²⁴Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 272 ff.

⁴²⁵Niemann, "Kaiser und Revolution", pp. 69 ff. Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 297.

⁴²⁶Hausner, "Die Politik der Mittelmächte und die öst-ung. Militärverwaltung in Polen während des Weltkrieges" (Vienna, 1935), pp. 273 ff. See also May's "Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy", Vol. II, pp. 733-734.

was the upcoming peace initiative. Since mid-August it had already been the subject of busy correspondence by wire between the capitals of the Quadruple Alliance. Emperor Charles had wanted to send a note to all the warring parties as early as 3 September, since the Ballhausplatz believed that a direct communication to everyone would be the most effective. The Berlin government were strongly opposed; their Foreign Service on the Wilhelmstrasse believed it would be more productive to use Holland as an intermediary, and anyway felt the time was not propitious since the retreat on the Western front still hadn't ended. With reluctance, Emperor Charles agreed to a delay of several days. Then Burian advised the Germans through Prince zu Hohenlohe, the Aus-Hung. ambassador in Berlin, that in the near future the Monarchy would release its note even if Germany didn't concur. Since Emperor Charles valued the opinion of the OHL, on 10 September Hindenburg declared that his troops were now holding their defensive lines. But the Field Marshal considered that releasing the Viennese note would be "ruinous for our armies and peoples", although he agreed that neutral mediation should be sought "without delay." The Ballhausplatz believed that the Germans' proposed approach would waste time, and let them know that the note would be sent on the 14th. To Emperor Wilhelm the Aus-Hung. sovereign justified this measure on the grounds that the Monarchy wanted the world to know its desire for peace, quickly and without reservation; a formal peace proposal would be needed before the Netherlands could mediate. Charles asked the German Emperor for fast and enthusiastic endorsement of the Austrian plan, thus renewing the unanimity of the two states at this important moment. The other two allies received similar messages. Through the Papal Nuncio the Ballhausplatz also requested the help of the Holy See. The Germans didn't raise objections until the last moment, when Emperor Wilhelm finally replied.⁴²⁷ But his message, which called the Viennese initiative a "serious danger to the alliance" arrived too late; Burian had published his call for peace on 14 September.

Emperor Charles responded to the German sovereign by pointing out that time was running against the monarchical system. The peoples and armies would severely blame their rulers if any possible road to peace was left unexplored. There could and would be differences of opinion about the means by which the goal desired by both empires could be achieved, but "our old and well-tried alliance, especially in the decisive questions of war and peace," would remain the unalterable basis of foreign policy.

With difficulty Burian was able to soothe the ruffled feelings of

⁴²⁷Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", pp. 128 ff.

the Germans; there were also disputes with Turkey and Bulgaria. But finally all three allies acquiesced in the *fait accompli* and declared themselves ready to take part in the proposed discussions. It even seemed possible that the Dutch could still mediate after Burian's initiative. But the enemy coalition spurned his approach. Lansing, the American Secretary of State, stressed that he was rejecting the proposal without a moment's hesitation. Contrary to normal diplomatic usage, Clemenceau merely referred the Viennese government to a recent speech in the Senate, published in the French official gazette, in which he'd cried "On to total victory!"

The call for peace, from which Emperor Charles and his ministers had expected so much, found no echo. The Entente, fully confident in their superiority, were determined to proceed ruthlessly. The Central Powers, menaced on all sides in Europe as well as in the far corners of Asia, would now receive their death stroke.

D. The collapse of Bulgaria

1. The breakthrough battle on the Dobro polje (15-17 September)

The commander-in-chief of the allied forces in the Balkans, General Franchet d'Esperey, eagerly awaited approval from the high command for the offensive he'd been preparing; it finally arrived in Salonika on 11 September.⁴²⁸ As we narrated previously, all the details had already been completed; therefore only a few short orders were needed to initiate this operation, which would dramatically change the course of the war in the Balkans.

In the clear, windy morning of 14 September 1918 the allied batteries opened fire on the Bulgarians along the entire Salonika front, from the Albanian lakes to the Aegean Sea. A strong, destructive bombardment was directed against the long-contested heights near Monastir, the Cerna bend, and the Vardar valley. With an intensity unprecedented on the Macedonian front it continued throughout the day and into the night of 14-15 September, especially against the positions in the Sokol Heights - Dobro polje - Vetrenik sector which were defended by

⁴²⁸Bujac, "Armée hellénique", p. 84

the 2nd and 3rd Bulgarian Divisions. The weak Bulgarian artillery tried in vain to suppress the enemy artillery and to ease the burden of their own infantry; they were also unable to effectively bombard the enemy foot soldiers who were packed into the forward trenches.⁴²⁹

The Bulgarian positions on the Dobro polje were heavily damaged under the fire of the guns. The trenches were flattened and the dugouts either destroyed or choked up with earth. Great gaps were torn in the barriers, and communications were cut off. Also it seems that the garrison's will to resist was badly shaken, even though casualties were relatively light.⁴³⁰

429Marinov, pp. 27 ff. French Official History, Volume VIII; 3rd Part, p. 314

430Marinov, pp. 29 ff.

Outline orders of battle

- A. Bulgaria and its allies (272 bns, 24 sqdns, 1159 guns)
- Commander-in-Chief of the Bulgarian Army = General Todorov
- Chief of the Bulgarian General Staff = GM Burmov
- . Scholtz's Army Group (Prussian GdA von Scholtz; C/Staff was Prussian Col. Graf Schwerin)
 - . German 11th Army (Prussian GdI von Steuben; C/Staff was Prussian Lt Col. Lämmerhirt) - 126 bns, 484 guns
 - . LXII Corps (Prussian G.Lt Fleck) - 1 and 6 Bulgarian ID; 302 German ID; Bulgarian Ochrida Div
 - . LXI Corps (Prussian G.Lt Surén) - 2, 3 and 4 Bulgarian ID
 - . Army reserves - Three Bulgarian IR, a Saxon Jaeger Bn
 - . 1st Bulgarian Army (General Neryezov) - 63 bns, 101 guns Had 5 and 9 ID; the Mountain Div; parts of 11 ID
 - . Army Group reserves (7 bns, 50 guns) - Two Bulgarian IR, one German Reserve Jaeger bn
- (Total for the Army Group - 196 bns, 635 guns)
- . 2nd Bulgarian Army (General Lukov) - 48 bns, 251 guns Had 7 and 8 ID; parts of 10 and 11 ID
 - . 4th Bulgarian Army (G.Lt Toschev) - 28 bns, 24 sqdns, 273 guns Had parts of 10 ID, all of 2 Cav Div
- B. The allied Army of the Orient (291 bns, 24 sqdns, 1572 guns)
- Commander-in-Chief = French General Franchet d'Esperey
- . The English Army of Salonika (General Milne)
 - . XII Corps - 22, 26, 27 UK ID; Greek ID "Seres"
 - . XVI Corps - 28 UK ID; Greek ID "Crete"
 - . I Greek Corps - 1, 2, 13 ID
 - . Reserves - 9 and 14 Greek ID
 - . 1st French Group of Divisions (General d'Anselme) - 16 Colonial ID; 4 Greek ID; Greek ID "Archipelago"
 - . The Serbian Army (Crown Prince Alexander; C/Staff = Voivode Misic)
 - . 2nd "Army" (Voivode Stepanovic) - Timok, Sumadija and Yugoslav ID; Cav Div; attached French 122 ID, 17 Colonial ID
 - . 1st "Army" (Voivode Bojovic) - Morava, Drina and Dunav ID
 - . French Army of the Orient (General Henrys)
 - . 2nd Group of Divisions - 30, 76, 156 ID; 11 Colonial ID
 - . 3rd Group of Divisions - 57 French, 35 Italian ID; two Albanian bns
 - . Cavalry Group - Three North African cavalry regts

Course of the infantry attacks

Around 5:30 AM on 15 September, still in half-darkness, units

from the 2nd Serbian Army (the French 122 ID and 17 Colonial ID plus the Serbian Sumadija ID) advanced, covered by a strong wave of artillery fire, against the entire Bulgarian line between the Sokol and Vetrenik Heights. Their mission was to break through the first network of positions and then to hold the ground they gained, enabling the Serbian divisions in the second line (the Timok and Yugoslav ID) to pursue the Bulgarians in the direction of Demir kapu and Kavadar.

In a quick initial onslaught the attackers moved through no-man's land, despite often-great changes in elevation, and pushed their way into the Bulgarian positions at several points. But contrary to expectations the majority of the garrisons in the trenches, aside from those which had been taken completely by surprise in the dugouts, held out. In hand to hand combat involving rifles and hand grenades they offered desperate resistance. Finally by 10:00 AM the attackers were able to occupy part of the first position in stubborn, step-by-step fighting.

At this time the 122 French ID were in possession of the summit of the Dobro polje massif, but the gallant defenders of the Sokol Heights were standing firm. All attempts to capture the northern edge of the Dobro polje and to enter the valley beyond were foiled by the Bulgarian machine gun emplacements. The situation of 17 Col ID on the left flank was similar. Initially they penetrated deep into the opposing positions without encountering much resistance, but then were forced to fight for every foot of ground as the Bulgarian regiments launched strong counter-attacks. The strength of the Colonial Division seemed to be exhausted.⁴³¹ Only the Sumadija Division won a complete success. In less than an hour the Serbs stormed the supposedly-impregnable positions on the Vetrenik; they took the garrison completely by surprise and captured most of them. By noon the attackers were established firmly along the entire ridge.

But Bulgarian resistance increased throughout the first defensive zone, where the terrain favored the defense. The nearest reserves had been called up from neighboring sectors and their first detachments were already nearing the battlefield. The principal allied thrust was stalling, and the next few hours would decide its fate.

Around noon the HQ of 2nd Serbian Army, correctly evaluating the situation, ordered both the French divisions to make every effort to reach all their objectives. Otherwise the thrust by the

431Rinieri, "Une Division française à la Bataille du Dobropolje" (Paris, 1925), pp. 84 ff. Daskalovic, p. 22

second wave of divisions, which had originally been scheduled to start at 10:00 AM, might not be carried out.⁴³² Now the units of 2nd Army committed all their riflemen for a renewed assault which was strongly supported by the artillery.

Meanwhile the commander of the Bulgarian brigade engaged on the Dobro polje was disturbed by exaggerated reports. Having lost contact with his troops, he believed that the situation was hopeless; he ordered the guns of his group to be destroyed and his Brigade to retreat into the second position.⁴³³ This forced the commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Bulgarian Divisions to issue similar orders.

Thus in the afternoon when the Entente troops, encouraged by their initial success, began their all-out attack they were confronted only by some remnants of Bulgarian regiments, guarding their forlorn and isolated posts with hardly any artillery help. Despite stubborn resistance, the unequal combat inevitably came to a quick end. Before evening descended on the battlefield the last Bulgarian defensive installations on the heights had fallen to the combined onslaught of the French and Serbs. The first line had been broken along a front of 11 km, enabling the Serbian divisions that had been in reserve to attack the Bulgarians' second line. Jubilantly they pushed through this position to pursue their foes toward the Kosjak Heights and the area farther east.

Through the gathering darkness the defeated and weakened survivors of the Bulgarian regiments pulled back along paths through the pine forests to a second position. The battlefield grew quiet. Fighting continued only on the Sokol, where the defenders held their entrenchments on the high ground despite all the efforts of the enemy; that night they were ordered to evacuate the ground they had defended so heroically.

By noon on 15 September the enemy's plan to break through on the Dobro polje ridges at last had become clear. The HQ of 11th German Army and of Scholtz's Army Group placed all available reserves - about a brigade strong - in motion toward the threatened area. It was expected that the reserves could

432Gazeilles, p. 85

433Marinov, p. 36. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE - However, the account by German General Dieterich doesn't mention the anecdote about the Bulgarian brigadier. It attributes the collapse to the overwhelming weight of numbers exerted by the entire 2nd Serbian Army pursuant to their new orders at noon. See Dieterich, pp. 29-30.

intervene on the 16th. The German Army HQ stepped in to harmonize the retreat of the two defeated Bulgarian divisions. Furthermore, to ensure that there was a unified command structure to oppose the enemy breakthrough, they placed all the troops engaged at the point where the lines of 2 and 3 Bulgarian ID came together under "Reuter's Division." Its commander GM von Reuter was very highly regarded within the Bulgarian Army.⁴³⁴

It seemed that everything possible was being done to ensure the security of the second position, which was geographically strong but insufficiently fortified. Without interference from the enemy the troops occupied this position in the night of 15-16 September.

During the course of this night the divisions of the 2nd and 1st Serbian Armies moved up to the new Bulgarian lines; at daybreak they attacked on a broad front between the Cerna and the left wing of the 3 Bulgarian ID. Throughout the day the defenders were able to repulse all the Serbian thrusts. But the hard fighting thus far had worn away almost all the strength of some Bulgarian units. Toward evening, when the Serbs renewed their attack on the key point of the position - the Kosjak and the heights farther west - the defenders evacuated it without offering resistance. Late that night the Saxon Reserve Jaeger Battalion # 13 intervened north of the Kosjak, but all their heroism couldn't redeem the situation.⁴³⁵ Thus it was necessary for both Bulgarian divisions to withdraw again in the night of 16-17 September, into the third position which lay just a few kilometers farther north. But here also they couldn't hold their ground, even though GM Reuter was able to establish a firm defense in the center of the front (on the heights south of Vitoliste and Rozden). For meanwhile the commander of the 2nd Bulgarian Division, without any pressing reason and without even notifying his neighbors of the fateful step, withdrew his troops behind the Cerna in the morning of 17 September. This gave the enemy an opportunity to fall upon and destroy the hastily created position of GM Reuter from the front and flank.

The remnants of Reuter's Division also had to retreat behind the Cerna in the evening of the 17th. Thus the link between the 2 and 3 Bulgarian ID was finally severed. A gap of 25 kilometers had developed, and could no longer be sealed due to the lack of reserves.

434Dieterich, pp. 31 ff.

435Keil and Littrow, "Das Kgl. Sächs. Reserve-Jaeger Bataillon Nr. 13 im Weltkriege" (Dresden, 1934), pp. 150 ff.

Thus the Serbs had conquered the heights which dominated the area, and were poised to enter the valleys which led north into their homeland. The thrust to break the lines of the "German" (actually mainly Bulgarian) 11th Army was ended, and the door was wide open for the pursuit.

2. Bulgaria's separate peace

The conviction of the k.u.k. AOK and the German OHL - that the resources of the Bulgarian front were sufficient to repulse an Entente offensive - had been proven false. The situation in the Macedonian theater of operations had grown serious, and rapid assistance was needed. Since the heavy fighting on the Western front was pinning down German forces, the OHL initially could only divert a mixed brigade - which was on its way to the Trans-Caucasus - through Varna and Sofia. And on 17 September they asked the k.u.k. AOK to send a division to assist their imperilled Bulgarian allies.⁴³⁶

Thus the Aus-Hung. Chief of the General Staff found himself facing another burdensome task. The forces of the Danube Monarchy were also stretched to the limit. An attack on the Southwestern front by a larger and better-equipped enemy army could start any day. The Albanian front urgently required reinforcements; a cavalry division (the 9th) was already moving there. The only infantry division that could be spared in Ukraine, 30 ID, had been earmarked for the German Western front. Under current circumstances it seemed almost impossible to make k.u.k. troops available for the Southeastern front, even though GO Arz wanted to provide the Bulgarian Army as much help as possible.

Meanwhile the Serbs were pushing furiously forward, inspired by their desire to enter their homeland as quickly as they could. Ever more urgent were the appeals by the Bulgarian government and by King Ferdinand, who was convinced that a defeat in the Balkans would be fatal for all his allies. Because of the great danger that Bulgarian collapse would pose to the Aus-Hung. Monarchy in particular, the k.u.k. AOK decided (as we mentioned earlier) to place two divisions at the disposal of the Bulgarian high command. With the agreement of the OHL, these units (9 ID from Venetia and 30 ID from Ukraine) were ordered to move to Skopje. But about fourteen days would elapse before the first of the new troops could enter the fighting.

436 Hindenburg, p. 291

The enemy advance continues

By 20 September the leading detachments of the 2nd Serbian Army were about 10 km from the low ground along the Vardar. Thus they destroyed the defenders' hope that at the last moment the offensive could be brought to a halt in front of the vital area around Gradsko. The supply line of the 11th German and 1st Bulgarian Armies was in danger. Thus, despite the fact that the western wing of the 11th German Army (as far as the Eastern Cerna) and the Bulgarians' entire 1st and 2nd Armies were standing fast against all enemy assaults, it would be necessary to pull back the center of the front. In the night of 21-22 September the HQ of Scholtz's Army Group made provisions for the center and left wing of 11th German Army to retreat to the heights south of Prilep and to the area southeast of the Prilep-Gradsko road, and for 1st Bulgarian Army to withdraw behind the Vardar.⁴³⁷ If these positions held firm, it would be possible to maintain the links with the k.u.k. Armeegruppe Albania and with 2nd Bulgarian Army behind the Struma; also the continued possession of Bulgaria's holy places - Ochrida, Prilep and Resna - would be guaranteed.

Every possible method was being tried to stiffen Bulgarian resistance along the new lines. The handful of German detachments offered resistance at the most dangerous points until the bitter end; staff officers with rifles in hand set an example by fighting in the foremost trenches. King Ferdinand, Crown Prince Boris and the Bulgarian commander-in-chief General Todorov⁴³⁸ appeared in the positions, exhorting the troops with forceful language to hold out. Nevertheless, some Bulgarian detachments fell back to the north after offering very little resistance; newly arrived battalions followed their example. On 22 September the Serbs were already just outside Gradsko and thrusting toward the Prilep-Veles road. This was the only route between 11th German Army and the railroad along the Vardar; if it was lost, that Army would be in danger of being pushed into the wild mountains of Albania and destroyed. Once again they would have to dis-engage from the enemy.

This was a step of fateful significance, probably the most important that had yet been taken. Loss of the towns of Ochrida, Prilep and Resna, which to the Bulgarians were the embodiment of their aspirations in Macedonia, would have an enormous impact on public opinion. It might restore the will to resist within the

437 Landfried, pp. 23 ff.

438 General Todorov was acting in place of the Bulgarian generalissimo Zekov, who'd become very ill shortly before the battle started.

entire nation, or it might cause an uprising in the interior and the complete collapse of the front. The purely military results of the retreat of 11th German Army were also far-reaching, since the forces in Albania would have to withdraw to the north and the 1st Bulgarian Army to the international border of 1914.

On 22 September GdA Scholtz issued the order for his Army Group to retreat. 11th German Army, along with the expected reinforcements, would construct a new defensive front in the Skopje area. For this purpose the troops on the left wing (under LXI Corps) would retreat through Veles toward Skopje, blocking the Vardar valley long enough for the right wing (under LXII Corps) and the reinforcements to deploy around Skopje itself. The divisions on the right, which were still firmly under the control of their commanders, were taking the road through Gostivar to Kalkandelen, whence they'd turn east toward Skopje. 1st Bulgarian Army were ordered in cooperation with 2nd Army to prevent any enemy advance past the line Stip-Strumica toward the old Bulgarian borders.⁴³⁹

But now the course of events quickened with dramatic intensity. The withdrawal of 11th German Army's western wing also compelled the k.u.k. Armeegruppe Albania to pull back; however, since reinforcements were arriving the Armeegruppe HQ ordered on 23 September that only enough ground should be abandoned as was necessary to secure the eastern flank. The retreat caused the disintegration within the Bulgarian armed forces to intensify; it even spread to the 1st Army, which on 18 and 19 September had still been able to stand fast - without wavering - against attacks in superior numbers by the English XII and XVI Corps on both sides of Lake Doiran. The will to resist was dying among the Bulgarian soldiers; in large groups they were leaving the trenches, either to go home or to march on Sofia. Mutinies were already breaking out here and there.

Because of the dissolution of the army, the relentless enemy advance and unrest in the interior, Malinov's government thought that the game was lost. They felt they'd been left in the lurch by Germany and Austria-Hungary. Although on 24 September the OHL ordered the Alpenkorps to come from the Western front and 217 ID from the East, while the k.u.k. AOK were also considering whether to send more troops, the Bulgarians believed that their allies weren't offering sufficient help.

Malinov saw just one way out of his difficult situation - an immediate end to hostilities. In a council of ministers in the

⁴³⁹Dieterich, p. 80

royal palace on 24 September he proposed to begin unilateral negotiations right away if Germany and Austria-Hungary didn't also sue for peace. But King Ferdinand, who stood unconditionally alongside the Central Powers, refused to agree to this suggestion, pointing out that it could have unforeseen consequences.⁴⁴⁰

Events in the Balkans were a decisive turning point for the Central Powers. If Bulgaria dropped out, there would be nothing to oppose General Franchet d'Esperey's entire victorious Army of the Orient with its 600,000 men.⁴⁴¹ The road to Serbia would lie open, the occupied territories of Albania, Montenegro and Serbia would have to be abandoned, and communications with Turkey could be cut. Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the oilfields of Romania would be threatened. These were grounds enough to create a new Balkan front as quickly as possible. Therefore on 25 September GO Arz proposed to the Emperor that all units which could be scraped up from anywhere - six Aus-Hung. divisions (five infantry, one cavalry) and four or five German divisions - should be sent to the Southeast where they'd take up a position on the shortest line from the Adriatic Sea to the Danube. The ideal line would be Scutari-Ipek-Mitrovica-Nish-Vidin, since it would protect the largest possible part of the Serbian Military Government. Austria-Hungary was already sending 9 and 30 ID to Serbia; it could also provide 32 ID from the interior plus three divisions (two infantry and one cavalry) from Ukraine. All forces in the Southeast were placed under FM Kövess as an Army Group commander. If it became necessary to evacuate all of Serbia and Montenegro, the most valuable military equipment and the harvested food would be evacuated; then the defense would be based on lines along the Danube, Sava and Drina Rivers. In order to free up troops from the East, the peace treaty with Romania should be ratified as soon as possible. Efforts should be initiated to conclude peace with Serbia and Montenegro.⁴⁴²

Chaos in Bulgaria

Meanwhile the fate of Bulgaria had already been sealed at Sofia. In the night of 24-25 September mutinous soldiers fell upon the Bulgarian HQ in Kjustendil, injuring many officers. After demanding the immediate initiation of peace negotiations, the mutineers marched on to Sofia. Tidings of their approach caused

⁴⁴⁰Opocensky, p. 211

⁴⁴¹Larcher, "La grande guerre dans les Balkans" (Paris, 1929), p. 241

⁴⁴²Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 301

panic in the government. Prime Minister Malinov convened the cabinet and demanded that regardless of the King's attitude an armistice commission should be sent to Salonika.

The Central Powers tried every possible course to master the confusing situation and to prevent an offer to surrender, which would have such serious consequences for the Quadruple Alliance. The overall situation was serious but not hopeless. General Franchet d'Esperey couldn't take full advantage of his numerical superiority because of the substantial destruction of the Vardar rail line, the miserable condition of the roads, and the lack of vehicles and food supplies in an area exhausted by the war. It would take him months to rebuild the Vardar railroad, and so operations could be prolonged during the upcoming winter in the wild Serbian mountains. The commander of the Allied Army of the Orient himself recognized that his troops were prisoners of their own lines of communication.⁴⁴³

In addition to these difficulties, the contradictory aspirations of two of the allies - England and Italy - also played a role. The English wanted to send their troops toward Constantinople so they could reap the benefits of their victories in the theater of operations in Syria and Palestine (1500 km distant).⁴⁴⁴ The Italians, on the other hand, were interested in the Adriatic where they wanted to seize as much of the coast as possible as a bargaining chip for the upcoming peace negotiations. Thus only the two Serbian armies - with a total strength of 119,000 men - were available to continue the offensive to the north. Awareness of this problem may have been behind the orders issued by commander-in-chief Franchet d'Esperey to prepare a defensive front running from Albania to the Danube and thence to the Black Sea.⁴⁴⁵

On the other side, the Central Powers could throw into the scales the still battle-worthy and willing western group of the 11th German Army (about 90 to 100,000 men) and the five new German and Aus-Hung. divisions which were coming by train. They also believed that with some support the Sofia government could count

⁴⁴³French Official History, Vol. VIII, Part 3, p. 363 and Appendix, Part 3, Document No. 1351. English Official History, "Macedonia", p. 271. Ratzenhofer, "Der letzte Aufmarsch an der Donau" in Österr. Wehrzeitung for 1930, Issue 28.

⁴⁴⁴English Official History, "Macedonia", pp. 254 ff.

⁴⁴⁵French Official History, Vol. VIII, Part 3; also the Appendix, Part 3, Document No. 1378.

on the troops of 1st and 2nd Bulgarian Armies to do their duty while guarding the pre-war boundaries.

Meanwhile the domestic turbulence became ever more intense. Prime Minister Malinov anxiously awaited the results of his peace initiative in Salonika. King Ferdinand declared officially that the approach to the enemy was taking place without his consent and that he bore no responsibility. The leader of the peasant's party, Stambolisky, was released from prison; at Radomir he proclaimed the overthrow of the dynasty and establishment of a republic. But the King was still unwilling to give up power. He was just waiting for reinforcements so he could move sharply against the insurgents. Now there were three competing governments, and anarchy raised its head throughout the land. In the general chaos the Bulgarians ignored a report from Berlin on 25 September that northern Dobruja was being given to them without conditions; this settled an issue that had long been a source of dissatisfaction to the army and people.⁴⁴⁶ Inevitably all efforts to keep Bulgaria part of the Quadruple Alliance were doomed to fail unless enough reinforcements arrived to master the situation. To support the King the German 217 ID and two battalions from the k.u.k. 9 ID (II/30 and I/102) were diverted toward Sofia.

General Franchet d'Esperey turned down the offer of an armistice, but declared he was ready to open peace negotiations. Meanwhile the fighting continued. During these decisive days of September the HQ of the Orient Army restricted their instructions to an order that the troops should keep up the pursuit, driving forward "to the uttermost limit of the abilities of men and horses." To widen the gap between the 11th German and 1st Bulgarian Armies, Franchet d'Esperey in particular told the 1st Serbian Army to secure the Skopje-Kumanovo road as soon as possible; on 23 September he personally ordered the brigade of French North African horsemen to quickly reach Skopje. Both missions were accomplished on 29 September - the Serbs of 1st Army came up to the Skopje-Kumanovo road, and after a brilliant mounted advance through the wild mountains south of Skopje the cavalry brigade entered Serbia's old capital at dawn. Thus Bulgaria's southern front was finally split in half; between the 11th German and 1st Bulgarian Armies there was a gap of more than 100 km.⁴⁴⁷ The enemy's breakthrough was complete.

⁴⁴⁶Radoslavov, "Bulgarien und die Weltkrise" (Berlin, 1927), p. 312. Kiritzesco, p. 433.

⁴⁴⁷"Revue des Balkans" - "L'armée d'Orient vue a 15 ans de distance" (Paris, 1932), p. 99

At 11:00 PM on the same day the delegates of Malinov's government accepted the peace conditions dictated by General Franchet d'Esperey, which amounted to an unconditional surrender. The Bulgarians were to immediately evacuate all occupied territory, reduce their army to three infantry divisions, permit the Entente troops to pass through their country, and give up the soldiers stationed southeast of the Vardar as prisoners. On the other hand, they'd be permitted to retain of old Bulgaria free from encroachment by the Serbs and Greeks. The Germans and Austrians were given one month to leave Bulgarian territory.

Thus a whole new situation had developed in the Southeast. The wall which had withstood enemy onslaughts for three years had fallen. On this front the Central Powers would have to rely on their own strength.

3. Events in Albania in the second half of September

The collapse of the Bulgarian front naturally had an impact on the Aus-Hung. Armeegruppe Albania farther west. In mid-September this group were finishing preparations for an attack on Valona; the troops selected by GO Pflanzer-Baltin for the operation were confidently awaiting the order to advance. The General Oberst had been left in the dark about the dangerous condition of the war-weary Bulgarian troops; this far-seeing commander was concerned solely with preparing a permanent position in the Skumbi valley.

Tidings of the catastrophe on the Dobro polje didn't reach Pflanzer-Baltin's HQ until 18 September. They caused a complete re-evaluation of the situation in the Albanian theater of operations, especially since the Bulgarian Ochrida Division - stationed at the junction of the two allied forces - would now have to pull back to a position in the rear as had long been discussed. From the first moment GO Pflanzer-Baltin was determined to immediately squelch any defeatist reaction to the desperate situation and to overcome any danger by exerting all the strength of his troops, who now at least were supplied as well as possible.

On 20 September the k.u.k. AOK at Baden ordered that troops from Armeegruppe Albania were to relieve the Ochrida Division. Only the 9 CD were available to lengthen the front. Although the line would thus be too long to retain permanently, the General Oberst intended to hold out until the enemy reached the Ipek area. But he'd start to prepare for an eventual retreat, if it became

necessary, by removing supplies not needed for the fighting. The AOK concurred with these measures, but again asked that the seven battalions which had been attached to the Armeegruppe should immediately be given up.

Meanwhile the Bulgarian front had also collapsed between Prilep and Gradsko, and the Ochrida Division on the right wing of Scholtz's Army Group were ordered to withdraw toward Dibra [Debra] in the night of 23-24 September. Although GO Pflanzer-Baltin's request to be given control of this Division was turned down, he was assured that its retreat would at least take place in coordination with his HQ. And in fact the first troopers of FML Le Gay's 9 CD were able to occupy the heights east of the upper Skumbi on 27 September under cover from the withdrawing Bulgarian rear guards.

Despite the continuing retreat of the Bulgarians, about which GO Pflanzer-Baltin's HQ at Tirana was insufficiently informed, he still expected the situation in Macedonia to improve. He hoped that this would enable him to maintain the Albanian front, and he hadn't finally given up the plan to attack Valona. Then the Bulgarian cease-fire on 29 September destroyed all the remaining hopes at Armeegruppe HQ. It would now be necessary to evacuate Albania. Actually the AOK, aware before the cease-fire that Bulgaria was negotiating with the enemy, had already decided on the 27th to withdraw the k.u.k. forces from Albania. The retreat would now have to be carried out as quickly as possible.

E. Building a new front in the Balkans

1. The first measures after Bulgaria's separate peace

Both the k.u.k. AOK and Scholtz's Army Group HQ on the Macedonian battlefield were placed in a very difficult situation by the peace agreement which the Bulgarians signed in the night of 29-30 September. The Bulgarian units of 11th German and 1st Bulgarian Armies were breaking up; the men who hadn't been taken prisoner were streaming in disorderly fashion toward their homes. The handful of German detachments was made up mostly of specialist troops; they had already suffered heavy losses of men and equipment while fighting at the most endangered points in continuous actions since 15 September. Now they had to be separated from their former (Bulgarian) units and refreshed; it

was intended to build a new 6 Res ID from these formations.⁴⁴⁸

The units of 11th Army's western wing were led by the HQ of LXII Corps⁴⁴⁹, and consisted mostly of staffs, machine gun detachments, batteries, communications detachments and supply trains; they were falling back through Kalkandelen toward Kacanik while fighting a series of rear-guard actions. The Army's eastern wing under the HQ of LXI Corps contained infantry (two Jaeger battalions plus Landwehr, Landsturm and Etappen troops) as well as specialized units; retreating from Skopje, they'd reached Kumanovo. The German soldiers under the two Bulgarian armies were ordered to seek to link up with 11th Army through Sofia. With the exception of the k.u.k. 9 ID the reinforcements intended for Macedonia were just reaching the line Nish-Sofia; thus at the start only a few battalions and batteries were available to plug the gap between the Albanian and Bulgarian borders and to block the routes leading from the Skopje area to Old Serbia through Nish, Krusevac and Kraljevo, as well as the route to Montenegro through Ipek (Peja).

As of 30 September GdA Scholtz didn't think he could yet decide where to establish the future line of resistance because of the fluid situation and pressure of circumstances; however, he intended to "take up a line as far south of Nish as is feasible." For this purpose the majority of the reinforcements coming by train (the Alpenkorps, German 219 and Aus-Hung. 30 ID) would deploy in the Nish-Pirot area. But one or two divisions (including the German 217 ID) would assemble near Sofia where they could if necessary support the right wing of 1st Bulgarian Army, which GdA Scholtz was still including in his plans. The deployment would be covered south of Vranje by the k.u.k. 9 ID, which had been detraining in that town since 28 September.

The k.u.k. AOK also viewed the developing situation in the Macedonian theater of operations with the greatest concern. The quick advance of the Entente troops was a direct menace to Montenegro and the western parts of the Serbian General Government. The garrison troops of both Governments were numerically weak and spread all over the land. They totaled about 10 field battalions, 10 batteries and 23 Etappen battalions; most of the units had second-rate troops and insufficient equipment. They had barely been adequate to provide local security, but now there were indications that the progress of the enemy offensive would cause an increase in partisan activity or even a general insurrection. It would take weeks to

⁴⁴⁸Dieterich, p. 170

⁴⁴⁹Ibid., p. 148

get reinforcements into the interior, which lacked roads and rail lines. Therefore the principal line of resistance envisioned by the k.u.k. AOK - running through Ipek (Peja), Mitrovica and Kursumlija - was already greatly endangered. And the Prizren area was also of great importance for the safe withdrawal of the Albania Armeegruppe.

Therefore the k.u.k. AOK scraped together the last available riflemen to set up at least a makeshift defense of the routes leading from western Macedonia to the planned assembly areas (Ipek [Peja], Mitrovica and Kursumlija). The route from Prizren through Djakova to Ipek (Peja) was to be blocked by units which would hastily assemble around Prizren. These were

- . troops from Ipek (Peja) and Mitrovica (three Streif companies and two reserve squadrons),
- . two Etappen battalions and a Landsturm security company from the Albania Armeegruppe, and
- . two batteries which had been attached to the Bulgarians but were now withdrawing.

Since these units didn't seem capable of offering prolonged resistance, the staff at Baden ordered the Albania Armeegruppe to send stronger forces to Prizren, if possible the 220 Lst Inf Bde. Finally, the Serbian Military Government would send two battalions of the Streif Regiment and a battery, under the regimental commander Col. Edler von Klemm, from Krusevac through Blace and Kursumlija to Pristina, where they could block the road leading from Skopje into the fields of Kosovo.

While these measures were taken to secure the western approaches to Old Serbia and Montenegro, fighting continued on the eastern wing of the 11th German Army.

The k.u.k. 9 ID had hastily entrained in Venetia on 23 September with just their infantry; they detrained in Vranje and the area farther south. By 2 October they occupied a position on both sides of the Moravica about 20 km southwest of the town, near Gramadan and on the Rujan heights; their mission was to "block the narrow part of the valley by Vranje." The HQ of LXI Corps instructed the Division to evacuate the area in time if attacked by a much larger force. Because of the length (15 km) of the position the mission of 9 ID was very difficult; they had just 9 weak battalions⁴⁵⁰ (about 3300 riflemen) plus 16 German guns. 9 FA Bde were still coming by train. Finally on 6 October two batteries of FAR 109 became available, followed by three more; however, there was a shortage of ammunition. Just one battery of

⁴⁵⁰Battalions II/30 and I/102 were detached to Sofia; the 9th Sturm Battalion had been held back at Nish.

six guns could be created from the assets of all five batteries; it was given 400 rounds. The remaining pieces had just 10 rounds per gun. Outposts were ordered to deploy far to the sides of the position, which significantly reduced the strength of 9 ID's line. The troops themselves, almost entirely of Slavic nationalities, were war-weary, badly infected by malaria, and wearing shoddy, worn-out uniforms. Some of the replacements were barefoot.

General Franchet d'Esperey, commanding the Orient Army, estimated that after the collapse of the Bulgarian Army the German and Aus-Hung. troops still in Serbia and Bulgaria consisted of about 9 battalions, some batteries, and 14 machine gun detachments.⁴⁵¹ These forces were scattered over a wide area and hardly seemed capable of prolonged resistance after the recent heavy fighting and tribulations. But because of the great importance of the Balkans to the Central Powers, the French general had to anticipate the creation of a new defensive front under the leadership of GFM Mackensen.⁴⁵² This seemed feasible, since the Germans and Austrians had 49 infantry and 10½ cavalry divisions in Russia and Romania, while the Austrian reserves on the Southwestern front consisted of 25½ infantry and 3 cavalry divisions. On the other hand, it would take at least four weeks for strong forces to arrive. The Orient Army would have to take advantage of their opponents' moment of weakness to occupy as much as possible of Old Serbia while delaying the deployment of the German and Aus-Hung. troops. Thus the 1st Serbian Army east of Skopje were instructed to thrust as quickly as possible to the north and to capture the important railroad junction at Nish.⁴⁵³ On 1 October the three divisions of this Army (Drina, Dunav and Morava) would advance north along a broad front on both sides of the Morava valley; their goal was to reach the line Prokuplje - Nish - Bela Palanka by 8 October. Farther west the Serbian Cavalry Division were to break the railroad line between Leskovac and Nish. The North African horsemen of the French cavalry brigade under General Juinot-Gambetta would protect the eastern flank of the advancing Serbs.

The other troops of the Orient Army would deploy so that they could either repulse counterattacks, support the offensive in Serbia, or attack through Bulgaria toward Constantinople.

Thus the 1st Serbian Army, covered on the wings by strong

⁴⁵¹French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 359

⁴⁵²French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 361

⁴⁵³Ibid., p. 377

cavalry, thrust forward along their entire front. They were eager to return to their home soil. They were opposed by just the poorly-supplied, war-weary and badly outnumbered troops of the k.u.k. 9 ID. Destiny would take its inevitable course.

2. Fighting in the Vranje-Leskovac area, 3-8 October

In the hazy, cold morning of 3 October strong Serbian forces attacked FML Edler von Greiner's k.u.k. 9 ID, which had taken up a position on both sides of the Moravica valley between Gramadan and the Rujan Heights. The enemy struck on a broad front, pushing along the road and rail line in the valley as well as over the heights on each side. After bitter fighting the Austrians were able to check their opponents in the valley itself⁴⁵⁴, but due to lack of manpower couldn't protect the Division's left wing from envelopment. Therefore as twilight fell the 9 ID, following their orders to evacuate the position in time if assaulted by overwhelming numbers, pulled back to a line 10 km southwest of Vranje.

The retreat was covered by darkness and wasn't disturbed by the enemy. The new position near Pavlovce, about 24 km long, was occupied by the troops in the early hours of 4 October. The 18 Inf Bde guarded the western side of the Morava valley and the adjoining high ground west as far as the Sv. Ilija summit; 17 Inf Bde plus Saxon Jaeger Battalion # 12 (placed under the HQ of 9 k.u.k. ID on the 4th) blocked the low ground in the valley farther south as well as the heights extending east to Grn. Milanova.

The fighting on 4 October was especially heavy. Under the Serbian onslaught the troops of 18 Inf Bde and parts of IR 102 in the valley were already falling back in the early morning. Meanwhile half of the 9th Sturm Battalion and a March battalion from IR 30 had arrived; their intervention made it possible to restore the situation in the valley and prevent any further enemy advance.

But the reinforced group in the valley were under increasing danger of envelopment from hour to hour. Therefore LXI Corps HQ also placed the Saxon Reserve Jaeger Battalion # 12 at the disposal of the Division, so that at 1:00 PM they could counter-attack the Serbs who were moving along the valley's northern slopes. However, the attack by the German Jaeger didn't succeed;

454French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 378

they were soon struck in the flank and rear by numerous armed partisans. Late in the afternoon they had to withdraw, along with the rest of 9 ID. The retreat was very difficult because as the enemy regular troops pressed forward all of Vranje was in an uproar. The town had to be bypassed from the south. Shots were fired from all the houses, and the divisional HQ were almost captured. Eight guns of the German batteries and two of the newly-arrived Austrian guns were lost to a Serbian surprise attack.

Due to the combined efforts of all the commanders, late that night it was finally possible to deploy the troops along the next line of resistance east and west of Priboj. Order was restored and supplies of food and ammunition were distributed. The new position was fully occupied by 8:00 AM on 5 October.

Without pausing, the Serbs pushed ahead on a broad front. Already at 10:00 AM on the 5th the Divisional HQ received reports that enemy columns were in motion against both flanks of 9 ID. A short time earlier strong Serbian forces in the valley had begun to probe against our positions. Since there was a clear danger of double envelopment, at noon FML Greiner ordered his troops to retreat by sections to the narrow point in the valley near Vladicin. Despite rear-guard actions, the withdrawal was carried out calmly, in an orderly fashion. Divisional HQ intended to use the attached German troops (the two Jaeger battalions and two machine gun detachments) as a group in the valley to block the narrow point at Vladicin; 18 Inf Bde would secure the slopes to the west and 17 Inf Bde the slopes to the east. The Division's Sturm battalion along with parts of IR 80 would form a reserve near the railroad bridge north of Vladicin. But the necessary orders had just been issued in late afternoon when a Serbian group, guided along little-known paths by knowledgeable local people through the darkness of approaching night, entered Vladicin by surprise. In hand-to-hand combat they inflicted heavy casualties on the detachments stationed here and, despite heroic resistance, threw them out of the town.

The remnants of the group in the valley along with the divisional reserves were finally able to establish a front running straight through the valley north of Vladicin and to bring the impetuous Serbian advance to a halt. The troops who'd been scattered were brought back together in order that night; the German Jaeger Battalion 12 with several guns were able to link up with the Division despite heavy losses. However, it was no longer possible to contemplate prolonged resistance in this area. The inadequately-fed troops were exhausted after almost unbroken

fighting and marching. While facing energetic assaults by regular troops to the front, they'd also had to simultaneously resist merciless partisans who'd been hiding in the rocky terrain but now struck from the flanks and rear. Casualties had been excessive. Thus Jaeger Battalion 12 had just 38 riflemen left⁴⁵⁵; the Division as a whole had only 500 available because 17 Inf Bde, finding the route through the valley already blocked by the enemy, had shifted into the mountains. They hoped to avoid captivity and rejoin the main body of 9 ID by taking an adventurous detour.

FML Greiner now decided that with his remaining troops he'd hurry through the narrow part of the Morava valley as quickly as possible; with the help of Battalion I/102, just arrived from Sofia, he established a position at the northern outlet of the narrows, on the heights next to Grdelica, where he'd hold up the enemy for as long as possible. Thanks to stubborn resistance by the fresh Battalion I/102, on 6 October the Division were able to defend the heights near Grdelica until evening against an overwhelming enemy force. But then they pulled back to Leskovac, where with the help of new troops released by LXI Corps HQ (three and a half weak battalions) they set up a new front immediately on the southern edge of the town. Corps HQ now explicitly ordered the Division not to take another step to the rear, but these instructions couldn't be carried out. Because of the Serbs' tactics and numerical superiority the remnants of the Division would certainly have been destroyed if they stayed in place.

During the night of 6-7 October the components of 9 ID still in contact with divisional HQ were brought into order. In the morning they occupied their assigned stations south of Leskovac. Because of the Division's small size it could easily be outflanked, so here again it was hardly possible to offer sustained resistance. Strong enemy forces were already working their way around the right wing at 8:00 AM, and two hours later Serbian infantry had also moved around the left wing. To avoid encirclement, divisional HQ brought the men back to a line about 2 km north of Leskovac. But after darkness fell this position also had to be abandoned, since an enemy column had already outflanked the Division in the northwest during the afternoon. While fighting rear guard actions the troops retreated to the heights east and west of Brejanovce, where they deployed in the morning of 8 October.

⁴⁵⁵Kracht und Poten, "Das königlich sächsische Jäger Baon. Nr. 12 im Weltkrieg" (Dresden, 1929), p. 310

In the morning hours the Serbs were already moving slowly up to 9 ID's front. In the early afternoon they also began with strong forces (about a division) to envelop the western wing overlooking the valley, causing Greiner's Division to break off the engagement and withdraw north in heavy fighting. Finally the Division reached the line Bukovac [Pukovac] - Toponica where they linked up with the newly-arrived 219 German ID and brought the pursuing enemy to a halt. Then the k.u.k. 9 ID were withdrawn from the battle; during the night of 8-9 October they assembled in Mramor (9 km west of Nish).

Meanwhile the first news arrived concerning the hitherto missing 17 Inf Bde. When they were pushed out of the position near Vladicin they marched without rest day and night over the chain of heights east of the Morava (Mackaticha - Ostrozub - Bukova glava # 1442). They used miserable roads through the woods as they crossed valleys and elevations of 1500 meters. Around 1:00 PM on 7 October the troops reached Vlasotince where they were jubilantly greeted with flowers and music by the inhabitants, who'd mistaken them for Frenchmen and Serbs. Because of reports that the real Serbs were already south of Leskovac, the brigadier (GM Chwostek) decided to once more turn east over the wooded Babicka gora. After another forced march, which at least wasn't bothered by the enemy, the Brigade reached Kutina (southeast of Nish) on 8 October; this town was already protected by the outpost line of 219 German ID. Thus ended the odyssey of 17 Inf Bde. The troops (700 riflemen with 18 machine guns) had been cut off in the fighting and forced into the mountains, but by their extremely difficult march of 75 hours they'd spared themselves the hard lot of captivity. While on the wretched mountain paths it had proven impossible to bring forward the guns of the German batteries; they were blown up and thrown into remote ravines.

Considering the limited combat strength of the k.u.k. 9 ID, and the condition of the personnel, the unit had been given an impossible assignment. But for six days of continuous fighting and marching in rain and cold, surrounded by partisans and insufficiently supplied with food, the Division had delayed the advance of 1st Serbian Army long enough to prevent them from taking Nish by 8 October as they'd intended. The divisional HQ, officers and most of the men had fulfilled their duty in their advanced posts under the most difficult circumstances.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁶According to the French Official History (Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, Appendix 153) the Serbs took about 3000 prisoners between 3 and 8 October. TRANSLATOR's NOTE: If this claim is true, the total must have included quite a few Germans. The German account of this action (Dieterich, pp. 158-163) is quite

3. Creating FM Kövess' Army Group

The collapse of the Bulgarian Army had become more evident from hour to hour. The political tumult also continued to rage throughout the interior. On 1 October the mutineers from Radomir were defeated and dispersed by troops loyal to King Ferdinand, with the assistance of German Res IR # 9; nevertheless on the 3rd the King renounced the throne in favor of Crown Prince Boris and silently left the country where he'd labored for much of his lifetime. The peace party, inimical to the Central Powers, now held the upper hand in the government. Thus for political and military purposes Bulgaria was finally lost, and no further help could be expected from this quarter in the impending Balkan battles.

Major measures were unavoidable if Austria-Hungary was to escape the ever-growing menace from this direction. Above all, it was necessary to establish a unified command for all the troops, those currently available and those coming as reinforcements, in the theater between the Adriatic Sea and the Danube. Because of the direct threat to the territory of Austria-Hungary, it was decided with the concurrence of the OHL that on 4 October the k.u.k. and German forces in the western Balkans (11th German Army, Armeegruppe Albania, the Serbian and Montenegrin Military Governments and the Bosnia-Herzegovina-Dalmatia Command) would be placed under an Aus-Hung. Army Group. Its commander was FM Kövess, the conqueror of Ivangorod, Belgrade and Asiago. He was already making major decisions on 8 October, and his Army Group HQ at Belgrade were fully operational on the 10th. GdA Scholtz's German Army Group HQ were dissolved; the General himself took over a new command in Romania.

The situation facing the new Army Group

FM Kövess arrived at Belgrade on 8 October and reviewed the situation of his Army Group based on incoming reports and a series of conferences. For the first time he was able to recognize the magnitude of his task and the heaviness of the responsibility which fate had bestowed him in the last phase of the war. In the wide territories under his command nothing was certain; the entire picture was in flux. On the eastern wing the

critical of the Austrians, particularly because of the lost guns. However, given the great numerical discrepancy between the opposing sides it appears that at least in this instance the accusations against the Germans' allies are unjustified.

k.u.k. 9 ID were withdrawing from Leskovac toward Nish, their strength exhausted after six days of stubborn fighting in their advanced positions. Most of the units of 11th German Army were still deploying on the line Prokuplje-Nish-Pirot. The German 219 ID blocked the routes leading north through the Morava valley and the area to the east; they were stationed with 9 battalions and 8 batteries on both sides of the Morava a half day's march south Nish. The German 217 ID were still coming from Sofia by train and by foot, and since 6 October had been trying to link up with the Army's left wing near Bela Palanka and Pirot. The first battalion of the k.u.k. 30 ID - FJB # 18 which likewise had come through Bulgaria - had detrained at Pirot. But the Division's other troop trains were greatly delayed; because of the altered situation they had to detour around Romania and at best wouldn't reach Belgrade until 10 October. To the right of 219 ID the German Alpenkorps were taking up a position on the Toplica and the heights south of Prokuplje with about 7 battalions and 6 batteries; it was estimated that the entire Division wouldn't be together until 14 October. It was planned to also bring the k.u.k. 59 ID and 4 CD as reinforcements from the Donets basin; their movement began on 6 October and the trains carrying the first elements were scheduled to cross the east Galician border on the 12th.

The enemy could use the area between the German 11th Army and Albania to penetrate into Old Serbia and Montenegro. Here there were two routes leading to the heart of Serbia - the road from Pristina (through Kursumlija and Krusevac) and the Ibar valley toward Kraljevo. These routes, as well as the road from Prizren to Ipek (Peja), were covered in makeshift fashion by just some small groups drawn from the garrisons of the Serbia and Montenegro Governments plus several guns and horsemen. Thus Col. Klemm's group (from the Streif Regiment) had been stationed since 7 October on the heights by the pass near Prepolac (south of Kursumlija). Another small group (about 200 foot, 70 horse and 4 guns) sought to hold Mitrovica; a somewhat stronger force was stationed at Prizren. It was certain that these groups could hold their ground only if they weren't attacked by larger enemy units. The security of the vital Mitrovica-Kraljevo communications route had to be strengthened immediately. Since the 11th German Army couldn't stretch further west due to its limited numbers, other units were hurriedly sent to Kraljevo - three companies of the "Serbia" Gendarmerie Battalion from Jagodina, three Streif companies under Lt Col. Zsivanovits from Krusevac and FJB # 15 from Sarajevo. It was intended that the defense of the Kraljevo-Krusevac road would eventually be entrusted to the Jaeger battalions of 30 ID's 60th Brigade, which

would detrain at both Kraljevo and Krusevac. On the Army's western wing in the Albanian mountains, since 1 October GO Pflanzer-Baltin's Armeegruppe had been carrying out an orderly retreat (which we'll describe later).

The rifle strengths of the infantry units were very low. The parts of the Alpenkorps and 219 ID which had already arrived totaled 6000 to 7000 riflemen, plus 19 batteries. Army Group HQ estimated that the entire 11th German Army plus the infantry in the Ibar sector had about 13,000 combat troops.⁴⁵⁷ The detachments of Armeegruppe Albania in contact with the enemy had just 5000 riflemen. On the other hand, the k.u.k. AOK estimated that the enemy had about 130,000 riflemen on the Macedonian front, with around 20,000 more in Albania.⁴⁵⁸

The generals of the Central Powers had to anticipate that the main body of the enemy would advance to the Danube in the direction of Belgrade. Since 8 October the 1st Serbian Army were deploying against 11th German Army. Smaller forces were advancing toward Pristina and Prizren. An important factor was that the Serbs didn't have to worry about supplies other than ammunition, since they could obtain food from the population. The local inhabitants were also a source of intelligence information and of manpower to fill the ranks of the advancing armies.

A special concern of the Army Group were the open, unprotected flanks on both ends of its front. Since General Franchet d'Espery had obtained the right to march through Bulgaria, his units could use Bulgarian railroads to reach the line from Nish to the Danube. And the Army Group's western flank seemed to be equally in peril. There were many indications that the enemy might land troops on the Dalmatian coast and cause uprisings in the coastal cities. It was feared that Italy would make a major effort to seize Dalmatia as a bargaining chip for the impending peace negotiations. Finally, the ground on which the Army Group were stationed was completely undermined. Wide areas were already in open rebellion and in others a general uprising was being prepared by Serbian officers and NCO's supported by the agents and money of the Entente. Partisans of the Serbian Army

⁴⁵⁷Konopicky, "Kriegsende an der Südfront" (an unpublished manuscript).

⁴⁵⁸TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This figure of 130,000 riflemen is very misleading, however. As indicated earlier, all of the English units and many of the others were aiming at Constantinople rather than Belgrade and so were not a direct menace to Kövess' Army Group.

were gathering already at different locations.

The decisions of Army Group HQ

Since the situation was so difficult, circumstances were forcing Army Group HQ to make a decision. Only an offensive along the Nish-Kumanovo road could substantially alter the situation, but this was unthinkable due to the actual discrepancy in size between the two sides. It was also becoming questionable whether it would be possible to base the defense on the line desired by the k.u.k. AOK (Ipek [Peja] - Mitrovica - Nish). Weeks would be required to bring sufficient troops to Ipek (Peja) or Mitrovica, while the enemy were just a few day's marches from both towns. Everything depended on whether or not the unready German 11th Army could stand fast in their current positions south of Nish. In any event, decisive combat would have to be avoided as long as our forces were so heavily outnumbered. A forced retreat should be carried out as slowly as possible because of the impact it would have on the neighboring sectors to the right and left; this would gain time for the arrival of reinforcements and the orderly evacuation of the territory. The first assignment given the German 11th Army was just to delay the enemy's further advance along the valley of the Southern Morava, and over the Western Morava, for as long as they could.

Because of these conditions, FM Kövess had to regard the instructions from the k.u.k. AOK regarding the line of main resistance as a desire rather than an order.⁴⁵⁹ In the afternoon of 8 October he explained his evaluation of the Army Group's situation to the k.u.k. AOK in the following words:

"With the forces currently available we can compensate for the disappearance of the Bulgarian Army to just a very slight degree. Therefore we can't count on establishing a position. Barely half of the units assigned are already in place; for the moment 9 ID is out of action. The area to be defended is very large in comparison to our available strength, and the front can easily be broken. We'll be very lucky to hold the current position. If we aren't successful, the situation will become very grave. Even if we succeed, we won't permanently master the situation unless further reinforcements arrive soon. It's possible that the enemy intend to use the bulk of their forces for other missions, but not probable. But even if that were the case they would still attack 11th Army rather than stand in place, if only to secure themselves from this direction."

⁴⁵⁹Konopicky, "Kriegsende an der Südfront (manuscript)

At this juncture it was only prudent to also initiate measures in anticipation of the worst-case scenario, so that it would be possible to easily retreat over the Danube and the Sava. The main problem was the shortage of crossing-points on these border rivers. The only ones available - one train-ferry apiece at Klenak, Zabrez and Semendria plus the wooden bridge and railroad bridge at Belgrade - weren't sufficient. The necessary equipment must be brought up to create new crossing-points. Army Group HQ intended to have nine working steam ferries - at Janja, Sabac, Zabrez, Pancsova, Semendria and Kupinovo plus three at Belgrade - and to build a military bridge at Kupinovo. But it wasn't clear whether there would be enough time to put the equipment in place.

The installations of the Belgrade bridgehead dated from the year 1915; they consisted of several adjoining infantry lines which lacked strong points and sufficient barbed wire obstacles. These defenses were half-ruined and needed to be restored. The armament of the bridgehead consisted of four 9 cm signal cannon on Belgrade's Kalimegdan and eight 18 cm cannon dating from the 1880's.

There were still 4000 boxcars full of foodstuffs in Serbia. Special measures were initiated to get them out of the country in time.

Thus the Army Group HQ were faced with a list full of very difficult assignments, as well as by great concerns both at the front and in the interior. While FM Kövess was taking his first steps, on 9 October fighting broke out anew along the entire front of the 11th German Army.

4. Fighting around Nish, 9-12 October9-10 October

Following their orders to capture Nish as quickly as possible, in the morning of 9 October the 1st Serbian Army resumed their advance north along a broad front on both sides of the Morava; south of the Toplica they came upon the troops of the Alpenkorps and of 219 ID, who were prepared to defend themselves. During the day the Serbian Dunav ID pushed into the lines of 219 ID in bitter fighting and at some points established themselves firmly in the positions on the western bank of the Morava. But also east of the Morava a small column from the Serbian Morava ID, along with artillery, were able to thrust through the strong points of 219 ID in the broken, hilly terrain south of Nish; they advanced to within 10 km of the city. Meanwhile the Alpenkorps had repulsed all enemy attacks on the heights south of Prokuplje. But in western Macedonia the weak garrisons of Mitrovica and Prizren had to evacuate both towns after actions with overwhelming enemy forces.

Thus a new situation had arisen for the western wing of the Army Group; here at least the planned main line of resistance would have to be pulled to the rear. Furthermore Army Group HQ considered it "improbable" that the 11th Army, half of which was still being deployed, would be able to prolong their resistance to the numerically stronger Serbian forces near Nish; this became even more unlikely when aerial reconnaissance reported on 9 October that a large enemy group was advancing through Vranje. Therefore it seemed that to preserve our own forces and prevent the situation from further deterioration, the gallant troops of 11th Army should be spared the fate of the k.u.k. 9 ID, which had been committed piecemeal and ripped apart in decisive actions before the other reinforcements arrived. As only "a precautionary measure to respond to developments", Army Group HQ asked GO Sarkotic, the commanding general at Sarajevo, to inform them clearly what forces he'd need if 11th German Army were compelled to retreat to the northern bank of the Western Morava and the heights north of Aleksinac, or even behind the Sava and Danube Rivers. Similarly the Prussian GdI von Steuben, who commanded 11th Army, was instructed to report where and how he'd group his units if he were to retreat from the Nish area.

Developments by 11th Army on 10 October seemed to confirm the correctness of FM Kövess' conclusions. Throughout the day strong Serbian forces were brought into the fighting on both sides of

the Morava, and pushed 219 ID west of the Morava to a point 8 km behind the Toplica. East of the river the right flank of the Morava ID almost reached the Nish-Pirot road. Thus the position of the Alpenkorps south of the Toplica had also become untenable. The withdrawal of 11th Army could no longer be delayed if they were to avoid being consumed in hopeless fighting.

Meanwhile, as became evident when new orders arrived at Belgrade in the evening of 10 October, the k.u.k. AOK at Baden had also changed their minds about the situation on the new Balkan front. The AOK now recognized that the plan of basing resistance on the line Ipek (Peja) - Mitrovica - Nish would have to be abandoned. The mission would be only "to prevent the enemy from advancing over the Monarchy's borders (including those of Bosnia and Herzegovina)." Resistance would be offered at a point "where sufficient forces would be available."

The high command wouldn't be able to make available to Kövess' Army Group any more reinforcements than those already on the way: the k.u.k. 59 ID and 4 CD, the newly added 32 ID⁴⁶⁰, and XI Corps HQ and IR # 93 from Ukraine. If it was no longer possible to sustain prolonged resistance south of the Danube, "the defense would be conducted along the borders of the Monarchy - behind the Danube-Sava line and on the eastern edge of Bosnia." In detail, the AOK instructed that the right wing should withdraw behind the mountains of northern Albania and that the k.u.k. 32 ID was to be used to defend Bosnia. The retreat behind the border rivers would be carried out in stages so that the rich material resources of Serbia could be exploited for as long as possible.

11-12 October

Although these directives presented a new plan to Army Group HQ, they weren't a surprise since thinking within the HQ itself had been running along the same lines from the beginning. The necessary instructions for regulating the Army Group's retreat were therefore issued already on 11 October to 11th German Army, the Albanian Armeegruppe (which was also responsible for the administration of Montenegro effective 12 October), the commanding general at Sarajevo, and the Serbian General Government. If 11th Army were compelled to retreat from their current positions, they would do so by sectors in the general direction of the Sava and Danube (to Sabac, Zabrez, Belgrade and Pozarevac). After crossing the rivers they'd deploy 4½ divisions (including 2 in reserve) on the Sava from Raca to Semlin, and 1½

460The 32 ID were being sent without IR # 70, which was a mainly south Slavic unit.

divisions from Pancsova to a point south of Fehertemplom (Weisskirchen). When the lines south and southeast of Nish were given up, the next resistance would be offered on the heights north of the Western Morava, and on the heights north of Aleksinac and northwest of Knjazevac. GO Sarkotic was entrusted with protecting Bosnia's open southeastern border, using the k.u.k. 32 ID after it arrived. It was planned to send him a further division for northeast Bosnia. But Sarkotic would have to immediately provide for the security of the stretch of the Drina on both sides of Visegard with the forces already at his disposal.

The Albanian Armeegruppe would continue to withdraw into the Scutari-Podgorica area. If it became necessary to evacuate Montenegro they would head for the Bocche di Cattaro. Then the troops hitherto in the Montenegro garrison would guard the border of Herzegovina.

Before the 11th German Army received the Army Group's order to retreat, they had to endure more heavy fighting on 11 October. Exploiting their success of the day before, the Serbs renewed their attack against the center of 219 ID at noon, and advanced to the heights south of Mramor (west of Nish). GdI Steuben now instructed the Army to retreat behind the Western Morava in the night of 11-12 October. The Alpenkorps would cover the routes in the Morava valley in a position on both sides of the Morava from the heights north of Krusevac as far as the Poslonska planina. Adjacent to the east the 219 and 217 ID would dig in on the heights north of Aleksinac and northwest of Knjazevac. The crossing-points over the Western Morava between Krusevac and Cacak would be guarded by the k.u.k. 30 ID, which began to detrain at Krusevac and Kragujevac on 12 October; along with all the other troops in this area they'd be commanded by the HQ of the k.u.k. XI Corps, which were expected to arrive in mid-October. Until then the order of battle would be - . Prussian G.Lt von Staabs' XXXIX Res Corps HQ over the Alpenkorps and k.u.k. 30 ID, . Prussian G.Lt Limbourg's LIII Corps HQ over 219 and 217 ID. The HQ of LXII Corp were dissolved, and LXI Corps received another assignment. Of the new Aus-Hung. units, 59 ID and 4 CD were coming by train to Kövess' Army Group and 32 ID to Bosnia.

Covered by rear guards, 11th Army were able to dis-engage from the enemy; on 15 October they stood ready to fight on the new line of resistance. After entering Nish on 12 October the enemy sent only some weak forces to pursue them.

During the fighting around Nish there hadn't been any significant events in the western part of the Army Group's area. The Mitrovica group, strengthened by the force under Lt Col. Zsivanovits, took up a position near Raska; Col. Klemm's group were retreating to the Western Morava near Alexandrovac. IR # 93 (with two battalions) arrived at Kragujevac, and FJB # 15 reached Kraljevo. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the Trebinje-Visegrad border sector was guarded by five battalions of 45 Sch

Div. The 220 Lst Inf Bde, from the retreating Albanian Armeegruppe, came to Podgorica.

But from day to day the ever increasing partisan activity in Montenegro and southwestern Serbia became a great problem. Numerous bands, in strengths of about 800 to 1000 men, sought to cut the lines of supply and communication, and were especially dangerous to small detachments. Also ominous was a report that on 13 October the leading battalion of a French regiment had arrived by train in the Bulgarian border station of Cari Brod.

The spirit of the troops of 11th Army hadn't suffered during the recent heavy fighting. The k.u.k. 9 ID, rebuilding in the area around Cicevac in the Morava valley, began to regain their strength; after incorporating March formations they already had 1800 riflemen. The German 6 Res ID were continuing to form in the Markovac-Sviljanac area. Thus there was hope that with the help of the arriving reinforcements it would be possible to offer prolonged resistance in the new positions.

5. The withdrawal of Armeegruppe Albania

On 27 September the k.u.k. high command had ordered that the troops in Albania should withdraw to a line running from the sea through Scutari to Ipek (Peja). This was a very difficult assignment for Pflanzer-Baltin's Armeegruppe HQ. They expected that as soon as the retreat began the Italians and French would press forward vigorously along the entire front, and that the latter might envelop the eastern wing. The anticipated thrust of the Serbs toward Ipek (Peja) could cause an uprising in Montenegro, threatening the rear of the k.u.k. Armeegruppe. Also a substantial part of the area to be crossed, along the north Albanian coast, was vulnerable to amphibious landings by enemy forces. Another concern was the preservation of the supplies stored at various points. Due to the increasing menace from the enemy fleets, since mid-September it had hardly been possible for hospital ships to sail from Durazzo and S Giovanni di Medua, let

alone cargo steamers. Therefore supplies could be shipped only on the field railroad to Scutari, of which the stretch between Vorra and Alessio had just a limited capacity.

There were several routes available to troops and supporting services marching back to the Skubmi; however, beyond the river there were just two routes to Vorra, and from that point everyone would have to use just one road as they marched north. Because of these difficulties GO Pflanzer-Baltin didn't want to evacuate the front until 3 October, although shipment of the supplies started immediately.

But meanwhile the tactical situation worsened when 9 CD gave up the heights near the source of the Skumbi on 30 September, thus also exposing the left wing of 81 ID. Since it was impossible to counter this danger, the retreat had to begin in the night of 30 September-1 October. This was also necessary because many trustworthy reports indicated that an uprising, well nurtured by enemy propaganda, was about to break out among the Albanians. It might be triggered by an Italian landing at Alessio and S Giovanni di Medua.

Under these conditions GO Pflanzer-Baltin believed that the retreat would succeed only if was well-planned and strictly controlled by all the commanders; he intended to intervene personally as needed. To keep up with constantly changing events, new orders would be issued every day if possible. Individual units would try to leave the front without fighting and to conceal the withdrawal for as long as possible under cover from rear guards.

The course of the withdrawal

With heavy hearts the undefeated troops left the country which they'd occupied for two and a half years while enduring hard fighting and even harder privations. As far as the Skumbi the retreat took place along a broad front and in short segments. Beyond that river the 47 ID would march along the narrow shoreline by Durazzo; 81 ID, followed by 9 CD, would take the route through the Krabe Pass and Tirana. Both paths converged at Vorra, from which all three divisions would be taking the same road to the north. The columns were accompanied by long supply trains. There had been a shortage of horses and other beasts of burden since the planned (but canceled) operation to recover the Podgradec position in the spring; now because of the shortage of personnel there weren't even enough men to lead the few available horses. Lacking animals, entire batteries had to use the field

rail line to move their guns. The machine gun detachments had similar problems, even though the March formations in the area had already been incorporated and every man was leading up to a dozen horses. And malaria continued to take its toll; from San Giovanni di Medua alone more than 30,000 sick men were evacuated during the retreat.

Despite all the problems, the withdrawal took place in perfect order, due in no small part to personal intervention by the tireless Armeegruppe commander. The men were quiet and depressed, but their well-ordered columns moved smoothly; the rear guards maintained their positions as if on maneuver. The Italian pursuit was feeble; perhaps malaria was decimating their ranks also. Only the French in the mountains kept on the heels of the 9 CD. The Italians tried to make up for inactivity on land with a major operation by their naval and air forces. 22 planes struck Durazzo in the morning of 2 October. Toward noon there was a new attack by 24 planes and about 30 ships; they ruined several houses near the piers in a bombardment that lasted for an hour and a half. Otherwise the damage was small, and the anticipated amphibious landing didn't materialized. To this day it's incomprehensible why the Italians didn't seize this favorable opportunity to seriously cripple their opponents by landing troops.⁴⁶¹ In the evening of the same day the rainy season finally opened with a heavy thunder storm.

On 4 October GO Pflanzer-Baltin received the order which placed his force, along with all other Aus-Hung. and German units in the western Balkans, under the new Army Group HQ of FM Kövess at Belgrade. To support the deployment which the AOK at Baden were planning along the line Ipek (Peja) - Nish - Pirot, GO Pflanzer-Baltin decided to offer resistance in the positions on the Skumbi which his men reached on 5 October. But Army Group HQ at Belgrade ordered him to continue the retreat without pausing. On 8 October the rear guards pulled back over the Skumbi. On 12 October Durazzo was evacuated, after the harbor installations were blown up.

Meanwhile tribal warfare was flaring up. The same mountain

⁴⁶¹Veith, pp. 554 ff. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: There is a long account of the involvement of the outnumbered k.u.k. naval vessels and planes in Sokol, "Seekrieg" (pp. 636-646). The action was significant since "it was the last time when Aus-Hung. naval forces encountered the enemy. True to our traditions and obedient to the iron demands of duty, the men stayed at their posts until the last moment, although everyone knew that a victorious end to the war was no longer possible."

peoples which had plundered the fleeing Serbs in the winter of 1915-16 now tried to treat the retreating "liberators" in the same fashion. The Armeegruppe's main body were in all cases able to repulse the attacks, although occasionally obliged to engage in heavy fighting (as for instance on 14 and 15 October near Preza). However, the Gendarmerie posts and smaller detachments in the Matja were forced to evacuate that territory. A relatively strong side detachment of 9 CD were surrounded by insurgents near Bazari Mati and disarmed. Then they were escorted to Alessio, while thoroughly plundered by each clan along the route. But at least their guaranteed "free passage" was protected from a French force; the latter sought to take the disarmed men as "prisoners" but were driven away by the Albanian bands. Later GO Pflanzer-Baltin, after personal discussions with Prenk Bib Doda (the leader of the Mirdits), obtained that chieftain's agreement to help protect the retreat against the bandits; similar arrangement were made with the Hoti and Gruda clans. Thus order was maintained in this direction.

Although the enemy didn't press forward from the south, the danger from the east became ever more threatening. Prizren and Djakova were already in the hands of the Serbs; according to the latest reports the fall of Ipek (Peja) was imminent, as was a Serbian thrust toward Podgorica which would disrupt the retreat. To prevent trouble, the 220 Lst Inf Bde (originally ordered to move to Prizren) now were sent onto the Vjeternik northeast of Podgorica. In cooperation with the garrison troops from Montenegro whom Col. Hospodarz was assembling, they'd guard the area toward the east. On 10 October the Armeegruppe HQ had already moved to Podgorica, which they believed would be the key point in the upcoming actions in the area. After taking all necessary measures for the security of the eastern flank, however, the General Oberst and his immediate staff shifted to Scutari on 15 October. Here they were closer to the enemy once more, and Pflanzer-Baltin could take the road toward Alessio every day to maintain personal contact with the marching columns as they pulled back in excellent order.

In the night of 17-18 October the former garrison of Djakova, 1600 German and Aus-Hung. soldiers, arrived at Podgorica. They'd survived adventurous actions as they fought their way through Ipek (Peja). But the garrison stationed in Ipek itself didn't join them; instead they soon surrendered to Serbian partisans who then (on 14 October) also captured Andrijevica. Thus the enemy were already behind the line Scutari-Ipek (Peja), which originally was supposed to be the main defensive position. Since this line no longer existed, the k.u.k. AOK approved GO Pflanzer-

Baltin's suggestion that he should defend the old pre-1914 border, based on the fortresses of Cattaro, Trebinje and Bileca.

In mid-October, as the 11th German Army stood ready for new actions on the northern bank of the Western Morava and north of Aleksinac, the Albanian Armeegruppe were marching north in one long column. The majority of the leading unit, 81 ID, had reached Scutari. Following them at a considerable distance were 94 Inf Bde (of 47 ID), then 162 Inf Bde, 9 CD and 93 Inf Bde. The rear guards were fending off Italian and French thrusts near Preza and Vorra. Farther inland the Orientkorps were guarding the eastern flanks against bandit clans. A day's march to the northeast, the same function was being performed by Hospodarz's group and by 220 Lst Inf Bde, which had come up through Podgorica. From here to the western flank of 11th Army there was a wide gap of 120 kilometers. But behind the gap, as already narrated, GO Sarkotic had sent 45 Sch Div to set up a defensive line on the southeastern border of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Eventually 32 ID would guard the Drina front.

6. Impact of Bulgaria's collapse in Romania and Ukraine (mid-September to mid-October)

Romania

The catastrophic developments on the Macedonian front in the second half of September, followed by the collapse of Bulgaria and the retreat of 11th German Army to Serbia, made it possible that war would begin anew in Romania.

But first there was dissension between the Central Powers regarding policy. Austria-Hungary's peace negotiation proposal of 14 September was at odds with the German OHL's plan for a military advance against Romania to compel the latter to implement the treaty which had already been concluded. On 16 September GO Arz responded to an inquiry from GFM Hindenburg; he stated that neither Emperor Charles nor his Foreign Minister could agree to Mackensen's proposed offensive. While the peace proposal was on the table any attack against Romania by German forces was out of the question. The displeasure of the OHL was clearly evident in the answering note which arrived at Baden on 18 September, in which Hindenburg defended Mackensen's right to ensure that the Romanians disarmed as obliged by the treaty; for this purpose he'd also be justified in making demands on the Royal government. However, military pressure was now lacking. The Austro-Hungarians would have to deal with Romania themselves,

since the OHL were no longer in a position to provide German forces as they had in 1916. The divisions which Mackensen had planned to use were already being earmarked for other missions.

A few days later it seemed very probable that Romania would re-enter the war and threaten Transylvania because of developments on the Bulgarian front.⁴⁶² GO Arz reported to the Military chancellery that as a minimum the employment of the 1 CD here would be urgently necessary. (The War Minister had wanted to employ this Division to suppress unrest among the miners in the Austrian coal fields.) Furthermore the Chief of the General Staff demanded that the battalions from the field armies still stationed in the Monarchy's interior (almost all were part of 32 ID) should be made ready to go to the front "whether in the Balkans or in Venetia." The Eastern Army were ordered to send Hon FAR # 355 (of 155 Hon ID) from Podolia to Transylvania. Planning would continue for a deployment on the Dniester, although no troops currently were available.

Lively discussion continued between Vienna and Berlin on the method by which Romania could be forced to adhere to the wishes of the two empires. At the start of October both high commands believed that military as well as diplomatic measures were advisable, and now they were no longer opposed by Graf Burian. However, no German units available since they were being sent either to the collapsing Balkan front or to the West. Therefore on 5 October the k.u.k. Eastern Army were ordered to quickly march as strong a force as possible to the east bank of the Dniester between Tiraspol and Mogilev. The troops covering southeastern Hungary were placed under a "Transsylvania Group", whose HQ at Kronstadt were taken over by FML Goldbach on 6 October.⁴⁶³ Goldbach demanded the 53 ID plus artillery, but the AOK could send him just the FA Bde of 1 CD (six batteries which had still been on the Southwestern front), plus two air companies (# 75 and 76). GFM Mackensen was preparing to reinforce the Wallachian border along the Sereth, which was commanded by LXIII Corps HQ (Bavarian GdI Ritter von Schoch). Here the k.u.k. 143 Inf Bde was strengthened with detachments from 62 ID. On 11 October the Eastern Army reported that parts of XXV Corps and of 2 CD were already deployed on the Dniester and that more troops were arriving.

But soon concerns of a new and greater danger became paramount. After the Bulgarians laid down their arms, the road to the north

462Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 300 ff.

463The organization of the Transsylvania Group is shown below in the general order of battle for mid-October.

was open for the advance of the Entente's Army of the Orient. The Central Powers would have to take measures to defend Romanian territory along the line of the Danube. On 17 October GdI Alfred Krauss was told by the AOK to halt the deployment on the Dniester and to send 155 Hon ID to Wallachia along with other units that had already entrained to join Kövess' Army Group. From Tyrol the k.u. Lst IR 5 and k.u. Lst Bn VI/3 were sent to join this Honved Division; several heavy batteries and an air company were also to be attached. In mid-October GFM Mackensen set up a Danube front adjoining the Sereth front, and placed it under GdA Scholtz, who'd come from Bulgaria. The western part of the Danube line (from the mouth of the Alt to the Hungarian border) was under FML Salis-Seewis' k.u.k. "General Command 16", with the Aus-Hung. 62 and German 218 ID; the former Division, led by FML Brunswik, guarded the Corabia sector west of the Alt. The k.u.k. Danube Flotilla were placed under GdA Scholtz.

Ukraine

The catastrophic deterioration of the military situation in the Balkans had an even greater impact in Ukraine than in Wallachia. In mid-September, before the collapse of Bulgaria, the commander of the Eastern Army (GdI Krauss) had personally visited Baden for a conference in which he asked the high command to clarify the political and economic goals he should pursue in Ukraine.⁴⁶⁴ The General presented his own suggestions, and warned about the vigorous efforts by the Entente to stir up trouble. The enemy's goal, as we've already noted, was to unite all the anti-Bolshevik parties and national groups on Russian soil (including the Cossacks, the "Volunteer Army" and the new Czechoslovakian force) so that after overthrowing the Communists they could create a new type of Eastern front against the Central Powers. Even a Bolshevik-led Great Russia, with far-reaching revolutionary goals, could be just as dangerous if it came under Entente influence. Therefore the two empires had an enormous interest in keeping an independent Ukraine on their side. Hetman Skoropadski, who'd visited Germany and been given all the honors of a head of state by Emperor Wilhelm, seemed to be gaining strength in his position; he was susceptible to the influence of the Central Powers, especially the Germans. In a report to the AOK the Aus-Hung. plenipotentiary at Kiev (GM Spannochi) urged that the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk should finally be ratified, which would remove the principal barrier to better relations between the Danube Monarchy and the Ukrainian government. But now the entire Ukrainian problem became a secondary issue because of the great concerns which burdened the allied high commands as

464Krauss, "Ursachen", pp. 265 ff.

the overall military situation deteriorated.

Immediately after plans for a concentric advance against Romania were abandoned in mid-September, GO Arz asked the Eastern Army (which was the only possible source of units) to send a division to the Balkans; the one they selected shouldn't come from XXV Corps, and it shouldn't include IR # 97. All units sent from Ukraine should first be given horses, if possible enough to bring them up to their full authorized allotment. GM Phleps' 30 ID were chosen to move to Belgrade to join Kövess' Army Group on the new Balkan front; part of the Division would travel through Bessarabia and Romania, and the rest through the Monarchy itself. The first elements left Odessa by sea for the port of Varna on 27 September. As the danger in the Balkans increased, the high command were also compelled to pull FZM Habermann's XI Corps from the east Ukraine with 59 ID and 4 CD. That area was once more placed under XII Corps. It was planned to garrison Odessa with k.u.k. IR 93, for which purpose the German Kiev Army Group approved its departure. However, the I and III Battalions of the Regiment were instead sent to Belgrade, while II Battalion stayed at Kiev.

The German OHL pointed out that the collapse of Bulgaria had opened up to the Entente the road to Constantinople, and that enemy fleets could break through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. The German forces and the k.u.k. Eastern Army should therefore prepare to defend the coasts. Like all the other overwhelming assignments, this one could hardly be carried out. The forces occupying Ukraine had to restrict their efforts to holding the important cities and securing the railroads; they had little enough time to spare for the task of procuring agricultural produce. The Aus-Hung. XII Corps, for example, were administering an area larger than Bohemia with just 15 ID and 5 Hon CD. And at the start of October the AOK had to remove parts of 15 ID to join the troops concentrating on the Dniester, since the divisions of XI Corps had now entrained to leave Ukraine. XXV Corps would now have to be the principal force deployed against Romania; for this purpose the parts of 187 Lst Inf Bde stationed at Mogilev were placed under their command.

GdI Krauss, who returned to his Army HQ at Odessa on 8 October, was certain that a new war would break out with Romania. He told the high command he could provide five divisions to defend against this menace (not counting 59 ID and 4 CD) if the Ukrainian territories east of the Bug were temporarily evacuated. This course could be advantageous, since it would immediately and clearly demonstrate to the Ukrainian government the great

usefulness of the Aus-Hung. garrison troops. Austria-Hungary then would be able to demand concessions, which the Ukrainians had hitherto refused, as a condition for the return of the troops. On 11 October GO Arz responded that even if the entire Eastern Army were deployed against Romania they still wouldn't have a numerical advantage. However, the forces the Army made available could be used for other purposes, and therefore a plan for evacuating all of Ukraine should be developed. As described above, a few days later (on the 17th) the plan for a concentration on the Dniester was finally abandoned; 155 Hon ID were to be sent to Mackensen, followed by 15 ID to Kövess. GdI Krauss was asked to determine whether the current position in Ukraine could be maintained with the remaining forces (two and a half infantry and three cavalry divisions) or to report which locations should be permanently abandoned.

F. The retreat of the German Western armies, 26 September to mid-October

On 3 September Marshal Foch had issued to all the allied armies under his command the orders for continuing the offensive, along with their next objectives. The goal was to sever the most important line of communication behind the main body of the German Western armies, the railroad running from Cambrai through St Quentin to Mezieres. The English armies were to continue their thrust toward Cambrai and St Quentin; farther east the French would attack in the Aisne-Ailette area, and the Americans west of the Meuse. In accordance with these orders, Marshal Haig prepared to assault the Siegfried position. Meanwhile on 9 September Foch visited the HQ of the King of the Belgians to initiate a general offensive by the armies stationed on the northern wing of the allied front. The "Flanders Army Group", under the command of King Albert, was formed to control the Belgian Army, the British 2nd Army and some French units (three infantry and three cavalry divisions). As part of the overall strategy, they would thrust on the flank toward Bruges and Ghent.

Preparations for the general offensive, and especially the assembly of the 1st American Army west of the Meuse after the fighting ended at St Mihiel, were still continuing on 18 September when the 4th English Army, supported by their neighbors, won a substantial success with a secondary assault in the Cambrai area. They took about 10,000 prisoners along with 150 guns.

For the great battle in northern France, Marshal Foch already

considerably outnumbered the Germans. After eliminating the forward bulge in the German lines, the French commander-in-chief General Pétain had been able to pull two armies into reserve.

According to supplementary orders issued on 22 September, the attacks by the various armies wouldn't be simultaneous, but would start in stages. On the 26th the Americans and French were to strike west of the Meuse, with Mezieres as their objective; on the next day two British armies would resume the thrust toward Cambrai, and on the 28th the Flanders Army Group should join in. Finally a thrust by the English and French was planned to start north of St Quentin on 29 September.

The ultimate objective of the general offensive was to drive the Germans from the soil of France and Belgium. The high command of the enemy coalition still weren't sure whether this fighting could lead to a decision prior to the onset of winter. If this wasn't the case, the Entente were ready to win final victory in spring 1919 with an enormous amount of men and equipment.

For the German Western armies, which now had been trying for two months to retain northern France in desperate battles, a new period of stubborn fighting lay ahead. For the last time the German soldiers would demonstrate their courage and willingness to sacrifice; with some exceptions their battle spirit was unbroken.

The fighting in late September

The offensive of 1st American Army in the Argonne and of the 4th French Army in the adjacent sector to the west gained local success on 26 September. But German resistance stiffened in the following days. It was soon evident that the Americans were unable to overcome the tactical and logistical problems presented by the dense forested terrain of the Argonne, with its poor road network; the troops and their commanders lacked experience. Naturally the battle resulted in heavy casualties and disputes with the overall high command of the Western powers.⁴⁶⁵

The English won some hard-earned success; on 29 September their 1st and 3rd Armies overcame the Siegfried position west of Cambrai after several days fighting. At the same time their 4th Army were engaged in front of St Quentin, along with 1st French Army. On 30 September the 4th and 5th French Armies attacked between the Argonne and Reims, making significant progress; on 3 October they forced the Germans to fall back after losing 20,000 prisoners and

⁴⁶⁵Foch, Vol. II, p. 217

230 guns.

On 28 September the Flanders Army Group opened their assault between Dixmude and the Lys. After three hours of artillery preparation they overran the first German line; they exploited their success the next day. Although the Germans suffered heavy losses (10,000 prisoners and 200 guns), on 30 September the advance of the Belgians, English and French came to a halt in Flanders. Here the fields, on which so many battles had been fought, were pitted with shell-craters and covered by spacious swamps; substantial engineering work would have to be completed before the advance could resume. In places the troops had to be supplied from the air. Thus the Germans gained enough time to deploy their troops in a position to the rear.

The fighting to date had already shown the German OHL that the situation was serious, and that their opponents could count on a steady flow of fresh forces as reinforcements. As they lost any hope that the situation in the West could take a favorable turn, the Germans were troubled by the collapse of Bulgaria and the menace to Turkey; the situation of Austria-Hungary, also endangered from the Balkans, was another problem. GO Hindenburg and his General Quartermaster believed that "even if we hold out on the Western front, conditions in the Balkans will only continue to worsen."⁴⁶⁶

Since the war now seemed hopelessly lost, the priority of the hour was to keep the Army intact; it would apparently soon be needed to keep internal order in the restless homeland or perhaps to counter the lurking menace of Bolshevism from the East. This reasoning lay behind the OHL's decision on 28 September to suggest seeking an armistice and peace negotiations, and reorganizing the Imperial government. The peace conditions which President Wilson had outlined (officially but incompletely) were harsh but acceptable. If, however, the enemy made unacceptable demands the German people would have to rally in a fight for existence.

The proposals developed in the OHL's HQ at Spa on this day resulted in the sending of a peace delegation. Its activity will be described fully in a later chapter.

Actions involving Aus-Hung. troops

While the Germans now were trying to find a way out of the great battle, the fighting raged in France and Belgium with

466Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", pp. 581 ff.

undiminished intensity. To support the 1st American Army, bogged down in the Argonne, four allied divisions⁴⁶⁷ also began to attack east of the Meuse, so that heavy fighting spread to this area.

The k.u.k. 1 ID, stationed east of the Meuse, had already been obliged in the last days of September to bend back their western wing to Sivry because the American attack west of the river had pushed back the neighboring 7 German Res ID. In the following nights Aus-Hung. sappers blew up the bridges on the Meuse, which now lay in no-man's land. In the period from 22 to 30 September the Division only had to repulse some minor thrusts by French and Senegal Negro troops, but they suffered substantial casualties from artillery fire, including gas shells.⁴⁶⁸

The offensive by the Americans and French east of the Meuse opened on 8 October after one and a half hours of destructive artillery bombardment. Three enemy divisions assaulted the "Brabant" Sub-Sector, held by the k.u.k. 1 ID. The first day of fighting was bitter and costly for both sides; the massive enemy force managed to break into the foremost defensive positions. But thanks to energetic intervention by the lower-level commanders and the stubborn endurance of their troops the enemy were then halted in a back-up position, and a deep penetration of the fortifications was prevented. On 9 and 10 October there was further bitter combat around this back-up line, in which parts of the east Hungarian IR # 5 distinguished themselves by their steady and successful defense of a forested hill, though enveloped on three sides. In fighting which surged back and forth the Aus-Hung. and German units, intermingled or working in close cooperation, fended off the enemy thrust without losing any substantial ground. An attack by an enemy bomber squadron of 120 enemy planes in the evening of 9 October also failed to break the defenders.

467 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original text, including Beilage 28 (Sketch 3), is in error regarding the enemy order of battle. It states there were "two corps, one French and one American", over 18 and 26 ID plus 29 and 30 US ID. Actually all the troops were under HQ of XVII French Corps - 18 and 26 French ID, 29 and 33 US ID. The 29th American Division was split up and its brigades attached to the French divisions as needed. There is another error a few lines later, where the text refers to 7th "Bavarian" Res ID rather than to 7th German Res ID; it has been corrected here.

468 Losses were 19 officers and 493 men, of whom 9 officers and 261 men were sick from poison gas (Franek, "k.u.k. Truppen im Westen", p. 421).

After this very honorable action, the worn-out 1 ID began to leave the front in the evening of the 10th (although parts weren't relieved until two days later). They had lost 190 officers and 5000 men.

Some battalions from the k.u.k. 106 ID (whose main body were stationed in the neighboring "Ornes" Sector under the HQ of the k.u.k. XVIII Corps) also played a successful part in these actions. The three Feld Jaeger battalions of 1 ID were engaged until 13 October under the 15 German ID near Beaumont, and suffered heavy casualties.

After a short pause to rest, in which the ranks of the greatly-reduced units were partly replenished, on 16 October the IR 112 already had to return to the "Brabant" Sub-Sector, which had been taken over by 228 German ID; FJB 17 joined them on the 18th. Also on 18 October the rest of 1 ID, which now had the k.k. Lst IR 25 and Sturm Battalion 106 attached, took over the "Sivry" Sub-Sector directly east of the Meuse. This position was 5½ km wide but didn't contain any completed positions, so it had to be fortified with strenuous labor. Although heavy new fighting developed in the neighboring areas, the 1 ID (further reinforced by the Württemberg Mountain Regt) weren't attacked; nonetheless they suffered considerably from heavy artillery fire and frequent gas attacks.⁴⁶⁹

The battles continue in October

Since the start of October the stubborn fighting had also continued farther west. In the Argonne and in Champagne the Americans and French made only slow progress; near Reims the Germans evacuated their permanent positions north and east of the city. On the battlefield north of the Aisne the French captured St Quentin on 3 October and the English stormed the trenches near Cambrai on the 8th; they captured that city the following day. This enemy success forced the German leadership to pull back the front between the Argonne and the Scheldt to the Hermann-Hunding-Brunhild Position by 13 October. The enemy, right on their heels, soon reached this line.

On 10 October Marshal Foch had issued new orders for continuing the general offensive along the 350 km front between the Meuse and the North Sea. He emphasized that pressure should be

469Between 21 and 23 October, 22 officers and 360 men - including the entire staffs of two battalions - had to leave the line after being gassed; at this time the Division had a total of 2700 riflemen.

increased between the Oise and the Scheldt, in the direction of the Belgian border south of Mons.

Therefore the onslaught against the German Western front intensified on 14 October. First the Flanders Army Group were able to advance north of the Lys, making the positions of the German 4th Army on the Belgian coast and of 6th Army in the Lille area untenable. The northern wing of the German forces therefore had to evacuate the North Sea coast, along with the Flanders submarine bases, between 17 and 20 October; by the 23rd they'd also abandoned the area around Lille and Douai. The English and French made further progress between the Oise and the Scheldt from 17 to 26 October.

On 19 October Marshal Foch extended the goals of his army groups. The Belgian Army were sent toward Brussels; the British forces, supported by 1st French Army, were sent through Maubeuge toward Givet. Three French armies and the 1st American Army⁴⁷⁰ were given Mezieres and Sedan as objectives.

To continue the great offensive Marshal Foch believed it was advisable to extend the battlefield toward the east. Strong forces would attack in Loraine from the area northeast of Nancy toward Saarbrücken (thus east of the Metz fortress); they might win a decisive success, since the bulk of the German Western armies were tied down in Belgium and France.⁴⁷¹ Based on Marshal Foch's orders, on 20 October Pétain began to prepare for this new operation, which was scheduled to start around 15 November. 28 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions, with 600 tanks, would deliver a destructive blow on a front of just 30 kilometers.

The distress of the German Western armies increased during October to an extent that fully justified the request for an armistice that had been made on 4 October. Despite the serious developments in the Balkans and the tense situation in Venetia, the German OHL continued to request their Aus-Hung. allies to shift forces to the hard-pressed Western front.

On 29 September the Aus-Hung. military plenipotentiary attached to the German Great General HQ had already reported to Baden that the situation on the Western front was very critical, that it was

⁴⁷⁰The 2nd American Army were formed on 14 October and took over the sector opposite the German "Michel" position west of the Moselle.

⁴⁷¹As of 20 October the supreme command of the Western Powers estimated that there were 127 German divisions west of the Meuse and only 32 east of the river (Foch, Vol. II, p. 259).

questionable whether the line could be held, and that it seemed urgently necessary to send further reinforcements. On 9 October GFM Hindenburg emphasized his urgent need for new troops. But the k.u.k. high command remained convinced that despite the danger on the Western front they couldn't spare any more units, because of

- . the increasing tension within the Monarchy itself,
- . the continuing enemy threat in Venetia, where an offensive was expected from day to day,
- . the new dangers in the Southeast which had arisen because of Bulgaria's collapse, forcing us to send all forces not needed elsewhere to Bosnia and southern Hungary, and
- . the questionable behavior of Romania.

On 16 October there was a new demand from Ludendorff that four more Aus-Hung. divisions should be sent to the West "because at this time weather conditions precluded [an enemy] attack against Austria-Hungary." The k.u.k. AOK - quiet justifiably, as would soon be proven - didn't share this opinion. The enemy had a numerical superiority of 12 to 15 divisions on the Italian front, but their relative strength was actually much greater once the physical condition and equipment of the opposing forces was taken into consideration. Thus in the interest of the common cause it was necessary to concentrate defensive forces on this front, whose retention was just as important to the Central Powers as the positions in the West. The Austrians could merely accelerate the shipment of the artillery units which still hadn't joined their divisions in France.

G. Last actions and surrender of Turkey

Turkey concentrates on the Caucasus

Because of climactic conditions there was a pause in fighting on the Turkish fronts during the summer. Only in the Caucasus did actions continue in June. Here the reorganized Turkish forces resumed their only temporarily-interrupted advance at the end of the month, wishing to implement the pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian plans of the Porte. Desire to possess the mineral resources and oil of the region was another motivation behind this military operation.

Thus a corps of the new 9th Turkish Army advanced toward Lake Urmia; on 24 June they occupied Choi, Dilman and Tabriz. But near Urmia city they collided with a "Christian Army" assembled from Armenian and Nestorian formations. The Christians caused

the Turks so much difficulty that at the start of July the second corps of 9th Army also had to be shifted toward Urmia. Then the Turks were able to throw their opponents back and on 2 August to capture the city. To protect the Caucasus from English forces that reportedly were coming from Bagdad, parts of 9th Army continued their advance toward Miandoab. Here on 12 August they defeated Armenians and Nestorians (who were led by English officers) and then reached Bijar and Sinna. At the same time a division which 3rd Army had sent to Tabriz advanced from that city toward Mianeh.

The 5 Caucasian ID, at Elisabethpol, had been reinforced by parts of the "Army of Islam" which were recruited from "Tartars" (actually Azeris) in this area. They began to advance toward Baku at the end of June and start of July; they tried to overrun the city on 2 August, but were defeated. A few days later the English occupied the important oil center.⁴⁷² Bloody fighting continued around Baku between the Tartars on one side, and the Armenians and Bolsheviks on the other. Finally on 14 September the Turks, who'd received reinforcements, were able to capture the city without great difficulty⁴⁷³; it became the capital of the new state of Azerbaijan.

Hand in hand with these events at the front a military-political dispute arose between the German Empire and Turkey, both of which were trying with all the means at their disposal to influence the creation of new states in the Caucasus, and to control both the railroads leading to the east and the major oilfields near Baku. The dispute escalated to armed clashes between units of the two countries⁴⁷⁴, and finally caused Germany to threaten to withdraw all its troops from the Turkish fronts. Then the Turks gave in and pulled back the forces which they'd sent to Tiflis; their place was taken at the start of September by German troops who'd come from Ukraine. But tension between the two allied states continued⁴⁷⁵ and wasn't diminished after 3 July, when Sultan Mohammed V died and was succeeded by his younger brother (who ascended the throne as Mohammed VI).

The Turkish statesmen had no intention of abandoning their plans

⁴⁷²English Official History, "Mesopotamia", p. 205

⁴⁷³Ibid., pp. 239 ff.

⁴⁷⁴TRANSLATOR's NOTE: The dispute was most acute in Georgia, where the Germans supported the new local government. On 10 June the Turkish 9 Caucasian ID were engaged against a mixed force of Georgians and Germans at Vorontsovka.

⁴⁷⁵Pomiankowski, pp. 362 ff.

to take over the Caucasus, for which they neglected the other fronts of the widespread theater in the Orient. The results were quickly becoming apparent. As we mentioned above, because of the climate the guns were silent in the summer months in Iraq as well as in Palestine. But during this period the disintegration of the Turkish armies, already noticeable in the spring, made shocking progress. Sickness and hunger ripped broad gaps in the ranks of the Turkish units, which also suffered because the troops took unauthorized leave. The units also were starting to lack necessary supplies of every kind. It is no wonder that morale and willingness to resist were flagging. Whenever the English probed the Turkish lines during these quiet weeks, they noticed this lack of fighting spirit, which was indicated by the lower level of resistance and by the lamentable physical and psychological condition of the soldiers who were taken prisoner.⁴⁷⁶

The authorities in Constantinople made little effort to redress these tragic conditions. They were so wrapped up in their political dreams of the future that they had no time to address the harsh reality and needs of the present. They ignored the complaints and warnings of Marshal Liman von Sanders (commanding the Palestine front) and closed their eyes to events on the parts of the European theater of operations adjacent to their own state. Thus news of the collapse of the Bulgarian Army struck them as an elemental force which they hadn't foreseen and thus was all the more shocking. Suddenly they had to deal with a menace to Constantinople from the west, which after the allied Army of the Orient conquered Bulgaria was a very real possibility. The weak garrison forces now holding the Catalca Lines could hardly be expected to halt or even delay the advance of this victorious Army toward the Golden Horn.

Collapse of the front in Palestine

While Turkey's civilian leadership and high command were still reeling from the surprising news of events in Bulgaria, they were struck by a second and more substantial blow - the collapse of the front in Palestine which led directly to the loss of Syria and thus to the imminent end of the war.

The commander of the English Army, General Allenby, had used the necessary pause in military operations due to the summer heat to make substantial preparations for a great offensive against the Turkish forces in Palestine which was planned for early fall. Thus on 19 September he was able to start the attack with

476English Official History, "Palestine", p. 446.

justified expectation of success. His army was well-armed, well-nourished, and well-equipped; they had twice as many combat troops as the Turks and an even larger advantage in weaponry and ammunition.⁴⁷⁷ The English struck the 8th and 7th Turkish Armies along a broad front between the sea and the Jordan River; the enemy were accompanied to the east by an army of Arab rebels, which advanced along the Medina-Damascus rail line, and supported on the coast by naval vessels. For the time being the 4th Turkish Army east of the Jordan were left undisturbed.

The attackers needed just a few hours to break through in the coastal sector, defended by 8th Army, and to force that Army into a disorderly retreat. As the English pivoted to the east, they also severely damaged the 7th Army, which had to abandon their positions and withdraw north. They were pursued by a strong English cavalry force which soon overtook the retreating units along all their lines of march; early on the 20th the horsemen already reached Nazareth, where they almost captured Marshal Liman with his HQ.⁴⁷⁸ The Turkish retreat, which was also harassed by English planes, soon degenerated into an unregulated flight by uncoordinated groups; they lost men and equipment not only to the quickly-moving English, but also to Arabs who everywhere rose in armed rebellion.

477English Official History, "Palestine", p. 452

478*Ibid.*, pp. 525 ff. Also Liman, pp. 354 ff.

Only the small detachments of the German "Asia Corps" and the even smaller Aus-Hung. artillery units - thanks to their superior leadership and cohesion in combat - were able to earn not only the recognition of the enemy⁴⁷⁹ but also a few combat successes. Whenever the English tangled with these units, they were checked. Among the Aus-Hung. troops, the 1st FH Batty and a gun of the 10.4 cm Cannon Batty fought in the ranks of the 8th Turkish Army until the last round. After the guns could no longer be served and had to be destroyed, the officers and men took up rifles; usually side by side with their German comrades, they braved a thousand dangers while retreating to the north and suffering painful casualties.⁴⁸⁰

The disintegration of the Turkish forces progressed rapidly. Since the Ottomans were no longer capable of sustained resistance, the English pursuit continued smoothly. Already on 21 September the enemy crossed the Jordan near the Sea of Galilee; they occupied Nablus on the same day and Haifa on the 24th. In the latter city the Aus-Hung. 24 cm Mortar Batty had been waiting for new weapons. Now they had to quickly retreat; they withdrew through Beirut, where they were reorganized as an anti-aircraft battery with German guns, and then to Aleppo in very difficult marches.⁴⁸¹

On 30 September the English occupied Damascus, where they linked up with the army of Arab rebels which had advanced along the railroad from Arzak, everywhere planting the standards of the Grand Sherif of Mecca.⁴⁸² With the loss of the largest and most important city of Syria, the country's fate was sealed. Because of the condition of the Turkish troops they had no choice other than to abandon the area to their enemies.

The planned encirclement of the Turkish 4th Army east of the Jordan was a failure, in no small measure because of the excellent spirit and inspired leadership of the Aus-Hung. and German units stationed there. Like their comrades west of the Jordan, they won the respect and admiration of the English as they fended off the Arab rebels, under English officers, who were pursuing 4th Army.⁴⁸³ The Aus-Hung. units east of the Jordan were the 2nd FH Batty (with the other gun of the 10.4 cm Can Batty

479English Official History, "Palestine", pp. 510 ff.

480Pomiankowski, pp. 395 ff.

481*Ibid.*, pp. 398

482Lawrence, "Revolt in the Desert" (German translation published at Leipzig), p. 346

483Lawrence, p. 336

attached) and the 1st Mtn Can Batty. On 22 September they started to retreat with the rest of the Turkish army, as ordered by Marshal Liman, at first without interference from the enemy. Both batteries were in perfect order as they left the positions they'd held for months. Soon they were attacked by enemy planes which inflicted heavy casualties. The 2nd FH Batty tried to continue the retreat by train, but soon had to leave their howitzers behind because of massive destruction to the rail lines. But the gun crews and their officers were able to break through on foot to Damascus, which they reached on 29 September. The retreat of the 1st Mtn Can Batty, entirely on foot, was even more difficult. On their dangerous route they had to fight swarms of hostile Arabs (including Bedouin) and English horsemen; they were also threatened from the air by hostile planes. Near Damascus enemy gunfire already blocked the direct route to the north; the battery had to make a long detour to the east before they could continue their march to Homs.⁴⁸⁴

Last efforts and surrender of the Turks

Tidings of the tragedy in Palestine hit the Turkish leaders in Constantinople with as great an impact as news of the downfall of Bulgaria. Nevertheless, for some time they didn't recognize the magnitude of the disaster and still hoped that a favorable outcome was possible. At least they now proceeded energetically. First they deployed all the troops at Constantinople in the Catalca Lines, including a German division which had been on their way to Tiflis. Then they ordered three divisions from 3rd Army in the Caucasus to come back to the capital. The advance of 9th Army in Persia was halted, except for a corps which were sent toward Mosul to reinforce 6th Army in Iraq. The occupation of Baku would be only temporary.

Marshal Liman now received, as he had long been requesting, command over the 2nd Turkish Army which guarded the coasts of Syria and Cilicia. But this change came too late, since the weak forces of this Army weren't enough to turn the tide of battle. Anyway the English and Arabs had paused in their advance after the occupation of Damascus, so that the Marshal was able to establish a rear-guard position between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains. Covered by this line, it was possible for the streams of fugitives which had converged at Damascus from all sides to continue moving to the north. However, due to the condition of the Turkish soldiers there could be no question of prolonging resistance at the Rajak position. Thus Marshal Liman pulled the remnants of his three armies quickly back by train and

484Pomiankowski, pp. 398 ff.

truck⁴⁸⁵ to Aleppo where he planned to create a new 7th Army. Here also the k.u.k. 1st Mtn Can Batty arrived after very difficult marches through the arid Anti-Lebanon. They had to leave behind their supply train and all their remaining ammunition, but were the only Aus-Hung. battery which managed to save all their guns. Therefore the personnel of the unit were brought up to full strength by incorporating remnants of the other artillery outfits at Aleppo; they received new equipment and became a welcome addition to the new Turkish 7th Army, which was greatly deficient in artillery. The officers and men not needed for the battery were sent by train to Constantinople.⁴⁸⁶

In the first days of October Marshal Liman and his German and Turkish colleagues were able to re-organize the confused masses of the retreating Turkish armies, which were at least partially re-armed and brought back to order. 2nd Army deployed in the Adana area to protect the coast and prevent an enemy landing in the Gulf of Alexandretta. They were now joined by the k.u.k. 1st Mtn Can Batty, whose last station was south of Adana. The 7th Turkish Army, deployed south of Aleppo, had several opportunities during October to demonstrate their renewed strength when they repulsed English attacks. But the ever-increasing number of Arab irregular groups near Aleppo made the area untenable, so the Army retreated in steady fighting to a position about 40 km northwest of the city. Here they remained until the end of October.

At the same time the remnants of the 6th Army at Mosul were enduring an attack by a much larger English force from Tekrit, to which they succumbed on 30 October. The Army was obliged to surrender. On the other hand the isolated Turkish Expeditionary Corps at Medina were able to hold out among the Arab rebels until January 1919.

At the start of October the leaders of the Young Turkish party which controlled the government at Constantinople recognized that the situation was hopeless. To add to their problems, the Turks' continuing violations of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty led to a conflict with Russia, with dangerous ramifications. Then the government fell. A new cabinet led by Marshal Ahmed Izzet Pasha found themselves forced to ask the English for an armistice. After long and humiliating negotiations this was granted on 30 October, with very severe terms. The Turks promised to evacuate their troops from all the parts of Persia, Iraq, Syria, Cilicia and Arabia which they still held, and to open the Dardanelles and

485During this movement an Aus-Hung. truck column performed useful service. (Liman, p. 386; Pomiankowski, p. 400)

486Pomiankowski, p. 400

Bosporus Straits. The German and Aus-Hung. units were given a time limit of four weeks to leave Turkish soil.⁴⁸⁷

Thus the Turks followed the Bulgarians out of the Quadruple Alliance. At this time they'd fought honorably at the side of their allies for four long years until complete military collapse and the loss of almost all territories with non-Turkish populations forced them to lay down their arms.

H. The Central Powers reach the end of their strength

1. The joint peace offer

In mid-September the Germans still regarded the call for peace by the Danube Monarchy as inappropriate, and felt that the proper course was to seek mediation by a neutral country. But the events of the next two weeks - on both the Western and Bulgarian battlefields - robbed the leaders of the OHL of their last hope that by force of arms they could gain a better peace treaty. On 28 September Hindenburg and Ludendorff - who for so long had kept the military spirit of the Central Powers alive with their unconquerable wills - together came to the bitter realization that the only remaining course was to ask the enemy for an armistice and an end to the war.⁴⁸⁸ On the next day, at Spa Emperor Wilhelm decided to accept his advisers' proposal; the Germans would invite President Wilson to a peace conference based on his Fourteen Points (and subsequent clarifications), with a simultaneous and immediate armistice. This was a fateful decision.

The OHL's demand for an immediate armistice came as a surprise not only to the Empire's political leaders (and indeed to the Emperor himself). Inevitably such a sudden admission of complete defeat greatly depressed and upset the German people; it disturbed not only the large groups which had already adopted or been influence by revolutionary ideas, but also the circles which hitherto had believed in the Army and in the skill of its leaders. As the military situation worsened, some of the leading political figures had for some time been convinced that the government must be re-organized and strengthened by ensuring that

487English Official History, "Palestine", pp. 625 ff.

488Ludendorff, "Kriegserinnerungen", pp. 581 ff. Hindenburg, pp. 392 ff. Schwertfeger, pp. 111 ff.

it had the broadest possible support among the nation. Thus the increasing domestic political tension would be dispelled by a "revolution from above." A parliamentary cabinet would make it easier for the mass of the population to endure the traumatic experience of defeat after four years of confidence in victory. The aged Imperial Chancellor Graf Herting resigned. His office - and thus the difficult task of creating a government that could negotiate peace at this critical hour - was taken over by Prince Max, the heir of the Grand Duke of Baden. The Prince had never been in military service, but had labored successfully to help prisoners of war. This high-minded aristocratic idealist had spent much time studying political-philosophical issues and was known as an advocate of a compromise peace. Therefore he seemed to be the right man to symbolize the changed spirit of a new Imperial government outside Germany's borders.⁴⁸⁹ The decisions taken at Spa were immediately reported to Vienna, Constantinople and even Sofia (where the separate armistice was just being accepted).

The new course at Berlin was no great surprise to the Ballhausplatz.⁴⁹⁰ At a Crown Council on 2 October Foreign Minister Burian saw no need to discuss the necessity of this step, which was coming right after his own call for peace. The Council endorsed the new initiative, although both the Austrian and Hungarian Prime Ministers had reservations about accepting the Fourteen Points and their supplements as a basis for negotiation; it was believed, however, that certain compromises could be reached during the peace conference. On the same day, Emperor Wilhelm chaired an important meeting in Berlin.⁴⁹¹ The new Reich Chancellor Prince Max was still opposing the demand of the OHL that requests for a peace conference and for an armistice should be requested simultaneously. He believed it was inappropriate and harmful to beg for an armistice, admitting to the entire world that Germany was defeated; this would dissipate any favorable impression created by his new government as it sought to secure peace. But the viewpoint of the OHL was adopted, and on 4 October the Swiss government forwarded a note (dated on the 3rd) to the United States of America. Austria-Hungary used Sweden as an intermediary and Turkey used Spain for their own correspondence to Washington, in which they indicated their

489Niemann, "Revolution", pp. 116 ff. Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 462

490Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 291 ff. Opocensky, pp. 223 ff.

491Schwertfeger, pp. 136 ff. Prinz Max von Baden, "Erinnerungen und Dokumente" (Berlin, 1927), pp. 335 ff.

willingness to come to terms.⁴⁹²

President Wilson first responded, on 8 October, with questions addressed to the German Empire; among other things, he wanted to know if the Central Powers intended to immediately evacuate the territories occupied by their troops.⁴⁹³ Austria-Hungary received no response, which itself was an ominous sign; the Monarchy's viewpoint was included in the response from Berlin on the 12th, indicating that both Empires were willing to evacuate. Wilson's second note (dated 14 October, received on the 16th) accused Germany of harsh measures in its conduct of the war on land and sea, and indicated that the Imperial form of government was a hindrance to peace; however, it was up to the German people to create more favorable conditions. The last sentence of his note contained, at last, a specific answer to the Aus-Hung. government.

2. The domestic political and economic crises in Austria-Hungary

Meanwhile the political and economic decay of the Danube Monarchy was becoming evident in ever more acute forms. Politicians in the lands of the Crown of St Wenceslaus were working to create a Czech state, almost without interference from Vienna. Galicia, which had long enjoyed a special status, looked toward Warsaw. It was very difficult to feed the populations of the industrial areas of Austria (including the "Sudeten" German districts on the edges of Bohemia), as well as of Vienna and other cities. Many places had just one or two weeks' sure supply of food.⁴⁹⁴ The Crown lands which were a more abundant source of produce, such as Galicia and Bohemia, were increasingly unwilling to share it; the central government in Vienna was losing its ability to impose its will on the local administrations - which were already exhibiting strong nationalist leanings - or on other bureaucratic offices such as those which ran the railroads.⁴⁹⁵ Agricultural products from Hungary, which was mainly responsible for feeding the field armies, were hard to obtain because of its resentment against the sister state across the Leitha.⁴⁹⁶ Austria could no longer count on effective supplies from Ukraine or Romania since it was

492Arz, "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 308

493Schwertfeger, pp. 160 ff. Kerchnawe, "Der Zusammenbruch", pp. 38 ff.

494Arz, *Ibid.*, p. 311

495Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 292 ff.

496Landwehr, pp. 250 ff.

evident that these areas would soon be evacuated.

All industrial establishments were hampered by numerous strikes; production was declining anyway due to the shortage of raw materials and energy sources, especially coal. And the lack of coal forced the railroads to leave large numbers of boxcars sitting idle, which in turn was strangling the transportation network. Vital supplies very often couldn't be shipped from their storage places to feed the famished consumers. The authorities couldn't cope with the black market, which was carried on through numerous intermediaries and replacing official transactions; they no longer had the physical means to enforce their regulations. The majority of the population had to survive by their own efforts, avoiding the law; this undermined respect for the government among broad segments of the population. An influenza epidemic and other illnesses ravaged the citizens, whose resistance was weak due to earlier physical and psychological wear and tear. Everywhere, and especially in the major cities, there was fear of the privations of the upcoming winter.

Hunger and economic misery, increased tension between social classes, and the political-revolutionary movements created a tense situation in which the government had to reckon that a powerful outbreak could occur at any moment among the enraged population. For a long time the police and gendarmerie had been unable to keep order by themselves. Military force was the ultimate means by which the state could resist the revolutionary menace. Since spring a number of field divisions had to deploy on "Assistenz" service in the interior. But because it was impossible to keep these units away from the front for long periods, the War Ministry believed they needed a minimum of 66 "Assistenz" battalions in the homeland, and started to create these units among the Ersatz formations.⁴⁹⁷ Then at the end of August, when the high command urgently needed all of the 21 field battalions still stationed in the interior, the War Minister GO Stöger-Steiner insisted that the field troops could only be sent back to the front as Assistenz units became available to replace them. The fact that a serious dispute arose over the issue of whether troops should deploy against external or internal enemies is shocking evidence of how far the situation had deteriorated.

The forces at home, which ultimately were the source of fresh fighters for the front, didn't remain untouched by the corrupting influences around them. The social crisis and political

497 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: For further details, see the notes appended to the end of this section.

agitation had a destructive effect on the spirit of the Ersatz units. These formations consisted mostly of former prisoners who'd returned from Russia along with men who'd been exempt but finally declared eligible for front-line service after numerous examinations; neither category were willing to fight. There was also a group of younger soldiers who'd been called up after a period in which they'd received relatively high wages as industrial workers, but now were often leaving hungry family members back home. Finally, the Ersatz units included veterans who'd barely recovered from illness or wounds; some of them had been wounded more than once. Among such people it was hardly possible any more to find enthusiastic defenders of the fatherland, and in fact many of them had already adopted contrary opinions. The numerous attempts by the authorities to regulate the contacts of the soldiers, or to oversee and censor their reading material, were an insufficient defense against powerful ideological currents that were all too prevalent.

There were continuing cases of mutiny and widespread disobedience of orders in the interior and also in the occupied territories; discipline was noticeably slackening.⁴⁹⁸ Soldiers in uniform were seen in ever larger numbers at strikes, demonstrations, and political meetings. Cases of desertion and unauthorized leave were increasing. The military courts and police were powerless against the deserters, who often were supported by the population and presented themselves as helpers to the upcoming revolution.

In the fall, when the nationalist and socialist forces opposed to the Monarchy were gaining the upper hand, there were no longer enough reliable troops in the interior to oppose the restless masses. The personnel of the Ersatz units increasingly were being drawn into anti-government conspiracies. The northern and southern Slavs already were preparing their own national armies. The majority of the reserve officers for some time had been in agreement with the political currents at home and now supported the creation of new states through total revolution. Even staff officers were making arrangements with the future national governments. The authorities knew what was going on, but didn't dare to intervene. In Bohemia the Sokol organizations were taking barely-concealed military measures. In German Austria the Social Democrats sought to spread a revolutionary organization among the soldiers. The men of the Assistenz battalions had been so greatly affected by the dissidents that eventually they would refuse to use their weapons.⁴⁹⁹

498Hausner, p. 261

499Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 333 ff.

The situation was no better in Hungary. Radical socialists spread their nets throughout the land while their agents and messengers worked among the garrison troops, especially those in Budapest; Bolsheviks among the "Heimkehrer" played a large role in this effort. The left wing of the bourgeois intelligentsia made common cause with these socialists. Concern for the preservation of the "thousand year old Kingdom of St Stephen" caused sentiment to rise in favor of seeking a separate peace by breaking with Austria and Germany.

Translator's note - distribution of the interior garrisons

The following information is derived from the appendices and maps at the end of Volume II of Plaschka's "Innere Front." It shows the organization as of 21 October 1918, when there certainly was a large force, at least on paper. The government didn't order these units into action against the dissidents, so it will never be known if any of them were in fact reliable.

In October the authorities started to create a series of "Feld Assistenz Battalions"; they hoped that the men of these units, drawn directly from first-line troops, would be more reliable than the other home-service outfits (Plaschka, pp. 113-116). Formation was finished just as the state was collapsing, so the battalions were never tested. There were nineteen units:

- . I - Germans and Czechs from IR # 4 and 104
- . II - Magyars, Slovaks, Ruthenes and Romanians from IR # 25, 66 and 85
- . III - Magyars, Romanians and Germans from IR # 26 and from Hon IR # 13 and 23
- . IV - Germans from the Kaiser Jaeger and Kaiser Schützen, plus some Czechs and Slovenes
- . V - Magyars, Romanians, Germans and Serbs from 34 ID
- . VI - Magyars, Serbs and Croats from 31 ID
- . VII - Romanians and Magyars from 7 ID
- . VIII - Magyars, Serbs and Croats from 70 Hon ID
- . IX - Magyars and Slovaks from 41 and 51 Hon ID
- . X - Germans and Slovenes from Archduke Joseph's Army Group
- . XI - Germans from Archduke Joseph's Army Group
- . XII - Magyars from Archduke Joseph's Army Group (IR # 32 and 68 and Hussar Regts # 9, 10, 13)
- . XIII - Germans and Magyars from Archduke Joseph's Army Group
- . XIV - Magyars and Romanians from Boroevic's Army Group
- . XV - Germans and Romanians from Boroevic's Army Group
- . XVI - Magyars and Romanians from Boroevic's Army Group
- . XVII - Magyars from Boroevic's Army Group
- . XVIII - Magyars from Boroevic's Army Group

- . XIX - Magyars and Slovaks from Boroevic's Army Group

The distribution of the Assistenz, Feld Assistenz and Ersatz units was as follows.

In Ist Corps District (Cracow)

- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 1, 27, 47, 49, 93, 101 and of Sch Regts # 9 and 15
- . Assistenz Half Bn of BH FJB # 1
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 1, 13, 20, 57; of Sch Regts # 15, 16, 31, 32; Ersatz Sqdn of DR # 12
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 55, 95; of Sch Regt # 33; Ersatz Sqdn of DR # 9; of Reit Sch Regt # 1

In IIInd Corps District (Vienna)

- . Front line troops - IR # 70 and 86 (however, # 86 soon left for the Serbian front); V Bn/IR # 69 (as imperial body guards)
- . Feld Assistenz Bns # I, II, III, IV, X, XVII, XIX
- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 76, 84 and of BH IR # 4
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 3, 4, 49, 81, 84, 99; of Sch Regts # 1, 13, 14, 21, 24, 25; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 10, 17, 21, 25; Ersatz Sqdns of DR # 3, 6, 11, 15; of Reit Sch Regt # 5
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 64, 76, 83, 91; of Sch Regts # 2, 30, 35; Ersatz Half Bn of BH FJB # 1

In IIIrd Corps District (Graz)

- . Front line troops - k.k. Lst Bn # 153
- . Feld Assistenz Bns # VIII, IX
- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 19, 60
- . Assistenz Half Bn of BH FJB # 2
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 7, 27, 47, 87; of Sch Regts # 3, 5, 26; of Mtn Sch Regt # 1 and K-Sch Regt # II
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 28, 98, 102, of BH IR # 2; Ersatz Half Bns of BH FJB # 2, 3, 4 (?)

In IVth Corps District (Budapest)

- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 23, 32; of Hon IR # 6, 25, 29
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 6, 23, 32, 38, 44, 52, 86; of Hon IR # 1, 6, 17, 19, 29, 30; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 24, 26; Ersatz Sqdns of HR # 7, 8, 10, 13; of Hon HR # 1, 4, 8
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 35, 88, 94, 97; of BH IR # 1, 3; of Hon IR # 11; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 6

In Vth Corps District (Pressburg)

- . Assistenz Bn of BH IR # 3; of Hon IR # 15; half of the Bn from Hon IR # 13
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 19, 26, 48, 71, 72; of Hon IR # 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 31; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 11, 19; Ersatz Sqdns of HR # 5, 9, 11; of Hon HR # 6 and 7
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 29, BH IR # 4; of Sch Regts # 11, 12; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 12; Ersatz Sqdn of UR # 3

In VIth Corps District (Kaschau)

- . Assistenz Bn of IR # 34; Bns of Hon IR # 9, 10
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 5, 25, 34, 65, 67, 85; of Hon IR # 9, 10, 12; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 15, 29, 32; Ersatz Sqdns of HR # 6, 12, 14, 15; of Hon HR # 5
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 21, 80; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 2

In VIIth Corps District (Grosswardein)

- . Assistenz Bns - None assigned as of 21 Oct; however, by end of Oct the District received the Bn from Hon IR # 8 and half a Bn from Hon IR # 13 (evacuated from Serbia; they had been guarding the Danube in the territory formerly occupied by Bulgaria just over the river from the District)
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 33, 37, 43, 46, 61, 66; of Hon IR # 2 [305], 3, 4, 5 [302], 7 [301], 8 [300]; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 28; Ersatz Sqdns of HR # 1, 3, 4, 16; of Hon HR # 2, 3
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 11, 12, 70, 75; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 3

In VIIIth Corp District (Prague)

- . Feld Assistenz Bns # V, VI, VII, XI, XIII, XV, XVIII
- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 2, 42, 48, 68, 78, 92
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bn of IR # 73; of Sch Regts # 6 and 29; Ersatz Sqdns of DR # 2, 7, 10, 14
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 2, 51, 68, 69, 101; of Kaiser Jaeger Regt # 2

In IXth Corps District (Leitmeritz)

- . Front line troops (?) - k.k. Lst Bn # 24 (per ÖULK, was in

Bohemia on 15 Oct, but is missing in the 21 Oct OB in Plaschka's book)

- . Feld Assistenz Bn # XII
- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 38, 90; of BH IR # 2; of K-Sch Regt # II
- . Assistenz Half Bn of FJB # 9
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 18, 42, 74, 92; of Sch Regt # 9; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 1; Ersatz Sqdns of DR # 1, 8, 13 and of UR # 11; of Reit Sch Regt # 2
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 39, 60, 90; of Sch Regt # 7; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 9, 22, 27

In Xth Corps District (Przemysl)

- . Feld Assistenz Bn # XVI
- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 14, 46; of Sch Regts # 1, 6
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 9, 10, 45, 77, 89; of Sch Regts # 17, 18, 34; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 4, 14; Ersatz Sqdn of UR # 6; of Reit Sch Regt # 3
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bn of IR # 54

In XIth Corps District (Lemberg)

- . Feld Assistenz Bn # XIV
- . Assistenz Bn of IR # 41; of Sch Regt # 3
- . Ersatz units (all locally recruited) - Ersatz Bns of IR # 15, 24, 41; of Sch Regts # 19, 20, 22, 36; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 31

In XIIth Corps District (Hermannstadt)

- . Assistenz Bn of IR # 82; of Hon IR # 21, 23
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 50, 62, 63, 82; of Hon IR # 21, 22, 23, 24, 32; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 23; Ersatz Sqdn of HR # 2; of Hon HR # 9
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of IR # 8, 22

In XIIIth Corps District (Zagreb)

- . Assistenz Bns of IR # 26, 53, 65, 91, 96
- . Ersatz units
 - . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 16, 53, 78, 79, 96; of Hon IR # 25, 26, 27, 28; Ersatz Sqdns of UR # 5, 12; of Hon HR # 10
 - . From other districts - Ersatz Bn of IR # 31; of Sch Regt # 23

In XIVth Corps District (Innsbruck)

- . Assistenz Bn of Kaiser Jaeg Regt # 3
- . Ersatz units

- . Locally recruited - Ersatz Bns of IR # 14, 59; of Kaiser Jaeger Regts # 1, 3, 4; of K Sch Regt # I; Ersatz Sqdn of DR # 4; of Reit Sch Regt # 6; of Tyrol Reit Sch Bn
- . From other districts - Ersatz Bns of Sch Regts # 8, 10, 28, 37; of Mtn Sch Regt # 2

In Bosnia (XVth and XVIth Corps Districts)

. Almost all the troops in Bosnia belonged to the field forces (see the field army OB for 15 October, below). The only exceptions at this time were the Ersatz Bn of Kaiser Sch Regt # III (stationed at Doboj) and the Ersatz Detachment of the kk Dalmatian Mounted Rifles (at Banjaluka).

The following garrison units were in occupied territories

- . In Poland - Ersatz Bns of IR # 30, 56, 58, 93, 100; Ersatz Half Bns of FJB # 5, 13, 16, 18; Ersatz Sqdns of UR # 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 and 13
- . In Serbia - None (all were being evacuated or had already returned home)
- . In Venetia - Ersatz Bns of IR # 17, 40; Ersatz Half Bn of FJB # 7

3. Emperor Charles' manifesto

To counter the external and internal forces which were about to smash the venerable edifice of the Habsburg Monarchy to pieces, Emperor Charles and his advisers made a last effort to bring the concept of a supra-national community in line with the desires of the peoples that were striving to go their separate ways. The Monarch, Foreign Minister Burian and Austrian Prime Minister Hussarek were convinced that a major change in domestic policy was unavoidable.⁵⁰⁰ The critical situation that developed in the Balkans when Bulgaria left the war forced the statesmen in Vienna to face the urgency of the South Slavic problem. GO Sarkotic, the governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had continually warned that Vienna and Budapest must come up with a solution at the last moment, since the population were transferring their allegiance to the enemy camp with surprising speed. Crown councils on 27 September and 2 October brought no decision. Hungary opposed the only still feasible plan, which was to create a complex of the Monarchy's South Slavic lands as an equal partner of the current two states ("Trialism").

500 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 285 ff. Opocensky, pp. 241 ff.

When Wilson's program was accepted as the basis of peace negotiations, reconstruction of the government became unavoidable. But Hungarian Prime Minister Wekerle refused to extend the right of self-determination to the lands of St Stephen's crown, while Hussarek - leading the Austrian cabinet - felt that despite undeniable difficulties it would be possible to reconcile Wilson's ideas with the continued existence of the Habsburg Monarchy. Thus on 1 October Hussarek presented a program of limited autonomy to the delegates of the Reichsrat in Vienna. It was rejected by the Northern and Southern Slavs, clearly indicating that these nationalities wanted nothing further to do with the old state; the Ukrainians, Italians and Romanians also spoke up in favor of secession. Among the German parties, that Social Democrats were the first (on 3 October) to recognize the right of the other nations to break away, while demanding the same right for the Germans of Austria. By 9 October all of the middle-class German parties took this same position. The pace of domestic political developments picked up rapidly due to the peace proposal sent to the Americans on the 4th.

On 6 October representatives of the Croats, Serbs and Slovenes set up a South Slavic National Council in Zagreb, claiming to represent the interests of their brothers living in both Austria and Hungary. A few days earlier (on 1 October) the Ballhausplatz had sent a suggestion to the Polish regency government in Warsaw, in which Graf Burian advocated an "Austro-Polish" solution.⁵⁰¹ But the Foreign Minister received no reply. Instead, on the 7th the Warsaw regency announced the creation, based on one of Wilson's Fourteen Points, of an independent state consisting of all parts of the Polish lands and with free access to the sea. The Poles in the Austrian Reichsrat joyously concurred with their co-nationalists.

Emperor Charles didn't shrink from taking extraordinary measures. On 12 October he summoned representatives of all nationalities and parties to Baden for a public conference; he wanted to get adherents of all the groups to join a cabinet that would rebuild the state in the common interest, but the idea failed. Nevertheless the Monarch and the Austrian statesmen still desired to make some significant offer to the dissatisfied nationalities before the revolutionary movements swelled beyond control and swept the existing order away. Also, because of Wilson's ideas

501 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The scheme envisioned "a Polish kingdom including Galicia, over which Emperor Charles would preside; the new Poland would stand on a footing of equality with Hungary." (May, p. 734)

it seemed advisable to take the initiative in restructuring the state so that we could avoid - as much as possible - having the internal affairs of the country discussed at a peace conference and thus subject to the dictation of the enemy.⁵⁰² The Emperor resolved to undertake the arduous task of reconstructing his realm; without altering Hungary's constitution he would convert Austria into a federal state in which the peoples would have substantial autonomous rights.

The domestic and foreign political situations allowed little time for deliberation and decision. During these days Wilson was engaged in a nerve-wracking game of questions and answers with the German government, while Vienna wasn't getting a response of any sort from Washington! Neutral Switzerland, situated between the warring parties, was the stage where non-binding contacts continued between official representatives, secret agents, and volunteer intermediaries. Through these channels the Viennese government naturally learned, with some pleasure, that circles within the Entente still existed which were well-disposed to the Habsburg realm; they also heard of pronouncements by foreign statesmen (both rumored and confirmed) that were somewhat favorable to the Monarchy. The rumors from Switzerland emphasized that the pro-Austrian circle in England advocated the survival of the Monarchy as a federal state, as General Smuts had once suggested in his meeting with Graf Mensdorff. A quick step in this direction, accepting Wilson's program, could still bring salvation. It was also advisable that the decision for reform should be taken before 15 October when a second "congress of oppressed peoples" was scheduled to meet in Paris, since this gathering might create new ties between the Entente and the dissatisfied nationalities. Also in Paris, on the 14th Benes announced to the French government that the Czecho-Slovakian National Council was being converted into a provisional ministry with Masaryk as president.⁵⁰³ On the same day a general strike broke out in the Bohemian lands; the radical socialists wanted to use the occasion to proclaim a republic. The outbreak was held in check, partly by the efforts of the government and partly due to strong opposition from the national committee at Prague; thus the republic was actually proclaimed only in a few smaller towns, such as Pisek.

502Werkmann (p. 283) reports the following words of the Emperor:
"I don't want to be forced by the peace treaty to initiate changes - consistent with Wilson's program - which I am willing myself to implement in favor of my peoples, and to which they are entitled after this long war."

503Benes, "Der Aufstand der Nationen" (Berlin, 1928), pp. 589 ff.

Such was the political background when a decisive crown council was held in Vienna on 15 October to initiate the "revolution from above." The attitude of Hungary was of enormous importance, since the agreement of the government of Budapest was essential to address at least the South Slavic question. But Prime Minister Wekerle, who arrived in Vienna only after the council ended, insisted that Hungary's constitution was inviolable; he reminded the Monarch of his coronation oath and finally threatened to cut off food supplies to Austria. The Emperor had to back down, conceding to the shrewd Magyar politician that in future Austria and Hungary would be united only in the person of the sovereign; each state would have its own foreign policy, armed forces and bank. The reconstruction effort would be restricted to the western half of the realm.

The wording of the manifesto

Realizing that Hussarek's shaky cabinet couldn't bear the heavy burden of implementing the reform program, Emperor Charles was determined that in the official public manifesto he'd place most of the responsibility upon himself. The document was prepared on 16 October and issued in the next few days. After referring to the Sovereign's efforts to bring peace to the peoples of the Danube Monarchy, dating back to his accession to the throne, the manifesto announced:

"....Austria will become a federal state in accordance with the will of its peoples; each nationality will create its own administration within the area where it dwells.

This arrangement won't interfere with the union between Austria's Polish territories and the independent Polish state. The city of Trieste and the surrounding area will receive a special status, consistent with the wishes of the population.

This new organization, which in no way will disturb the integrity of the lands of the Holy Crown of Hungary, should guarantee self-determination to each of the individual national states. But it will also protect the common interests, and above all prove its worth in areas where inter-cooperation is a vital necessity for the individual components. In particular all our strength will be exerted to justly and economically address the great challenges posed by the effects of the war.

Until the changes are legally implemented, the current institutions will remain in place to protect common interests. My government is authorized to prepare all the work without

delay. I am calling upon all the peoples, whose right to self-determination will be the foundation of the new Empire, to participate in this great project through national councils to be formed from the Reichsrat deputies of each nation; they will regulate the relationships of the peoples with each other and with my government.

Thus our fatherland, fortified by the harmony of the nations of which it is composed, may emerge from the storm of the war as a league of free peoples..."

An order to the Army and Navy, drafted in the Imperial Military Chancellery, was designed to inform the fighters at the front about the Emperor's program. It stated:

"In accordance with the wishes of all the peoples of Austria, the country will evolve into an amalgamation of national states, united under a federal government.

Thus on the one hand we will remove barriers which have interfered with the common life of the peoples, and on the other open the road to happiness for each individual nationality and for the fatherland.

At this significant moment I turn to my armies and my fleet. In your ranks the loyalty and unity of all nations to each other and to me have always been inseparable.

My confidence is unshaken that your well-proven spirit of loyalty and harmony, which has existed from olden times until today, will continue without interruption. As Austria becomes a new state, this spirit will prove to be a valuable inheritance, for the good and profit of us all. May God grant this!"

VIII. The Collapse of Austria-Hungary

A. *Awaiting the Italian offensive*

1. The Southwestern front in the first three weeks of October

On 4 October, when the Vienna government along with the German Empire and Turkey sought to open peace negotiations with Wilson,

the military spirit at the front was still satisfactory. Despite the oppressive shortage of resources and friction within the ranks of the field forces (caused by men returning from leave, by replacement troops, and by the Heimkehrer from Russia), the combat soldiers still retained their discipline. Through mid-October the only signs of demoralization were appearing among the March formations and the troops on the lines of communication; they hadn't extended to the main body of the field forces. The soldier of the fourth year of the war was under-nourished and led a joyless existence. Clad in a ragged uniform and pale-faced, he took shelter from the fire of enemy guns in a cavern, trench or shell crater, but took up his rifle when necessary and followed his officers into the counterattack. Although he fought without enthusiasm, he kept going because of comradeship, a sense of duty, and habits created by years of practice.

War-weariness and a desire to go home waxed greatly among all the front-line troops in October 1918 due to concerns about their families and the uncertainty of the future. Letters from home to the fighters at the front spoke mainly of the unrelieved misery in the interior; women and children in particular suffered from hunger. Under the impact of events on the Western front and in the Balkans, despondency and anxiety spread among the officer corps. The professional officers were increasingly convinced that the Army was estranged from the Monarchy's peoples and that the war was no longer regarded as a common effort, but merely the concern of the forces at the front. And then at the start of October came the peace initiative, which was regarded as an admission of defeat and gave everyone the agonizing impression that they were defending a lost cause.

Effects of the peace initiative

On 5 October the k.u.k. high command reported the peace initiative to the armies in the field, emphasizing that the offer was not the same as an actual armistice, and that their watchfulness and readiness to fight were now an urgent duty. But this diplomatic initiative in reality caused a severe problem for the AOK. Since late summer there already had been no doubt that the Italians were preparing for a large-scale offensive. Plans for anticipating this development with an attack of our own finally had to be abandoned in August. Now the concern was that the request for an armistice and resultant political turmoil could harm the Army's ability to fight. Therefore in an order dated 7 October the k.u.k. high command instructed all the Army commanders "in this hour of all-important domestic and foreign political developments to do everything in [your] power to

maintain the morale of officers and men and to guard the combat strength of the armed forces from undesirable influences." At the same time the AOK issued specific guidelines for instructing the front-line soldiers - reminding them to be prudent, disciplined and orderly, and promising to prevent the homeland from suffering Russia's fate by remaining strong. Because of Bulgaria's collapse, the pitiless foe might not grant the request for an armistice. In that case we'd need to summon up all our strength and fight on until the enemy recognized that they could accomplish nothing further.

The k.u.k. high command and all the high-ranking generals were sincerely trying to weaken any adverse impact from the armistice request and to keep the field armies from being sucked into the confusing events in the interior. They still hoped that the armies, though cut off from society and suffering from all kinds of deprivation, would be able to hold out until the armistice was concluded. Only thus would it be possible "to muffle in the trenches the tidings of the events then transpiring in the Monarchy's interior."⁵⁰⁴ For this reason, and because the enemy for the time being didn't initiate their great offensive, the course of trench warfare along the entire Southwestern front in the first three weeks of October followed a similar course to the actions of September.

Activity along the mountain front

As previously, almost every day the Italians directed patrol operations and strong artillery fire against the k.u.k. 10th Army. On 5 October the enemy were able to capture a position on the cliffs south of the Stilfserjoch that was held by 164 Inf Bde (of GdI Archduke Peter Ferdinand's k.u.k. V Corps). In mid-October there were further lively patrol actions in the Ortler area and in the Tonale sector of 22 Sch Div. Italian scouts were also active in the area held by XX Corps (the Adamello area) and in the Judicarien. Small enemy detachments also probed the positions in the Riva sector, along Lake Garda, and - on the eastern wing of XXI Corps - on Lake Loppio and near Mori. Italian artillery bombarded the hamlets in the Arco basin and the Adige valley. The enemy air units were very active. Thus on 5 October a squadron of planes appeared over the Adige valley; they bombed Calliano, a road leading south from Neumarkt, and our airfields.

The enemy scouting detachments continued to probe frequently on the mountain front east of the Adige. They sought primarily to

504 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 337

break into the positions of 56 Sch Div (under XXI Corps) on the Zugna Ridge and into those of the Kaiser Jaeger Division in the Pasubio sector, on the Borcola Pass and in the Laghi basin. On 22 October a storm detachment of K-SchR III were able to penetrate the Italian lines on the Corno and to return with booty. Almost everywhere on Tyrol's western and southern front the enemy artillery fire increased noticeably around mid-October.

This vigorous activity by artillery and infantry alike against the k.u.k. 11th Army's right wing was apparently designed to conceal the departure of English forces from the Asiago plateau, about which we learned from prisoners' statements. Around 3:00 AM on 4 October a local enemy attack near Asiago led to the penetration of the lines of 16 ID (XIII Corps) at two points. But the intruders were thrown out again with a counter-thrust. On 7 and 9 October the enemy artillery fire increased to a point that we had to expect a larger-scale attack on the plateau, but only some patrols advanced. However, the constant need to stay ready and the Italian gas attacks kept the troops from resting while they also suffered from continuous bad weather. Cases of illness were increasing because the under-nourished bodies of the soldiers weren't capable of resisting the effects of the storms. Nevertheless our troops on the plateau exerted their last remaining strength to survive this debilitating trench warfare.

Although the bombardment died down on 10 October, starting at 3:00 AM on the 11th all the positions between the Assa Ravine and the Brenta valley were again subjected to explosive and gas shells. At 4:00 AM enemy infantry attacked the positions of XIII Corps near Asiago and on Mt Sisemol. While the scouting probes by the English collapsed under our defensive fire at Asiago, the French managed to penetrate the trenches of 38 Hon ID on Mt Sisemol. An immediate counterattack by the local reserves hurled them completely out of the position. The Honved Infantry Regiments "Nagyszében" # 23 and "Brasso" # 24 were especially distinguished in these actions.

At 5:00 PM Italians attacked the positions of 53 ID from Mt di Val Bella; some of them were brought to a halt in front of our barriers, and the rest were defeated by a counterattack. Many dead and wounded enemy troops lay on the battlefield after these actions. Relative calm settled over the Asiago plateau in mid-October, but the artillery bombardments continued.

In the midst of this tense situation in the lines near Asiago, on 4 October the 74 Hon ID were relieved by 38 Hon ID; two days later 10 CD left the front, and on the 21st the 16 ID were

relieved by 27 ID. The 5 ID north of the Col del Rosso had already been replaced on the 4th by 18 ID. 74 Hon ID sent k.u. Lst IR 5 and k.u. Lst Bn VI/3 to 155 Hon ID in the East, and with the rest of their troops gathered in the area around Bozen by 23 October. The 16 ID released one brigade to Pergine to serve as the Army's reserve; the other brigade stayed on the plateau as a reserve for XIII Corps. 5 ID were resting in the area around Borgo.

At the start of October local fighting also flared up on the mountain front between the Brenta and the Piave, in the defensive sector of the neighboring Armeegruppe Belluno. Our garrisons had to repulse repeated thrusts by Italian storm troops on the Col Caprile, on Mounts Asolone, Pertica and Spinuccia, and in the area north of Mt Tomba. On 4 October the I Corps carried out a well-prepared operation. After short but heavy fire by our artillery, in the first onslaught storm troops of BH IR 5 (60 ID) pushed their way into the position in the Pez valley which had been in enemy hands since 16 September. The Italians fell back after suffering heavy casualties in hand-to-hand combat, and the lost trenches were recovered. During the day the enemy made three attempts to once again seize the Pez valley position, but all were defeated. At the same time as this successful action a storm detachment from 17 ID thrust into the enemy trenches on the western slope of the Col dell'Orso.

On the eastern wing of the Belluno Group there was also activity by Italian patrols, which probed our positions near Alano in front of XV Corps. On 13 October FZM Goglia ordered that 60 ID should be relieved from the Stizzone sector by 13 Sch Div, which had been placed at his disposal. On the 19th he had 4 ID take the place of 28 ID on Mt Asolone because personnel of IR # 11 were in criminal contact with the enemy.

On 20 October the 6th Army moved 10 ID to the Francenigo area; in their place 34 ID came from Pordenone to the area southeast of Vittorio.

At the start of October the enemy were just as active along the entire mountain front between the Assa Ravine and the Piave as they'd been in September. But on both banks of the Piave the situation became quieter, except for the usual artillery bombardments. Unexpectedly the heavens opened their gates in the middle of the month, causing the mountain brooks to swell and turning the Piave into a raging torrent. Thus operations over the river became impossible.

At the same time tension also temporarily slackened on the Asiago plateau and in the Grappa mountains. It seemed as if the Italians might want to further delay their great offensive. Therefore on 16 October, as we've already narrated, the German OHL through their plenipotentiary general at Baden once more asked whether more k.u.k. divisions could be made available for the Western front. They were of the opinion that there could be no major fighting on the Southwestern front due to the imminence of winter. But the Aus-Hung. high command didn't agree with this conclusion; since the collapse of Bulgaria they expected all the more that the Italian offensive could start any day.

And new fighting was already breaking out on the Asiago plateau on 21 October. In the early morning the French were able to temporarily enter the trenches of 38 Hon ID in the sector around the much-contested Mt Sisemol. The enemy were thrown back only with difficulty. Enemy scouting patrols were also active near Asiago town and east of the Brenta. Italian prisoners had stated that the HQ of XIV English Corps with one of their two divisions had been relieved, and that their former sector near Asiago had been taken over by the HQ of XII Italian Corps. On the other hand, signs had increased since the end of September that a major offensive by the Italians was imminent in the Grappa mountains and on the upper Piave. Railroad and truck traffic in the Treviso area became noticeably greater every day, as did troop movements behind the 4th and 8th Italian Armies. There was also traffic at night behind 3rd Army. The artillery were being reinforced. Although at the start of October the Italian cavalry divisions were still far behind the front (around Padua della Scala and south of Lake Garda), they were observed to be practicing river crossings, which clearly indicated their future intentions. Intelligence reports from Switzerland noted that traffic over the Italian border had been interrupted three times since mid-August, apparently to keep preparations secret. It was also known that G.Lt Diaz had visited the Allied Supreme War Council in France at the start of September. Estimates of the American units which had moved to Italy fluctuated wildly - from one regiment up to five or six infantry divisions. In fact only one regiment did come to Venetia.

Because of the certainty that the Italians would attack on the upper Piave, on 16 October the k.u.k. high command ordered that 36 ID and 10 CD should move by rail from Tyrol to Boroevic's Army Group. The shipment of 36 ID started on 19 October, and 10 CD were supposed to follow on the 23rd. But on the 20th the destination of the latter unit was changed to the Balkans. In addition, on 17 October the Edelweiss Division were ordered to

march on foot from Trent to the Feltre-Belluno area where they'd be in the AOK's reserve. The staff of the AOK at Baden were all the more concerned about the apparently imminent offensive by the Italians and their allies because of the political developments in the interior of the Danube Monarchy. It seemed that the armies in the field would be soon ripped apart due to the chaos in the homeland.

2. The k.u.k. Army on the eve of the last trial of arms

a. The order of battle

The following was the organization of the Aus-Hung. forces (and attached German units) as of 15 October 1918. (German units and HQ are italicized.)

Commander-in-Chief = Emperor and King Charles

Chief of the General Staff = GO Freiherr von Arz

Chief of the Operations Office = GM Freiherr von Waldstätten

Chief of the Quartermaster Detachment = Col. Ritter von Zeynek

The Italian theater of operations

Archduke Joseph's Army Group

Commander = GO Archduke Joseph

Chief of Staff = FM Freih. von Willerding

10th Army

Commander = FM Freih. von Krobatin

Chief of Staff = GM Domaschnian

V Corps

GdI Archduke Peter Ferdinand; C/Staff = Col. Buzek

(18 bns, 1 foot half regt, 6 vol rifle bns, 2 SS bns, 12 high mtn comps, 6 mtn guide comps, 1 mntd sqdn, 105 batties, 4 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 10,400 foot, 100 horse, 350 mobile guns, 73 fixed MG)

- . 164 Inf Bde (Col. Freih. von Lempruch) - Sturm Half Bn 164; Tyrol Lst Bn I; High Mtn Comps 20, 22; Mtn Guide Comps 1, 4, 10; Carinthia Vol Rifle Regt (3); Upper Aus, Salzburg, and Styria Vol Rifle Bns; SS Bn Vintschgau. Artillery (under Lt Col. Utschig) - Batties 1, 2, 3 & 9/Mtn AR 12; 13 & 16/Hvy AR 11. Also 19 fixed batties, 24 fixed MG, and ½ of Sapper Comp 3/58

- . 22nd Sch Div (FML Rudolf Müller)

- . 43 Sch Bde (GM Edler von Merten) - SchR 3 (3), 26 (3)

- . 44 Sch Bde (Col. Freih. von Scholten) - K-SchR I (3); SchR 23 (3)
- . Sturm Bn 22, Res Sqdn/DR 12, Sap Comp 1/22
- . 22 FA Bde (Col. Edler von Toncourt) - FAR 22, 122; Hvy FAR 22; Mtn Arty Bn 22
(Following units were attached to 22nd Sch Div HQ)
 - . 163 Inf Bde (Col. von Rosmus) - Sturm Half Bn 163; k.k. Lst Bns 152, 170, 173; High Mtn Comps 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 28, 30; Mtn Guide Comps 2, 9, 11; SS Group II; dismounted Half Regt of the Tyrol Mntd K-Sch
 - . 39 Hon FA Bde (Col. Banyai) - Hon FAR 39, 139; Hon Hvy FA 39; Hon Mtn Arty Bn 39
 - . Also - Mtn AR 1 (9); Batties 4, 5 and 6/Mtn AR 12; 13, 14, 15 and 16/Hvy AR 13; 1, 2, 3/Hvy AR 11. 23 fixed batties; 49 fixed MG. Sap Comps 2/46, 2/59; $\frac{1}{2}$ of 3/58
- . Corps troops - Air Comp 73.K

XX Corps

GdI Kalser Edler von Maasfeld; C/Staff = Col. Freih. von Handel (24 $\frac{1}{2}$ bns, 4 SS bns, 6 high mtn comps, 3 mtn guide comps; 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ mntd sqdn, 98 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 3 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 12,800 foot, 80 horse, 290 mobile guns, 174 fixed MG)

- . 49th ID (FML Edler von Steinhart)
 - . 97 Bde (GM Krammer von Marchau) - IR 118 (2); FJB 8, 9, 30; k.k. Lst Bn 169; High Mtn Comps 18, 27, 29, 31; Mtn Guide Comps 3, 12; SS Bns Bozen, Bregenz; an SS High Mtn Comp
 - . 98 Bde (Col. Riedl) - IR 136 (2), BH IR 8 (3); k.k. Lst Bns 29, 151, 165, 168; High Mtn Comp 32; Mtn Guide Comp 13
 - . Sturm Bn 49, $\frac{1}{2}$ 3 Ma Sqdn/DR 4, Sap Comp 1/49
 - . 49 FA Bde (Col. Wach) - 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 49, 6 Batty/FAR 149; Hvy FAR 49, 1 Batty/Mtn Arty Bn 49
 - . Also - 22 fixed batties, 104 fixed MG
 - . Attached - Mtn AR 2 (9); Batties 8/Hvy AR 1; 4, 5, 6 & 8/Hvy AR 11; 1 TM/Hvy AR 9; 4 & 11/Hvy AR 13; Flak Platoons 5, 15, 180. Sap Comp 2/21
- . Riva Sector (FML Schiesser Edler von Reifegg) - Bn III/136; k.k. Lst Bns IV/2, 157, 162, 163, 166, 174, III Tyrol; High Mtn Comp 24; SS Bn Innsbruck; SS Group Eisacktal; Kriegerkorps Riva-Arco. Riva Sturm Half bn. A zug from 3 Ma Sqdn/RSR 6. Sap Comp 2/60. Also 37 fixed batties, 70 fixed MG.
- . 3 "K" FA Bde (under the Sector; Col. Amman-Amon von Treuenfest) - Batties 6/FAR 49; 1 to 5/FAR 149; 6/FAR 172, 5/Hvy FAR 72, 2 & 3/Mtn Arty Bn 49; 2 TM & 7/Hvy AR 1, 1 TM/Hvy AR 14; 1, 2 & 3/Hvy AR 13; 1 to 4/Hvy AR 14
- . Corps troops - $\frac{1}{2}$ 3 Ma Sqdn/DR 4; Air Comp 54.K

XXI Corps

- GdI Freih. von Lütgendorf; C/Staff = Col. Walter Slameczka
 (13 ½ bns, 9 foot half regts, 1 SS bn, 1/4 mtn guide comp, 2 mntd sqdns, 79 batties, 4 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 9700 foot, 100 horse, 290 mobile guns, 54 fixed MG)
- . 3rd Cav Div (FML Edler von Kopecek)
 - . 5 Cav Bde (GM Greger von Stirbul, acting for GM Edler von Kirsch) - DR 3 (2), HR 8 (2); UR 4 (2), 7 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 3, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . Attached 19 FA Bde (Col. Dobringer) - FAR 9, 119; 1 to 4 Batties/Hvy FAR 19; Mtn Arty Bn 19; 2 TM Batty/Hvy AR 8; Flak Platoons 3, 4/119
 - . Also attached - Sap Comp 3/34; 14 fixed batties, 21 fixed MG
 - . 56th Sch Div (FML Edler von Kroupa)
 - . 111 Sch Bde (GM Maendl Edler von Bughardt) - SchR 36 (3), K-SchR III (3)
 - . 112 Sch Bde (Col. Hinek) - SchR 37 (2 ½), K-SchR II (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 56, 4 Sqdn/RSR 3, Sap Comp 1/56
 - . 56 FA Bde (Col. Ziller) - FAR 56, 156; Hvy FAR 56, Mtn Arty Bn 56
 - . Also - 13 fixed batties, 33 fixed MG
 - . Attached - k.k. Lst Bn IV Tyrol; SS Group 1; a zug of Mtn Guide Comp 8. Mtn AR 6 (9); Batties 5 & 6/Hvy FAR 19, 9 to 12/Hvy AR 3; 1 TM/Hvy AR 13, 3 TM/Hvy AR 14; 7/Hvy AR 11, 11 & 12/Hvy AR 14; Flak Batty 7
 - . Corps troops - Air Comp 23.K; Sap Comps 3/27, 3/31

XIV (Edelweiss) Corps

GdI Verdross Edler von Drossberg; C/Staff = Col. Schneller
 (28 bns, 2 SS bns, 1 1/4 mtn guide comps, 2 mntd sqdns, 81 batties, 3 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 19,000 foot, 200 horse, 300 mobile guns, 37 fixed MG)

- . Kaiser Jaeger Div (GM Prinz zu Schwarzenberg)
 - . 1 KJ Bde (Col. Dr. Eccher von Echo Edler von Marienberg) - KJR 1 (3), 2 (3)
 - . 2 KJ Bde (Col. Julius Lustig-Prean von Preanfeld) - KJR 3 (3), 4 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 8; 2 Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn; Sap Comps 1 & 3/8
 - . 8 FA Bde (Col. Walluscheck von Wallfeld) - FAR 8, 108; Hvy FAR 8; 1 & 2 Batties/Mtn Arty Bn 8
 - . Also - 8 fixed batties, 37 fixed MG
 - . Attached - IR 111 (3 bns; from 38 Bde); SS Bns Enneberg, Pustertal. Mtn AR 14 (9); Batties 4/Mtn AR 10; 2, 3 & 12/Hvy AR 10; 5/Hvy AR 13; 4 TM/Hvy AR 14, 7/Hvy AR 13, 5/Hvy AR 14; Flak Batty 1; a naval batty
- . 19th ID (FML von Elmar)

- . 37 Bde (GM Lunzer Edler von Lindhausen) - IR 35 (3), 75 (3)
- . 38 Bde (GM Greger von Stirbul - temporarily leading 5 Cav Bde instead) - IR 50 (3) only
- . Sturm Bn 19, 1 Sqdn/DR 7, Sap Comp 1/19
- . Also - 6 fixed batties
- . Attached 40 Hon FA Bde (Col. Schreiner) - HFAR 40, 140; Hvy HFAR 40; Hon Mtn Arty Bn 40
- . Also attached - Batties 3/Mtn Arty Bn 8; 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9/Mtn AR 10; 6 & 8/Hvy AR 13; 2 TM and 6/Hvy AR 14
- . 6 Inf Bde (directly under Corps, from Edelweiss Div; GM Ritter Wasserthal von Zuccari) - IR 114 (6 comps) only
- . Corps troops - Mtn Guide Comp 5, a zug of Mtn Guide Comp 8; Air Comp 17.K

Army reserves (4 bns, one dismounted zug; about 1300 foot)

- . 159 Bde (Col. Edler von Corvin) - Lst Bns II Tyrol, 10, 164, 171; a dismounted zug from 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 15
- . Also - FAR 3.K, 15 Batty/Hvy AR 14; Flak Batty 1, Training Flak Batty 2; Air Comps - 3.I, 7.I, 10.P, 27.F. Corps Training Groups 1, 2 and 3

TOTALS for 10th Army - 88 bns, 10 foot half regts, 6 volunteer rifle bns, 9 SS bns, 18 high mtn comps, 10 ½ mtn guide comps, 6 ¼ sqdns, 372 ½ batties, 14 tech comps, 8 air comps; about 53,200 foot, 480 horse, 1230 mobile guns, 338 fixed MG

11th Army

Commander = GO Graf Scheuchenstuel

C/Staff = GM von Sündermann

III Corps

GO Martiny von Malastow; C/Staff = Lt Col. Hofmann
 (23 bns, 9 foot half regts, 1 mtn guide comp, 3 horse sqdns, 72 batties, 6 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 11,400 foot, 230 horse, 300 mobile guns, 25 fixed MG)

- . 6th Cav Div (Dom Miguel Duke of Braganza)
 - . DR 6 (2); HR 15 (2; from 11 Cav Bde)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 6, a combined horse sqdn
 - . 6 "K" FA Bde (Col. Steffan) - FAR 6.K; 6 Batty/FAR 2
 - . Also - 1 ½ fixed batty; 13 fixed MG
- . 6th ID (GM Ritter Schilhawsky von Bahnbrück)
 - . 11 Bde (GM Prey) - IR 81 (2), 127 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 6, 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 5, Sap Comp 1/6
 - . Also - 1 ½ fixed batty; 12 fixed MG
 - . Attached 11 Cav Bde (from 6th CD; Col. Heinrich Lasek) - DR 8 (2), 11 (2)

- . Attached 2 FA Bde (Col. Ritter Otto von Ortenfeld) - Batties 1 to 5/FAR 2, 1 to 5/FAR 102; 1, 2 and 4/Hvy FAR 2; Mtn Arty Bn 2
- . Attached 28 FA Bde (Col. Freih. von Augustin) - Batties 1 to 3/FAR 28, 1 to 5/FAR 128; Hvy FAR 28, Mtn Arty Bn 28; 2 TM and 2 & 4 Batties/Hvy AR 2
- . Also attached - Sap Comp 3/60
- . 52nd ID (GM Schamschula)
 - . 103 Bde (Col. von Miokovich) - IR 26 (3); BH IR 6 (1 bn; detached to 36th ID)
 - . 104 Bde (GM Eugen Adler) - IR 42 (3), 74 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 52, 3 Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn, Sap Comp 1/52
 - . 52 FA Bde (Col. Hlubek) - FAR 52; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 152; Hvy FAR 52, Mtn Arty Bn 52
 - . Attached - III Bn/81. Batties 4 to 6/FAR 28, 3/Hvy FAR 2, 1/Hvy AR 2. Sapper Comps 2/7, 3/33, 2/37
- . Corps troops - Mtn Guide Comp 6. Batties 6/FAR 116, 6/FAR 128, 6/FAR 154; Flak Batties 3, 324. Air Comp 24.K

XIII Corps

GdI Csanady von Bekes; C/Staff = Col. Csoban

(31 bns, 11 foot half regts, 3 mntd sqdns, 81 batties, 8 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 14,600 foot, 200 horse and 360 mobile guns)

- . 27th ID (GM Sallagar)
 - . 53 Bde (GM Lederer von Borszczewka, who was temporarily leading 16th ID) - IR 25 (3), 34 (3)
 - . 54 Bde (Col. Doblitzky) - IR 67 (3), 85 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 27, 3 Sqdn/HR 11; Sap Comps 1/27, 1/16, 2 & 3/22
 - . 5 FA Bde (Col. Freih. Wolf-Schneider von Arno) - FAR 5, 105; Hvy FAR 5; Mtn Arty Bn 5; 6 Batty/Hon FAR 38
 - . 16 FA Bde (Col. Bolland) - FAR 16; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 116; 4 Batty/Hvy FAR 16; Mtn Arty Bn 16
- . 38th Hon ID (FML Molnar von Peterfalva)
 - . 75 Hon Bde (Col. Freih. von Than) - HIR 21 (3), 22 (3)
 - . 76 Hon Bde (GM Karleusa von Borynia) - HIR 23 (3), 24 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 38, 6 Sqdn/Hon HR 4, Sap Comp 1/38
 - . Attached 74 Hon FA Bde (Col. Gernya) - HFAR 74; 1 to 5 Batties/HFAR 174; Hvy HFAR 74; Hon Mtn Arty Bn 74
 - . Attached 10 "K" FA Bde (Col. Leeder) - FAR 10.K (only)
 - . Also attached - 1 to 3 Batties/Hvy FAR 16; Mtn Arty Regt 11 (9); 2 TM Batty/Hvy AR 9. Sapper Comps 3/36, 3/50
- . 10th Cav Div (FML Bauer von Bauernthal)
 - . 19 Cav Bde (GM Horthy de Nagy-Banya) - HR 10 (2); Lst HR 1 (2)
 - . 20 Cav Bde (Col. Mollinary Edler von Sekowa) - HR 9 (2); UR 8 (2)

- . Sturm Half Regt 10; a combined mntd sqdn
- . Units directly under Corps HQ
 - . 31 Bde (Lt Col. Fritz acting for Col. Simacek; Bde detached from 16th ID) - IR 2 (3 bns), 138 (6 comps)
 - . Hussar Regt 13 (2)
 - . Batties 6/HFAR 138, 6/HFAR 142, 6/HFAR 174, 5 & 6/Hvy AR 1; 3 & 4/Hvy AR 6; 4 & 11/Hvy AR 10
 - . Air Comp 21.K; Sap Comp 3/52

VI Corps

FML von Felix acting for GdI Weber Edler von Webenau; C/Staff = Col. von Algya-Pap von Alsokomana
(38 bns, 1 mtn guide comp, 3 mntd sqdns, 106 batties, 10 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 15,800 foot, 270 horse, 460 mobile guns)

- . 53rd ID (GM Korzer)
 - . 105 Bde (GM Stanoilovic von Stanogora) - IR 82 (3 bns), 131 (6 comps)
 - . 106 Bde (Col. Brosch Edler von Fohraheim) - IR 125 (3), 125 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 53, 2 Sqdn/Damatian RS Bn, Sap Comp 1/53
 - . Attached 6 FA Bde (Col. Stering Edler von Krugheim) - FAR 6; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 106; 1 to 5 Batties/Hvy FAR 6; Mtn Arty Bn 6
 - . Attached 18 FA Bde (Lt Col. Ferrares acting for Col. Nowakowski) - FAR 18; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 118; Hvy FAR 18, Mtn Arty Bn 18
 - . Attached batteries - 2 TM & 3/Hvy AR 6; 5, 7, 9, 10 & 15/Hvy AR 9
- . 18th ID (GM Ritter von Romer acting for GM Vidale von San Martino)
 - . 35 Bde (GM Franz) - FJB 7, 20, 22 (The Bde's IR 126 was detached to the Transylvania Group Command)
 - . 36 Bde (GM Ritter von Romer) - IR 104 (3), 117 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 18, 5 Sqdn/Hon HR 10, Sap Comp 1/18
 - . Attached under Div HQ - k.k. Lst IR 13 (3). Sap Comp 3/47
 - . Attached 15 FA Bde (Col. Stepanescu von Ropa) - FAR 15; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 115; Hvy FAR 15, Mtn Arty Bn 15
 - . More attached artillery - Hvy FAR 30, Hvy FAR 36, Mtn Arty Regt 4 (7); 11, 12 & 14 Batties/Hvy AR 9; 13 & 16 Batties/Hvy AR 10
- . 39th Hon ID (FML Breit von Doberdo)
 - . 77 Hon Bde (Col. Hausser von Kapuvar) - HIR 9 (3), 11 (3)
 - . 78 Hon Bde (Col. Franz Jankovich von Jeznenicze) - HIR 10 (3), 16 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 39, 1 Sqdn/HR 11, Sap Comp 1/39
 - . Attached 36 FA Bde (GM Freih. Bibra von Gleicherwiesen) - FAR 36; 2, 3 & 5 Batties/FAR 136; Mtn Arty Bn 36

- . Also attached - Batties 6/HFAR 38; 6 & 9/Mtn Arty Regt 4
- . Corps troops - Mtn Guide Comp 7. Batties 6/FAR 106, 6/FAR 115, 6/FAR 136, 3 TM/Hvy AR 4, 3 TM/Hvy AR 6, 1 & 3 TM/Hvy AR 7. Air Comp 36.K. Sap Comps 2/3, 3/15, 3/26, 3/30, 2/40

Army reserves

- (15 bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 3 tech comps; about 7200 foot, 160 horse)
- . 5th ID (GM Demus-Moran acting for FML von Felix)
 - . 9 Bde (Col. Redlich von Redensbruck) - IR 54 (6 comps), 101 (3 bns)
 - . 10 Bde (GM Demus-Moran) - IR 1 (6 comps), 103 (3 bns)
 - . Sturm Bn 5; 5 Sqdn/DR 7; Sap Comps 1/5, 3/39, 3/47
 - . 16th ID (GM Lederer von Borszczewka acting for FML Fernengel)
 - . (31 Bde detached to XIII Corps, above)
 - . 32 Bde (Col. Fleischmann) - IR 31 (2 ½ bns), 52 (6 comps)
 - . Sturm Bn 16, 2 Sqdn/Hon HR 4
 - . A "Special" Sturm Bn
 - . 38 Hon FA Bde (GM von Braun) - 1 to 5 Batties/HFAR 38, 1 to 5 Batties/HFAR 138; Hvy FAR 38, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 38
 - . Batties - 6/FAR 104, 6/FAR 121, 4/Hvy AR 1, 4 TM/Hvy AR 9, 4 TM/Hvy AR 11, 4 TM/Hvy AR 13, 9/Hvy AR 10; Flak Batty "Bozen"; Flak Platoons 13, 3/RB
 - . Sapper Comps 3/25, 2 & 3/28, 2/38, 2/49
 - . Air Comps 9.I, 15.F, 31.P, 45.S, 48.S, 55.I
 - . Corps Training Groups 1 to 4 and 7

TOTALS for 11th Army - 108 bns, 20 foot half regts, 2 mtn guide comps, 11 mntd sqdns, 485 batties, 32 tech comps, 9 air comps; about 49,000 foot, 860 horse, 1120 mobile guns, 25 fixed MG

Reserves of Archduke Joseph's Army Group

- (24 bns, 3 horsed sqdns, 3 batties, 2 ½ tech comps; about 9300 foot and 260 horse)
- . 3rd (Edelweiss) ID (behind 10th Army; FML Wieden Edler von Alpenbach)
 - . 5 Bde (Col. Graf Alberti d'Enno) - IR 14 (3 bns), 107 (3 comps)
 - . IR 59 (6 comps)
 - . Sturm Bn 3, 5 Sqdn/RSR 1; ½ of Sap Comp 1/3
 - . Mtn Arty Bn 3
 - . 36th ID (FML von Nöhring)
 - . 71 Bde (GM Edler von Löw) - IR 78 (4 comps), 116 (2 comps)
 - . 72 Bde (Col. Babic) - IR 16 (6 comps), 53 (3 comps)
 - . Sturm Bn 36, 1 Sqdn/Hon HR 10, Sap Comp 1/36
 - . Attached - BH IR 6 (1 bn; from 52nd ID)
 - . 74th Hon ID (FML Perneczky)
 - . Col. Papp's Bde - k.u. Lst IR 5 (4); k.u. Lst Bn VI/3;

- Russ' Hon Bn
 - . GM Savoly von Nagyida's Bde - Hon IR 306 (3), 307 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 74, 3 Sqdn/Hon HR 4, Sap Comp 3/57
- . Air Comp 20.I

TOTALS for Archduke Joseph's Army Group - 220 bns, 30 foot half regts, 6 volunteer rifle bns, 9 SS bns, 18 high mtn comps, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ mtn guide comps, 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ mntd sqdns, 657 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ tech comps, 18 air comps. 111,500 foot, 1600 horse, 2350 mobile guns, 363 fixed MG. There were also about 56,000 riflemen in the March formations present in the Army Group's area.

FM Boroevic's Army Group

Commander = FM Boroevic von Bojna

Chief of Staff = GM Anton Ritter von Pitreich

Armeegruppe Belluno

Commander = FZM Ritter von Goglia

Chief of Staff = Col. Kundmann

XXVI Corps

GdI Horsetzky Edler von Hornthal; C/Staff = Col. Stromfeld

(42 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ mntd sqdns, 125 batties, 8 tech comps, 1 air comp;
about 13,100 foot, 300 horse, 610 guns). 40th Hon ID (Col. Mierka von Morva-Lieszko acting for FML Edler
von Nagy). 79 Hon Bde (Col. Mierka von Morva-Lieszko) - HIR 29 (3),
30 (3). 80 Hon Bde (Col. Kószeghi von Winkhelstein) - HIR 6 (3),
19 (3)

. Sturm Bn 40, 5 Sqdn/HR 1, Sap Comps 1/40 & 3/32

. 27 FA Bde (Col. von Seewald) - FAR 27; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR
127; Hvy FAR 27, 2 & 3 Batties/Mtn AR 27. Also Hvy FAR 21,
Mtn Arty Bn 4; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 4, 1 and 4/FAR 104, 1 &
4/FAR 53, 1 & 4/153, 1/Mtn Arty Bn 53, 1 to 3/Hvy FAR 206;
4, 5, 7 & 8/Hvy AR 6. 28th ID (GM Alfred von Zeidler)

. 55 Bde (GM Rada) - IR 11 (3 bns), BH IR 7 (6 comps)

. 56 Bde (GM Eugen Straub) - IR 28 (5 comps), 47 (3 bns)

. Sturm Bn 28, $\frac{1}{2}$ Res Sqdn/DR 3, Sap Comps 1/28, 2/8. 4 FA Bde (Col. Antony Edler von Antonyburg) - 2, 3 & 5
Batties/FAR 104; Hvy FAR 4. 32 FA Bde (Col. Winterstein for Col. Teisinger) - 1, 2, 3,
5 & 6 Batties/FAR 32; 2, 4 & 5 Batties/FAR 132; Hvy FAR 32;
Mtn Arty Bn 32. Also Batties 1 & 4/Hvy FAR 53, 1/Mtn Arty
Bn 27, 13 to 16 plus 1 TM/Hvy AR 6, 2 TM/Hvy AR 7. 42nd Hon ID (FML Ritter von Soretic). 83 Hon Bde (Col. Pinter von Legenye for Col. Minnich) -
HIR 25 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$), 26 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$). 84 Hon Bde (Lt Col. Kovacevic acting for Col. Pinter von
Legenye) - Hon IR 27 (1 $\frac{1}{4}$), 28 (1 $\frac{1}{4}$)

. Sturm Bn 42, 4 Sqdn/Hon HR 10, Sap Comp 1/42

. 53 FA Bde (GM Alois Adler) - Batties 2, 3 & 5/FAR 53; 2, 3
& 5/FAR 153; 2 & 3/Hvy FAR 53; 2 & 3/Mtn Arty Bn 53; 4/FAR
32; 1 & 3/FAR 132. 4th ID (Col. Wittmann for FML Haas)

. 7 Bde (Col. Kliemann) - IR 9 (3), 99 (3)

. 8 Bde (Col. Wittmann) - IR 8 (3), 49 (3)

. Sturm Bn 4, 2 Sqdn/DR 15, 1 Comp/Sap Bn 4

- . Corps troops
 - . Sturm Bn 32
 - . 21 FA Bde (Col. Mally; Bde coming by train) - FAR 21; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 121; Mtn Arty Bn 21)
 - . Mtn AR 3 (9). Batties 6/FAR 4, 6/FAR 53, 6/FAR 127, 6/FAR 142, 6/FAR 152, 6/FAR 153; 1, 2, 4 & 9/Hvy AR 6; 1 TM/Hvy AR 10
 - . Air Comp 16.K. Sap Comps 2/4, 2/27, 3/37

I Corps

GdI Kosak; C/Staff = Col. Plachota

(39 bns, 3 mntd sqdns, 104 batties, 11 tech comps, 1 air comp; about 10,800 foot, 250 horse, 530 guns)

- . 48th ID (GM Gärtner Edler von Karstwehr)
 - . 95 Bde (Col. Fischer von See) - IR 79 (3), 120 (3)
 - . 96 Bde (Col. Oskar Slameczka) - IR 73 (3), 119 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 48, 1 Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn; Sap Comps 1/48, 2/53
 - . 3 FA Bde (GM Grandowski) - Mtn Arty Bn 3; Batties 1, 3 & 4/FAR 3; 1 & 3/FAR 103; 3 & 4/Hvy FAR 3; 2, 3, 4 & 6/FAR 60, 2/Hvy FAR 60, 3/Mtn Arty Bn 60; 3, 4, 5, 6 & 8/Mtn AR 9; 13, 15 & 16/Hvy AR 1; 6/Hvy AR 6; 3 TM/Hvy AR 2; 2 TM/Hvy AR 5
- . 13th Sch Div (GM Zwiedinek Edler von Südenhorst und Schidlo acting for FML Kindl)
 - . 25 Sch Bde (GM Edler von Vest) - SchR 1 (3), 24 (3)
 - . 26 Sch Bde (GM Zwiedinek...) - SchR 14 (3), 25 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 13, 3 Sqdn/DR 15; Sap Comps 1/13, 2/56
 - . 60 FA Bde (Col. Maximilian Müller) - Batties 1 & 5/FAR 60; 1 to 5/Hvy FAR 60; 1 & 2/Mtn Arty Bn 60; 2, 5 & 6/FAR 3; 2, 4 & 5/FAR 103, 1 & 2/Hvy FAR 3, 2 & 3/Hon FAR 42; 13, 15 & 16/Hvy AR 7; 2 TM/Hvy AR 6, 2 TM/Hvy AR 12
- . 17th ID (FML Ströher)
 - . 33 Bde (GM Johann von Richter) - IR 39 (3), 139 (3)
 - . 34 Bde (Col. Ludvig) - IR 43 (3), 46 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 17, Res Sqdn/HR 10; Sap Comps 1/17, 2/29, 2/39, 2/57
 - . 55 FA Bde (Col. Gallistel) - FAR 55; Mtn Arty Bns 54 and 72; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 155, 1 to 4/Hvy FAR 55, 1 & 3/Mtn Arty Bn 55, 3/Hvy FAR 60, 1, 2, 7 & 9/Mtn AR 9; 3/Hvy AR 2; 6 & 7/Hvy AR 7; 1 TM/Hvy AR 4
- . Corps troops
 - . 42 Hon FA Bde (Col. Mandich) - Batties 1, 4, 5 & 6/Hon FAR 42; all of Hon FAR 142, Hvy HFAR 42, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 42
 - . Also - Batties 6/FAR 103, 6/FAR 105, 6/FAR 130, 6/FAR 155, 6/FAR 153
 - . Air Comp 66.K; Sap Comp 3/7, 2/51, 1/55

XV Corps

- GdI Scotti; C/Staff = Col. Freih. Senarclens de Grancy
 (26 bns, 1 high mtn comp, 2 mntd sqdns, 71 batties, 12 tech
 comps, 1 air comp; about 9200 foot, 150 horse, 320 guns)
- . 50th ID (FML Gerabek)
 - . 99 Bde (Col. Jungl) - IR 130 (3), 133 (3)
 - . 100 Bde (Col. Koschak) - IR 129 (3), BH IR 1 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 50, High Mtn Comp 12, 4 Sqdn/Tyrol RS Bn; Sap
 Comps 1/50, 3/9, 2/11, 2/13, 2 & 3/17, 2/34, 3/43, 2/58
 - . 50 FA Bde (Col. Edler von Portenschlag-Ledermayr) - Mtn
 Arty Bn 50; Batties 2 to 6/FAR 50, 2 & 5/FAR 150; 1, 2 & 5/
 Hvy FAR 50
 - . 62 FA Bde (Col. Mensi) - Mtn Arty Bns 62, 11, 30; Batties
 2 to 6/FAR 62, 1 to 5/FAR 162, 1 to 3/Hvy FAR 62; 15/Hvy AR
 2, 1 & 3/Hvy AR 3, 1 TM/Hvy AR 8, 2 TM/AR 13
 - . 20th Hon ID (GM Ritter Pohl von Monte San Michele acting for GM
 Stadler von Monte San Michele)
 - . 39 Hon Bde (Col. Kratochwil von Szent Kerszthegy) - HIR 3
 (3), 4 (3)
 - . 40 Hon Bde (Col. Dobak) - HR 1 (3), 17 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 20, Res Sqdn/HR 3; Sap Comps 1 & 2/20, 2/10
 - . 20 FA Bde (GM Ritter Pohl von Monte San Michele) - HFAR
 20, Hvy HFAR 20, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 20; Batties 1 to 5/HFAR
 120; 1, 3 & 4/FAR 150; 3, 4 & 6/Hvy FAR 50, 4/Hvy FAR 62,
 14/Hvy AR 2, 4 & 8/Hvy AR 3
 - . Corps troops - Batties 1/FAR 62, 6/FAR 111, 6/HFAR 120, 6/FAR
 150, 6/FAR 162. Air Comp 2.K

Armeegruppe Reserves

- . 60th ID (GM Pacor von Karstenfels und Hegyalja)
 - . 119 Bde (GM Panzenböck) - IR 108 (6 comps); FJB 12, 19; BH
 FJB 4
 - . 120 Bde (Col. Kofron) - IR 105 (3), BH IR 5 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 60, 1 Sqdn/Dalmatian RS Bn
- . 55th ID (FML von le Beau)
 - . 109 Bde (GM Trimmel) - IR 7 (3), BH IR 2 (2 ½)
 - . 110 Bde (Col. Graf Zedtwitz) - IR 6 (3), BH IR 4 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 55, 1 Ma Sqdn/DR 4
- . 21st Sch Div (FML Klein)
 - . 41 Sch Bde (GM Schwanda Edler von Dobropolje) - SchR 6
 (3), 7 (3)
 - . 42 Sch Bde (Col. Steinsberg) - SchR 8 (3), 28 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 21, 4 Sqdn/DR 7, Sap Comp 1/21
- . Also - Air Comps 8.S, 11.F, 14.I, 30.I, 39.P, 53.S, 60.I;
 Training Groups 1 to 3

TOTALS for Armeegruppe Belluno - 144 ¾ bns, 1 high mtn comp, 11 ½
 mntd sqdns, 300 batties, 32 tech comps, 10 air comps; about

43,300 foot, 900 horse, 1400 guns

6th Army

Commander = GdK Fürst Schönburg-Hartenstein
 C/Staff = Col. Lorz von Ruszkin

II Corps

- GdI Rudolf Krauss; C/Staff = Col. Podhajsky
 (26 bns, 18 foot half regts, 4 mntd sqdns, 92 batties, 17 tech comps, 1 air comp, 4 balloon comps; about 17,300 foot, 280 horse, 420 guns)
- . 31st ID (FML Lieb)
 - . 61 Bde (Col. Gerö von Barania) - IR 32 (3), 69 (3)
 - . 62 Bde (Col. Bauer von Krupiec) - IR 44 (3), BH IR 3 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 31, 1 Sqdn/HR 1; Sapper Comps 1 & 2/31, 3/36
 - . 17 FA Bde (Col. Svoboda Edler von Asticotal) - FAR 17, Hvy FA 17, Mtn Arty Bn 17; Hvy Hon FAR 155; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 117, 6/FAR 34, 1 & 2/FAR 12.K, 5/Hvy AR 3
 - . 25th ID (GM Werz Edler von Ostenkampf)
 - . 49 Bde (Col. Küttner) - IR 84 (3), 128 (3)
 - . 50 Bde (Col Freih. Haas von Haagenfels) - IR 4 (3); FJB 5, 6 and 10
 - . Sturm Bn 25, 1 Sqdn/DR 15; Sap Comps 1/25, 4/22, 1/43; Balloon Comp 21
 - . 25 FA Bde (GM August Filz Edler von Reiterdank) - FAR 25, 125; Hvy FAR 25, Mtn Arty Bn 25
 - . 12 "K" FA Bde (Col. Freih. von Majneri) - 3 to 6 Batties/FAR 12.K (only)
 - . Also - Batties 9/Hvy AR 1, 10/Hvy AR 2, 2 TM & 16/Hvy AR 3
 - . 11th Hon Cav Div (GM Jony de Jamnik)
 - . 21 Hon Cav Bde (GM Hegedüs) - HHR 2 (2), 3 (2)
 - . Col. Heinlein's Group - HHR 5 (2), 9 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 11; a combined mntd sqdn; Sap Comps 3/13, 2/52; Balloon Comp 4
 - . 11 "K" Hon FA Bde (Major Veder, temporary) - HFAR 11.K
 - . 34 FA Bde (Col. Reutter Edler von Reutensfels) - Hvy FAR 34, Mtn Arty Bn 34; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 34, 1 to 5/FAR 134, 13/Hvy AR 2
 - . 12th Reitende Schützen Division (GM Karapancsa Edler von Kraina)
 - . 23 RS Bde (Col. Serda Edler von Teodorski) - RSR 2 (2), 4 (2), 5 (2), 6 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 12; a combined mntd sqdn; Sap Comps 2 & 3/54; Balloon Comp 17
 - . 31 FA Bde (Col. Benesch Edler von Föhrenburg) - Hvy FAR 31, Mtn Arty Bn 31; Batties 2 to 6/FAR 31, 1 to 5/FAR 131
 - . Corps troops - Batties 1/FAR 31, 6/FAR 110, 6/HFAR 141, 6/FAR 160; Flak Batty 4; Erhart's Experimental Flak Batty; Flak Platoons 18, 10/5. Air Comp 52.K, Balloon Comp 7. Sapper Comp

1/10

XXIV Corps

- GdI Hadfy von Livno; C/Staff = Lt. Col. Röder
 (26 bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 70 ½ batties, 7 tech comps, 1 air comp, 3 balloon comps; about 10,000 foot, 170 horse, 280 guns)
- . 41st Hon ID (FML Schamschula von Simontornya)
 - . 81 Hon Bde (Col. Balassa) - HIR 12 (3), 32 (3)
 - . 82 Hon Bde (GM Ritter von Sypniewski) - HIR 20 (3), 31 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 41, 5 Sqdn/Hon HR 4; Sap Comps 1/41, 2/4, 3/23; Balloon Comp 5
 - . 41 Hon FA Bde (Col. Capp) - HFAR 41, Hvy HFAR 41, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 41; FAR 10; Batties 1 to 5/HFAR 141, 6/FAR 35
 - . 51st Hon ID (GM Daubner)
 - . 101 Hon Bde (GM Letay von Nyirjes) - HIR 301 (3), 302 (3)
 - . 102 Hon Bde (Col. Paleta von Moldova) - HIR 300 (3), 305 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 51, 1 Sqdn/Hon HR 4; Sapper Comps 1/51, 2/9, 2/18, 2/43; Balloon Comp 12
 - . 51 Hon FA Bde (Col. Mattanovich) - HFAR 51, 1 to 5 Batties/HFAR 151, Hvy HFAR 51, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 51
 - . 10 FA Bde (Col. Baech) - Mtn Arty Bn 10; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 110, 1 to 4 plus 6/Hvy FAR 10, 1 TM/Hvy AR 1
 - . Corps troops - Batties 6/FAR 113, 6/FAR 117, 6/FAR 131, 6/FAR 134, 6/HFAR 151, 10/Hvy AR 1, 5 to 9 and 11/Hvy AR 2; Flak Batty 2; MK Platoon 1. Air Comp 28.K; Balloon Comp 25

Army reserves

(30 bns, 2 foot half regts, 3 mntd sqdns, 19 batties, 1 balloon comp; about 11,300 foot, 340 horse, 110 guns)

- . 10th ID (GM Watterich von Watterichsburg)
 - . 19 Bde (GM Weisz von Schleussenburg) - IR 15 (1), 55 (1)
 - . 20 Bde (GM von Einem) - IR 21, 98 (6 comps each)
 - . Sturm Bn 10, 6 Sqdn/RSR 3
- . 43rd Sch Div (FML von Stöhr)
 - . 85 Sch Bde (GM Graf Szeptycki) - SchR 29 (3), 30 (3)
 - . 86 Sch Bde (Col. Kremling Edler von Eggholf) - SchR 20 (3), 22 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 43, 6 Sqdn/RSR 1
 - . 43 FA Bde (Col. Lemesic Edler von Bebrinagornja) - FAR 43, 143; Hvy FAR 43, Mtn Arty Bn 43
- . 34th ID (FML Edler von Luxardo)
 - . 67 Bde (GM Koneczni) - FJB 24, 28, 32 (IR 93 [3] was still with the Eastern Army)
 - . 68 Bde (Col. Bertsch) - IR 29 (3), 33 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 34, 6 Sqdn/HR 1
 - . Attached - HR 2 (2); Balloon Comp 20
- . 13 FA Bde (Col. Ritter Bogusz von Ziembilce) - FAR 13, Mtn Arty Bn 13; Batties 2 to 5/FAR 113, 1 to 4 plus 6/Hvy FAR 13

- . Honved Bicycle Bn
- . Batties - 1/FAR 50, 6/FAR 125, 6/6/FAR 131, 6/HFAR 355; Flak
Batties 12, 2/5, 4/5
- . Air Comps 4.F, 26.S, 38.S, 40.P, 42.I, 47.F, 56.I, 57.F, 59.S,
65.S, 67.S, 68.I, 70.P, 72.I, 74.I
- . Sapper Comps 3/11, 3/14, 3/46, 3/49
- . Training Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 8/11

TOTALS for 6th Army - 83 bns, 20 foot half regts, 9 mntd sqdns,
206 ½ batties, 28 tech comps, 17 air comps, 8 balloon comps.
About 38,600 foot, 790 horse, 835 guns

Army of the Isonzo

Commander = GO Freiherr von Wurm

C/Staff = Col. Körner Edler von Siegringen

XVI Corps

FML Ritter von Berndt acting for GdI Kralicek; C/Staff = Col.
Vogt

(29 bns, 2 ½ mntd sqdns, 57 ½ batties, 5 tech comps, 1 air comp,
4 balloon comps; about 12,400 foot, 170 horse, 270 guns)

- . 29th ID (FML Kloiber acting for FML Ritter von Berndt)
 - . 57 Bde (GM Majewski) - IR 94 (2), 121 (3)
 - . 58 Bde (GM Novottny) - IR 92 (3), 137 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 29, 1 Sqdn/RSR 1; Sap Comps 1 & 3/29; Balloon
Comps 16, 26
 - . 29 FA Bde (Col. Mazza) - FAR 29, Hvy FAR 29, Mtn Arty Bn
29; Batties 1 to 3 and 5/FAR 129, 11/Hvy AR 7
- . 7th ID (FML Baumgartner Edler von Wallbruck)
 - . 13 Bde (Col. Edler von Vitzthum) - IR 37 (3), 38 (1)
 - . 14 Bde (GM von Falkhausen) - IR 68 (3), 132 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 7, 4 Sqdn/HR 4; Sapper Comps 1/7, 2/19, 3/51;
Balloon Comps 10, 51
 - . 7 FA Bde (Col. Schuster for GM von Kaufmann) - FAR 7, Hvy
FAR 7, Mtn Arty Bn 7; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 107, 4/FAR 129,
3/Mtn Arty Bn 59; 10, 12 & 15 plus 4 TM/Hvy AR 7; 9, 10, 11/
Hvy AR 11
- . k.k. 201 Lst Bde (Col. Freih. von Rast) - k.k. Lst IR 1 (3), 2
(3); Sturm Half Bn 201; an indep platoon from DR 4; FAR 26
- . Corps troops - Batties 6/FAR 107, 6/FAR 129, 6/FAR 158, 1 & 2/
Mtn Arty Bn 59; Flak Batty 13; Flak Platoons 2, 4, 6/5.
- Air Comp 62.K

IV Corps

FZM Tamasy von Fogaras; C/Staff = Col. Karpathy

(19 bns, 9 foot half regts, 3 mntd sqdns, 4 tech comps, 1 air

- comp, 3 balloon comps; about 9600 foot, 260 horse, 240 guns)
- . 64th Hon ID (FML Seide)
 - . 127 Hon Bde (Col. Sirchich von Kis-Sira) - k.u. Lst IR 6 (3), 19 (3)
 - . 128 Hon Bde (Col. Jarmy von Szolnok) - k.u. Lst IR 1 (2), 3 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 64, 6 Sqdn/HR 11; Sap Comps 2/34, 3/53; Balloon Comps 2, 24
 - . 64 FA Bde (GM Skotak Edler von Dunavac) - HFAR 64, Hvy HFAR 64; Batties 1 to 5/HFAR 164, 1 & 3/Hon Mtn Arty Bn 64; 9 Batty/Hvy AR 7
 - . 70th Hon ID (Col. Biffi von Pilica acting for GM Berzeviczy von Berzevicze und Kakas-Lomnitz)
 - . 207 Hon Bde (Col. Guilleaume) - HIR 313, 315 (6 comps each)
 - . 208 Hon Bde (Col. Biffi von Pilica) - HIR 33, 314 (6 comps each)
 - . Sturm Bn 70, 4 Sqdn/Hon HR 4; Sap Comps 2/26, 3/45; Balloon Comp 19
 - . 70 Hon FA Bde (Major Geyer acting for Col. Czapp von San Martino) - HFAR 70, Hvy HFAR 70, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 70; Batties 1 to 5/HFAR 170, 2/Hvy AR 7, 14/Hvy AR 10, 1 TM/Hvy AR 5
 - . 8th Cav Div (GM Edler von Dokonal)
 - . 15 Cav Bde (GM Brandmayer von Reiterfehd) - DR 2 (2), 14 (2); UR 11 (2), 12 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 8, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . 8 "K" FA Bde (GM Baumann) - FAR 8.K (only)
 - . Corps troops - Batties 6/FAR 126, 6/FAR 133, 6/FAR 144; Flak Batties 8, 9, 11; Flak Platoon 3/5; MK Zug 2. Air Comp 19.K

VII Corps

GdI Freih. Schariczer von Reny; C/Staff = Col. von Panos
 (31 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 3 mntd sqdns, 78 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 4 tech comps, 1 air comp, 2 balloon comps; about 10,600 foot, 300 horse, 370 guns)

- . 33rd ID (FML Iwanski von Iwanina)
 - . 65 Bde (Col. Trauttweiller Edler von Sturmheg) - IR 83 (3), 106 (3)
 - . 66 Bde (Col. Lehar for Col. Magerl von Kouffheim) - IR 12 (3), 19 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 33, 3 Sqdn/HR 4; Sapper Comps 1/33, 1/24; Balloon Comp 1
 - . 33 FA Bde (GM Scheucher von Presserhof) - FAR 33, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 133, Hvy FAR 33, Mtn Arty Bn 33
 - . Also - FAR 9.K; Batties 3/Hvy FAR 9.K; 5, 7 & 8/Hvy AR 10; 2 TM/Hvy AR 4
- . 12th ID (GdI Waitzendorfer)
 - . 23 Bde (Col. Wohlang for Col. Archduke Karl Albrecht) - IR

- 56 (2), 100 (1 $\frac{3}{4}$)
 . 24 Bde (Col. Hostasch) - IR 3, 20 (6 comps each)
 . Sturm Bn 12, 4 Sqdn/RSR 1; Sap Comps 1/12, 3/10; Balloon Comp 18
 . 12 FA Bde (Lt Col. Kozel for Col. Haller Edler von Hallenburg) - FAR 12, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 112, Hvy FAR 12, Mtn Arty Bn 12, 2 Batty/FAR 124
 . 24th ID (Col. von Skoday for FML Urbarz)
 . 47 Bde (Col. Kuchta, temporary) - IR 45 (3), 109 (3)
 . 48 Bde (Col. Daniek Edler von Danhof) - IR 10 (2), 77 (2)
 . Sturm Bn 24, 3 Sqdn/RSR 3 (No sappers)
 . 24 FA Bde (Col. Pochinger, temporary) - FAR 24; 1 to 3 and 5 Batties/FAR 124; Hvy FAR 24, Mtn Arty Bn 24
 . Corps troops - FAR 1.K; Batties 6/FAR 14, 6/FAR 157, 6/HFAR 164; Flak Batty 3/Hvy AR 6; Flak Training Batty 1; a 7 cm L.30 Flak Batty; Flak Platoon 9/5; 3 TM Batty/Hvy AR 3. Air Comp 35.K

XXIII Corps

- GdI Csicsrics von Bacsany; C/Staff = Col. Rychtrmoc
 (18 bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 46 batties, 6 tech comps, 1 air comp, 3 balloon comps; about 3900 foot, 170 horse, 200 guns)
 . 46th Sch Div (GM Gustav Fischer Edler von Poturzyn)
 . 91 Sch Bde (Col. Marchesani) - SchR 31 (3), 32 (2 $\frac{1}{2}$)
 . 92 Sch Bde (Col. Hummel) - SchR 13 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ bns), 15 (6 comps)
 . Sturm Bn 46, 4 Sqdn/DR 15; Sap Comps 1/46, 2/24; Balloon Comp 6
 . 46 FA Bde (Col. Ritter Rüling von Rüdingen und Rüdennen for Col. Klinger) - FAR 46, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 146, Hvy FAR 46, Mtn Arty Bn 46, 4 TM Batty/Hvy AR 10
 . 58th ID (GM Wolf von Monte San Michele)
 . 115 Bde (Col. Mitteregger) - IR 96 (1), 135 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$)
 . 116 Bde (Col. Lamatsch Edler von Waffensteine) - IR 13 (2); FJB 2, 11, 23
 . Sturm Bn 58, 2 Sqdn/DR 7; Sap Comps 1 of Bn 58 and 3 of Bn 4; Balloon Comp 9
 . 58 FA Bde (Col. Prinz for Col. Ritter Hussarek von Heinlein) - FA 58, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 158, Hvy FAR 58, Mtn Arty Bn 58, 3 TM Batty/Hvy AR 5
 . Corps troops - Batties 6/FAR 146, 6/FAR 148; 1, 13 & 16/Hvy AR 7; Flak Batties 2, 39; Flak Training Batty 3. Air Comp 22.K; Balloon Comp 3. Sapper Comps 3/12, 3/38

XXII Corps

- GdI Kletter Edler von Gromnik; C/Staff = Lt Col. Rausch
 (17 bns, 2 foot half regts, 2 mntd sqdns, 55 batties, 6 tech comps, 1 air comp, 2 balloon comps; about 6200 foot, 180 horse, 240 mobile guns)

- . 14th ID (FML Szende von Fülekkelecseny)
 - . 27 Bde (Col. Graf Beck-Rzikowsky) - IR 71 (½), 72 (½)
 - . 28 Bde (Col. Pollak) - IR 48 (½), 76 (½)
 - . Sturm Bn 14, 1 Sqdn/HR 4; Sapper Comps 1/14, 3/21; Balloon Comp 14
 - . 14 FA Bde (GM Eugen Müller) - FAR 15, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 115, Hvy FAR 14, Mtn Arty Bn 14
- . 2nd ID (FML Ritter Jemrich von der Bresche)
 - . 3 Bde (Col. Schmidbacher) - IR 110 (3); FJB 4, 21, 29
 - . 4 Bde (Col. Huber) - IR 40 (3), 95 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 2, 5 Sqdn/RSR 3; Sap Comps 1 of 2, 3/19; Balloon Comp 8
 - . 57 FA Bde (GM Höning) - FAR 57, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 157, Hvy FAR 57, Mtn Arty Bn 57
- . Corps troops - DR 1 (2); k.k. Lst Bn IV/39. Batties 1/FAR 5, 6/FAR 102, 6/FAR 112, 6/FAR 124, 6/HFAR 170; Flak Batties 8/5, 9/5; Flak Platoons 3, 17, 36, 1/5, 6/5. Nine fixed batties. Air Comp 44.K. Sapper Comps 2/5, 3/20

Army reserves

(19 bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 13 batties, 2 tech comps; about 8200 foot, 90 horse, 58 guns)

- . 57th ID (FML Hrozny Edler von Bojemil)
 - . 113 Bde (Col. Hossner Edler von Costesin-Millergrove for GM Laxa) - IR 22 (3 comps), 87 (6 comps)
 - . 114 Bde (Col. Edler von Hartmann) - IR 57 (6 comps), 122 (3 comps)
 - . Sturm Bn 57, 2 Sqdn/HR 11, Sap Comp 1/57
- . 26th Sch Div (FML Podhajsky)
 - . 51 Sch Bde (Col. Gautsch von Frankenthurn for Col. Scholtz von Krechcowce) - SchR 11 (3), 12 (3)
 - . 52 Sch Bde (GM Otto von Richter) - SchR 9 (3), 10 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 26, 2 Sqdn/RSR 3, Sap Comp 1/26
 - . 26 FA Bde (Col. Erler Edler von Erlenried) - 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 126, Hvy FAR 26, Mtn Arty Bn 26, 1 TM Batty/Hvy AR 2
- . 48 FA Bde (under orders to join Kövess' Army Group; Col. Melnitzky) - FAR 48, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 148, Hvy FAR 48, Mtn Arty Bn 48
- . Also - 2 MG Sqdn/DR 7. Flak Platoons 5 (inactive), 16, 34, 38. TM Batties 1/Hvy AR 3, 4/Hvy AR 5, 3/Hvy AR 10. Sapper Comps 3/2, 2/6, 2/14, 3/24, 2/30, 3/56, 2 & 4/62. Army Training Groups 1 to 6
- . Air Comps 5.S, 12.P, 32.S, 37.P, 41.I, 43.I, 46.P, 49.S, 50.S, 51.I, 58.F, 61.I, 63.I, 69.S, 71.S; Balloon Comp 23

TOTALS for the Isonzo Army - 133 ¾ bns, 12 foot half regts, 14 ¼

mntd sqdns, 326 batties, 35 tech comps, 20 air comps, 15 balloon comps. About 50,900 foot, 1170 horse, 1500 mobile guns

Reserves of the Army Group

(13 bns, 1 mntd sqdn, 21 batties, 1 tech comp; about 6400 foot, 100 horse and 94 guns - total of guns doesn't include the 3 indep batties)

- . 44th Sch Div (FML Schönauer)
 - . 87 Sch Bde (Col. Edler von Schuschnigg) - SchR 2 (3), 21 (3)
 - . 88 Sch Bde (Col. Pour, temporary) - Mtn SchR 1 (3), 2 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 44, Res Sqdn/DR 10, Sap Comp 1/44
 - . 44 FA Bde (GM Edler von Ellenberger) - AR 44, 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 144, Hvy FAR 44, Mtn Arty Bn 44
- . Also - 1 & 2 Batties/Hvy FAR 9.K; 4 TM Batty/Hvy AR 2
- . Large airplane units - Air Comps 101.G, 102.G, 103.G, 104.G, 105.G

Other commands under Boroevic's Army Group

- . Trieste Sector (Vice Admiral Freih. von Koudelka; 8 bns, 11 coast defense detachments, 14 batties, 5 MG comps; about 1100 foot, 91 guns, 41 fixed MG)
 - . Foot - Trieste Naval Bn; Bike Bns 1 & 2; k.k. Lst Bn 40; Vol Rifle Bns Marburg IV, Laibach VI, Trieste VII; Military Police Watch Corps; 11 coast defense dets; Marine MG Comps 1 to 5; 41 fixed MG
 - . Artillery (under Col. von Walzel) - Batties 13 & 14/Hvy AR 3, 12/Hvy AR 6; 14, 15 & 16/Hvy AR 8; 1 & 2/Trieste Heavy Flak Bn; four naval flak batties, four naval flak platoons
- . Fiume Sector (FML Istanovic von Ivanska; 1 ¼ bns, some coast defense dets; 9 batties; about 900 foot, 23 guns) - k.u. Lst Bn V/26; k.k. Lst Watch Comp Volosca; several coast defense and gendarme dets; 8 naval batties; one 9 cm fixed batty
- . Pola Coastal Sector (Counter-Admiral Cicoli; attached Army commander was Col. Alfred Mitlacher with Col. Freih. von Bienert as C/Staff; 5 bns, 9 coast defense dets, 40 batties; about 4000 foot and 466 guns)
 - . Foot - Bn IX/BH IR 2; k.k. Lst Bns 160, 161, 167; k.k. Lst Eta Bn 65; nine coast defense dets
 - . 4 Hvy Arty Bde (Col. Pengov) - All of Hvy AR 4; Batties 1 to 12/Hvy AR 8, 7/Hvy AR 3; Flak Platoons 5, 24/35; ten naval flak batties
- . Line of Communications (Etappen) Group Commands
 - . Görz (FML Kuchinka; C/Staff = Major Pichler; 8 bns and 3 batties) - Five k.k. and three k.u. Lst Eta bns; Batties 6/Hvy FAR 6, 16/Hvy AR 14; Flak Platoons 6 & 7
 - . Belluno (FML Ferdinand von Kaltenborn; C/Staff = Lt. Col.

Marcsekenyi; 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns, 1 batty) - Six k.k. and two and a quarter k.u. Lst Eta bns; Batty 5/Hvy FAR 10

TOTALS for Boroevic's Army Group [not including the two Etappen group commands] - 388 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 32 foot half regts, 1 high mtn comp, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ mntd sqdns, 888 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 92 tech comps, 47 air comps, 23 balloon comps. About 145,200 foot, 2960 horse, 4450 guns. Also there were around 90,400 riflemen in the March formations present within the Army Group's area of responsibility.

The Russo-Romanian Theater of Operations**Army of the East**

Commander = GdI Alfred Krauss
 C/Staff = GM Belitska

XXV Corps

- GdI Freih. von Hofmann; C/Staff = Col. Makoviczka
 (27 bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 17 batties, 2 tech comps; about 16,700 foot, 180 horse, 82 guns)
- . 155th Hon ID (ordered to move to the area of the 16th General Command; FML Ritter Unschuld von Melasfeld)
 - . 129 Hon Bde (Col. Spaics von Mitrovicza) - HIR 309 (3), 310 (3)
 - . 130 Hon Bde (Col. Eölbey-Thyll von Olbö) - HIR 308 (3); k.u. Lst IR 20 (2)
 - . Sturm Bn 155, 4 Sqdn/HR 1, Sap Comp 3/16
 - . 155 Hon FA Bde (Col. von Latka) - HFAR 255, 1 to 3 & 5 Batties/HFAR 355, 1 & 2 Batties/Hon Mtn Arty Bn 255
 - . Attached - SW Inf Bns 5 & 8
 - . 54th Sch Div (FML Severus Edler von Laubenfeld und Ciminago)
 - . 107 Sch Bde (GM Graf Lasocki von Lasocino) - SchR 19 (3), 35 (3)
 - . 108 Sch Bde (GM Köckh Edler von Lehenshof) - SchR 5 (3), 16 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 54, 3 Sqdn/DR 7, Sap Comp 1/54
 - . 54 FA Bde (Col. Edler von Knötgen) - 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 154

XVII Corps

- GdI von Fabini; C/Staff = Col. Ritter Fischer von Ledeneice
 (14 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns, 9 foot half regts, 3 mntd sqdns, 12 batties, 1 tech comp; about 14,700 foot, 270 horse, 270 horse, 72 guns)
- . 7th Cav Div (GM Ritter Szivo de Bunja)
 - . 13 Cav Bde (Col. Franz von Velikiprilih) - DR 10 (2), 12 (2); UR 2 (2), 3 (2)
 - . A combined mounted sqdn
 - . 7 "K" FA Bde (Col. Kikovszky) - FAR 7.K (only)
 - . Attached - $\frac{1}{2}$ of Bn III/58, $\frac{1}{2}$ of III/15; all of II/k.u. Lst IR 20; one guard company; a combined mounted sqdn
 - . 11th ID (FML Ritter Metz von Spondalunga)
 - . 21 Bde (Col. Ritter von Stampfer) - IR 90 (3) only (IR 89 was detached to XI Corps)
 - . 22 Bde (Col. Edmund Hauser) - IR 58 (2 $\frac{1}{2}$), 115 (2 $\frac{1}{2}$)
 - . Sturm Bn 11, 2 Sqdn/RSR 1, Sap Comp 1/11
 - . 11 FA Bde (Col. Moc) - FAR 11 (only)
 - . Attached Sturm Half Regt 7 (from 7th CD)

XII Corps

- FZM von Braun; C/Staff = Col. Dragoni Edler von Rabenhorst
 (3 bns, 9 foot half regts, 2 mntd sqdns, 11 batties, 2 tech
 comps, 1 air comp; about 11,000 foot, 180 horse, 66 guns)
- . 5th Hon Cav Div (GM von Mouillard)
 - . 9 Hon Cav Bde (GM von Vetsey) - HHR 1 (2), 6 (2), 7 (2), 8 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 5; a combined mntd sqdn
 - . 5 Hon "K" FA Bde (Col. Basch) - Hon FAR 5.K
 - . 15th ID (FML von Aust; ordered to move to Kövess' Army Group)
 - . 29 Bde (GM Gombos) - IR 66 (3), 134 (3)
 - . 30 Bde (GM Markovits) - IR 60 (3), 65 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 15, 5 Sqdn/HR 11, Sap Comp 1/15
 - . Artillery - 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 111
 - . Corps troops - Air Comp 18.F; Sap Comp 2/2

Units directly under the Eastern Army

- (12 ½ bns, 9 foot half regts, 1 ¾ mntd sqdns, 14 batties, 1 tech
 comp, 1 air comp; about 6800 foot, 150 horse, 80 guns)
- . HQ of the Governor of Odessa (FML Edler von Böltz); all troops
 in turn were under 145 Inf Bde (Col. Kneisl von Alzenstett) - Bns
 VI/48, V/76, V/103 (also assigned was V/69, but it was serving in
 Vienna at the Imperial court); Sturm Half Bn 145; ¾ of 3 Sqdn/HHR
 10
 - . 2nd Cav Div (FML Freih. Abele von und zu Lillienberg)
 - . 3 Cav Bde (GM Matz Graf von Spiegelfeld) - HR 3 (2), 6 (2), 16 (2); UR 5 (2)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 2, a combined mntd sqdn, Sap Comp 3/55
 - . 2 "K" FA Bde (Col. Sponner Edler von Oknaringen) - FAR 2.K
 - . Attached - IR 97 (3) and FJB 27 (both from 30th ID); a
 guard bn; FAR 54 (from 54th Sch Div)
 - . Smaller units - Bns VI and VII/103; Batties 4/Hvy AR 7, 8/Hvy
 AR 9; Air Comp 25.K
 - . Attached to the Kiev Army Group - Bn II/93 (from 34th ID)

Units still assigned to Eastern Army but moving to Kövess' Army
 Group (10 bns, 9 foot half regts, 1 mntd sqdn, 18 batties, 1 tech
 comp; about 11,000 foot, 75 horse, 108 guns)

- . 59th ID (FML von Pichler)
 - . 117 Bde (Col. Nagy von Peremarton) - IR 24 (3); FJB 3, 15
 and 26 (but Bns 5 and 26 were on Assistenz service in the
 interior)
 - . 118 Bde (Col. Kemmel-Schuster von Megyfalu) - IR 41 (3)
 only
 - . Sturm Bn 59, 6 Sqdn/Hon HR 10, Sap Comp 1/59
 - . 59 FA Bde (GM Scholtz Edler von Rarancze) - FAR 59, 159

- . 4th Cav Div (GM Graf Lubenski)
- . 7 Cav Bde (Col. Ritter Strzelecki von Strzelec) - DR 5 (2), 9 (2); UR 1 (2), 13 (2)
- . Sturm Half Regt 4
- . 4 "K" FA Bde (coming from the Isonzo Army; Col. Bruckner); had FAR 4.K (only)
- . IR 93 (I & III Bns; from 34th ID)

TOTALS for the Eastern Army (not counting the units that were moving to Kövess' Army Group) - 66 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 27 foot half regts, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ mntd sqdns, 54 batties, 6 tech comps, 2 air comps. About 49,300 foot, 780 horse, 300 guns. Also there were around 6000 riflemen in the March formations in the Army's area of responsibility.

Other commands in the theater

4th General Command

- FZM Heinrich Goiginger; C/Staff = Col. Glöckner
 (13 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 1 batty; about 6400 foot, 6 guns)
- . 187 Lst Bde (in Bessarabia; GM Mihanovic Edler von Frankenthal) - k.k. Lst IR 22 (3 $\frac{1}{4}$); k.k. Lst Bns 39, 42, 75; 4 Batty/FAR 355
 - . Guarding the border (Col. Edler von Perner) - IR 203 (3); the Ukrainian Legion
 - . Vladimir-Volynsky Etappen Group Command (Lt Col. Poppi) - SW Bns 1, 2, 6
 - . FML Schilling's Command - 5 & 6 Sqdns/HR 7

k.u.k. General Government in Poland

GdI Liposzak; C/Staff = GM Huber Edler von Szekelyföld
 (33 Etappen bns, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ Streif comps, 1 mntd sqdn, 1 air platoon) - Streif Comps 19 to 23; one Streif platoon; 26 k.k. Lst Eta bns, 6 k.u. Lst Eta bns. 3rd Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt. "Lublin" Air Platoon.

Transylvania Group Command

FML Goldbach Edler von Sulittaborn; C/Staff = Col. Ritter von Randa (19 bns, 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ foot half regts, 2 mntd sqdns, 6 batties; about 15,000 foot, 150 horse, 36 guns)

- . 1st Cav Div (GM von Habermann)
 - . 1 Cav Bde (Col. Janky von Bulcs) - HR 5 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$), 7 (2), 12 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$), 14 (1 $\frac{1}{4}$)
 - . Sturm Half Regt 1, a combined mntd sqdn
 - . Attached - IR 113 (3); Bns I/Hon IR 311 & I/Hon IR 316; Batties 1, 2, 3 and 5/Hon FAR 355
- . 216 Hon Bde (GM Szabo von Kisjolsva) - k.u. Lst IR 17 (3), 29 (3); k.u. Lst Bn IV/19; Sturm Half Bn 216, 2 Sqdn/HR 1

- . Attached to the Bde - IR 126 (3 bns; from 18th ID), 4 & 5 Batties/FAR 172
- . Directly under Group HQ - IR 204 (4)

16th General Command (under *Scholtz's group of Mackensen's command*)

FML Graf von Salis-Sewis; C/Staff = Col. Freih. von Pitreich
(20 bns, 1 ½ mntd sqdns, 9 batties, 1 tech comp; about 10,100 foot, 100 horse, 54 guns)

- . 62nd ID (FML Brunswik von Korompa)
 - . 121 k.k. Lst Bde (GM Edler von Kouff) - k.k. Lst IR 9 (3), 409 (3); k.k Lst Bn 37
 - . 124 k.k. Lst Bde (GM Wokoun Edler von Les Grabowiec) - k.k. Lst IR 11 (3), 27 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 62, 4 Sqdn/HR 11, Sap Comp 3/6
 - . 72 FA Bde (Col. Seidl Edler von Wiedlinden) - FAR 72 only
- . 143 Bde (with *LXIII Corps*; GM Edler von Stika) - SW Bns 3, 4, 7; k.k. Lst Bns 23, 44, 150; one zug from DR 4; 1 to 3 Batties/FAR 172

Balkan Theater of Operations

All troops were under Kövess' Army Group; the order of battle here was the planned disposition, but it wasn't complete by the end of the war.

Commander = FM Freiherr Kövess von Kövesshaza

Chief of Staff = FML Konopicky

11th German Army

Commander = Prussian GdI von Steuben

C/Staff = Prussian Lt. Col. Kirch

IX Aus-Hung. Corps

FZM Edler von Habermann; C/Staff = Col. Buley
(18 ½ bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 30 batties, 2 tech comps; about 13,300 foot, 180 horse, 160 guns)

- . 9th ID (FML Greiner Edler von Madonna del Mare)
 - . 17 Bde (GM Chwostek) - IR 91 (2 ½), 102 (1)
 - . 18 Bde (Col. von Philipovich) - IR 30 (1), 80 (1)
 - . Sturm Bn 9, Res Sqdn/UR 12, Sap Comp 1/9
 - . 9 FA Bde (GM Alfred Filz Edler von Reiterdank) - FAR 9, 109; Hvy FAR 9, Mtn Arty Bn 9
- . 30th ID (GM Phleps)
 - . 59 Bde (Col. Fritsch Edler von Lipiny-Adelina) - IR 18 (3) only (IR 97 was with 2nd Cav Div of the Eastern Army)
 - . 60 Bde (Col. Wosatka Edler von Heldentreu) - FJB 1, 13, 14, 16, 18, 27
 - . Sturm Bn 30, 3 Sqdn/RSR 1, Sap Comp 1/30
 - . 30 FA Bde (commander not listed) - FAR 30; 1 to 5 Batties/FAR 130
 - . Attached IR 89 (3 bns; from 11th ID)
- . Corps troops - Sap Comp 2/25

XXXIX Reserve Corps

*Prussian G.Lt Staabs; C/Staff = Prussian Major von Strzemieczny)
(23 bns, 2 mntd sqdns, 27 batties; about 12,400 foot, 200 horse,
108 guns)*

- . *Alpenkorps (Bavarian GM Ritter von Tutschek) - Jaeger Regt 2;
Bavarian Jaeger Regt 1 & Leib Regt; 3 Sqdn/Bav Chevleg Regt 4;
FAR 204, Mtn Arty Bn 6, I Bn/Bav 1 Res Fuss Arty Regt*
- . *219th ID (Saxon GM von Kotsch) - IR 391, 431; Res IR 101; 4
Sqdn/HR 19; Ersatz FAR 45*

LIII Corps

Prussian G.Lt Limbourg; C/Staff unknown

*(20 bns, 3 mntd sqdns, 22 batties; about 7500 foot, 300 horse,
88 guns)*

- . *217th ID (Prussian GM von Gallwitz gennant Dreyling) - Res IR
9, 22; LW IR 22; Res Sqdn 47; FAR 65 (minus II Bn), II Bn/FAR
274*
- . *6th Res ID (Prussian GM Dieterich) - Had Jaeger Regt 10; other
units still forming*

TOTALS for 11th Army - 61 $\frac{1}{2}$ bns, 7 mntd sqdns, 81 batties, 2 tech
comps; about 33,200 foot, 680 horse, 356 guns

Other field forces

Units en route from other theaters (their orders of battle are
given under their old HQ)

- . From the Army of the East - 15th and 59th ID; 4th Cav Div; IR 93
- . From the Southwestern front - 48th FA Bde, Hvy FAR 45
- . From the interior - 32nd ID

Armeegruppe Albanien

*GO Freih. von Pflanzer-Baltin; C/Staff = Col. Joseph Schneider
(52 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 1 high mtn comp, 7 foot half regts, 4 mntd sqdns, 69 $\frac{1}{2}$
batties, 3 air comps, 1 balloon comp; about 18,400 foot, 280
horse, 280 guns)*

- . *47th ID (FML Ritter Weiss-Tihanyi von Mainprugg)*
 - . 93 Bde (GM Baukovac) - BH FJB 3; Border Jaeger Bns 1, 2,
3; a combined Albanian bn; $\frac{1}{4}$ 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11
 - . 94 Bde (GM Förster von Mezza Selva) - IR 88 (3); BH FJB 1,
2; a zug of the Dalmatian Mntd Rifle Bn, Albanian Cav Det
 - . Sturm Bn 47; Sap Comps 1/47, 1/23, 2/33, 3/40; k.k. Lst
Eta Bn 491, k.u. Lst Eta Bn I/18
 - . Albania Arty Command (Col. Forstner) - FAR 47; Mtn AR 5
(8), 13 (8); Batties 1 & 4/FAR 147, 1 to 5/Hvy FAR 47
- . *81st ID (FML Wossala)*
 - . 161 k.k. Lst Bde (Col. Laufer) - Border Jaeger Bn 4; IV Bn/

- SchR 23; k.k. Lst IR 23 (2); k.k. Lst Bns 38, 46, 158
- . 162 k.u. Lst Bde (Col. Sreter von Szanda) - Border Jaeger Bn 5; k.u. Lst Bns IV/4, I/9, III/29, I/30, I/31, II/32
- . Sturm Bn 81; Sap Comps 2/15, 3/18, 2 & 3/41, 2/44, 2/48; k.u. Lst Eta Bns IV/6, V/9
- . 47 FA Bde (Lt Col. Mraz, temporary) - Mtn AR 7 (8); Batties 2, 3, 5 & 6/FAR 147; 1 & 3/Mtn Arty Bn 47; 1 TM/Hvy AR 12
- . 220 k.k. Lst Bde (Col. von Vittorelli) - k.k. Lst Bns I/37, 17, 41, 45, 148, 159; Sturm Comp 220; a zug from DR 5
- . Orientkorps (Lt Col. Duic) - BH Bns VI/1, VI/2, VIII/3; Bn IV/103; Orientkorps Sturm Comp
- . 9th Cav Div (FML Freih. Le Gay von Lierfels)
 - . 17 Cav Bde (Col. von Radey) - DR 4 (2) only
 - . 18 Cav Bde (Col. Prinz von und zu Liechtenstein) - DR 13 (2), UR 6 (2)
 - . A combined mounted sqdn
- . Albanian Coastal Sector (Counter-Admiral Edler von Obradich-Bevilacqua)
 - . Sub-Sector Alessio (Col. Siemens) - k.u. Lst Bn VII/8
 - . Sub-Sector Durazzo (Col. Dörfler) - k.u. Lst Bns V/9, IV/16, V/33
 - . 22 fixed batteries
- . Directly under the Armeegruppe
 - . Bns III/94, II/118, III/BH 7, III/SchR 22, III/SchR 33, II/SchR 34, BH Gendarme Bn⁵⁰⁵; High Mtn Comp 23
 - . 6 Sqdn/DR 7, 1 Sqdn/RSR 3
 - . 6 Batty/FAR 147; Flak Platoons 9, 11, 13
 - . *En route* from the Bulgarian Ochrida Div - Border Jaeger Bn 6, 8 Batty/Mtn AR 13

Troops under the commanding general in BHD

- GO Freiherr Sarkotic von Lovcen (C/Staff = Col. Appollonio)
 (19 bns, 6 ½ Eta bns, 12 coast defense comps, 79 batties, 2 tech comps; about 13,600 foot; 320 mobile and 600 fixed guns and 100 fixed MG)
- . Sturm Bn 45; 4 & 5 Batties/FAR 145 (all from 45th Sch Div)
 - . 90 Sch Bde (Col. Freisinger; from 45th Sch Div) - III Bn and half of II Bn/SchR 18
 - . Coastal Sector "North Dalmatia" (FML Freih. Wucherer von Huldenfeld)
 - . Foot - Half of II Bn/SchR 18; k.k. Lst Bns V & VII/37;

505 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The seven bns listed here are apparently those which the AOK had been trying to remove from Pflanzer-Baltin's command for use elsewhere. If so, the units presumably were still under his control when the war ended because time ran out before they could transfer.

- k.u. Lst Bns IV/1, VI/4; Coast Defense Comps II, III, IV, V, VI, VII
 - . Artillery (under Capt. Kong) - Three fixed batties, two mobile batties, four flak platoons, half a TM platoon
 - . Sebenico Naval Command (Counter Admiral von Schwarzl) - 62 naval guns, 5 naval flak platoons
- . Coastal Command "South Dalmatia" (FZM Guseck Edler von Glankirchen)
 - . Ragusa Coastal Area (GM Fürst Weikersheim) - $\frac{1}{4}$ of VII Bn/ BH IR 2; Bn II/SchR 17 (from 45th Sch Div); k.k. Lst Bn VI/37; k.u. Lst Eta Bn V/24; Coast Defense Comps I, IX, X, XI, XIII
 - . Artillery Command (GM Fejfar) - Batties 1 to 3/FAR 145 (from 45th Sch Div), 3 TM/Hvy AR 12; five fixed batties, four flak platoons
 - . Cattaro Military Harbor (also led by FZM Guseck Edler von Glankirchen)
 - . 45th Schützen Division (GM Meisel)
 - . Foot - Bns I and $\frac{1}{4}$ III/SchR 18; $\frac{3}{4}$ of I Bn/SchR 33; k.k Lst IR 51 (3 $\frac{1}{4}$); Coast Defense Comp XVI; six guard detachments
 - . 45 FA Bde (GM Wolff Edler von Wolffsried) - FAR 45; 6 Batty/FAR 145
 - . Sap Comps 1/45, 2/42
 - . 5 Heavy Arty Bde (Col. Illuscig recte Jeusceg) - Heavy AR 5 (minus TM batties); Batties 5 to 8 and 13 to 16/Hvy AR 13
 - . Reserve artillery (being re-armed, etc.) - Batties 5/Hvy AR 55, 6/Hvy AR 3, 6/Hvy AR 6, 6/Hvy AR 10; two mobile heavy cannon batties; about 300 fixed guns; 10 flak batties
 - . Also - 113 fixed MG; Air Comp 1.I
 - . Antivari Coastal Region (under HQ of 89 Sch Bde; Col Olbrich) - Bns II and $\frac{1}{4}$ of I/SchR 33; $\frac{1}{4}$ k.u. Lst Bn VII/19. Batties 3/Mtn AR 45, 15/Hvy AR 11, 1 TM/Hvy AR 12; two fixed batties, two flak platoons
 - . Fortress garrisons
 - . Sarajevo (FML Haala) - BH Lst Eta Bn 10; 1 & 9 Batties/ Hvy AR 12; 58 fixed guns
 - . Kalinovik (Col. Strain) - $\frac{1}{4}$ III Bn/SchR 18; $\frac{1}{4}$ BH Lst Eta Bn 5; 8 fixed guns
 - . Mostar (FML Edler von Haam) - One guard detachment; 3 & 11 Batties/Hvy AR 12; 46 fixed guns, 20 fixed MG
 - . Trebinje (FML Kutzlnigg) - BH Lst Eta Bn 12; 2, 4 and 10 Batties/Hvy AR 12; 69 fixed guns, 52 fixed MG
 - . Bileca (Col. von Vorner) - III Bn/SchR 17; BH Lst Eta Bn 11; 53 fixed guns, 14 fixed MG
 - . Avtovac Defense District (Lt Col. Czadan-Bujdoso) - Bn I/ SchR 17; BH Lst Eta Bn 8; 8 fixed guns, 6 fixed MG

. Gorazde Etappen District (Col Vodnik) - $\frac{3}{4}$ of Bn III/SchR
18; Lst Eta Bn 9; 6 fixed MG

Troops under the k.u.k. General Governments

- . Montenegro General Government (GM Graf Clam-Martinic, assisted by GM Petkovic von Batar; C/Staff = Lt Col Sekulich)
 - (5 $\frac{3}{4}$ bns, 17 Streif comps, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ Etappen bns, 28 field gendarmerie platoons, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ mntd sqdns, 1 batty; about 4000 foot, 125 horse, 4 guns)
 - . Col. Freih. von Hospodarz's Group - SchR 34 (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ bns); $\frac{3}{4}$ of VII Bn/BH IR 2; k.k. Lst Bn II/37; k.u. Lst Bns IV/23 and $\frac{3}{4}$ of VII/19. "Jagd Commando" from the BH Gendarme Bn.
 - Streif Comps # 24 to 39. Streifkorps Battery "MGG/M"
 - . Garrison troops - Three k.k., three and a half k.u. and one BH Lst Eta bns; 28 field gendarmerie platoons; Res Sqdn/HR 10; $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 Sqdn/Lst Hussar Half Regt 11
- . Serbian General Government (GO Freih. von Rhemen und Barenfeld, assisted by GM Babich von Lovinca; C/Staff = Col. Kerchnawe)
 - (5 bns, 16 Eta bns, 14 field gendarmerie platoons, 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ mntd sqdns, 9 batties; about 4000 foot, 200 horse, 36 guns)
 - . Field troops - The Streif Regt (3 bns); Gendarme Bn "S"; an Albanian bn. 7 Sqdn/Hon HR 3, 3 Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 11, $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 Sqdn/Lst Huss Half Regt 12. Nine batteries of various calibers
 - . Garrison troops - Two k.k. and fourteen k.u. Lst Eta bns; fourteen field gendarmerie platoons

TOTALS for the Balkan theater of operations (both Aus-Hung. and German mobile forces; they do not include the fortress garrisons under the BHD HQ nor the units under the k.u.k. General Governments) - 169 bns, 1 high mtn comp, 16 foot half regts, 13 mntd sqdns, 275 $\frac{1}{2}$ batties, 21 tech comps, 3 air comps, 1 balloon comp. About 90,000 foot, 1150 horse, 1140 guns

Units on other assignments**On the German Western front**

- . XVIII Corps HQ (under Gallwitz's Army Group, responsible for the Ornes Sector) (FML Ludwig Goiginger; C/Staff = Col. Matsvanszky)
- . 106th ID (FML Kratky; in the Ornes Sector)
 - . 210 k.k. Lst Bde (Col. von Nechwatal) - Lst IR 31 (3) 32 (3)
 - . 211 k.k. Lst Bde (GM Pischely) - Lst IR 6 (3), 25 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 106 (detached to 7th Res ID), Res Sqdn/UR 1, Sap Comp 2/16
 - . Batties 4/FAR 206, 6/FAR 306 (the other components of 106 FA Bde were being re-armed at the Brixlegg artillery

- station)
- . 1st ID (FML Metzger; under V Reserve Corps)
 - . 1 Bde (Col. Wagner von Ujbesenyö) - IR 5 & 61 (6 comps each)
 - . 2 Bde (GM Gustav Hellebronth von Tisza-Beö) - IR 112 (4 comps); FJB 17, 25, 31
 - . Sturm Bn 1, 2 Sqdn/Hon HR 10, Sap Bn 1, Balloon Comp 13
 - . 1 FA Bde (Col. Hubischta) - FAR 1, 101; Hvy FAR 1, Mtn Arty Bn 1
 - . 35th ID (FML von Podhoranszky; under Armee Abteilung C)
 - . 69 Bde (Col. Guha) - IR 62 (2 ½), 64 (3)
 - . 70 Bde (GM Funk) - IR 51 (2 ¼), 63 (2)
 - . Sturm Bn 35; 6 Sqdn/HR 4; Sapper Bn 35, Balloon Comp 27
 - . 35 FA Bde (Lt Col. Koch for Col. Sostaric von Letovanicdvor) - FAR 135, Hvy FAR 35, Mtn Arty Bn 35; Batties 1 to 5/FAR 35
 - . Attached - 3 TM Batty/Hvy AR 1
 - . 37th Hon ID (FML Haber; under Herzog Albrecht von Württemberg's Army Group)
 - . 73 Hon Bde (Col. Farkas von Nagyjoka) - HIR 13 (3), 18 (3)
 - . 74 Hon Bde (GM Pogany von Nagypolany) - HIR 14 (3), 15 (3)
 - . Sturm Bn 37, 5 Sqdn/HR 4, Sapper Comp 1/37
 - . 37 Hon FA Bde (GM Seh) - HFAR 137, Hon Mtn Arty Bn 37; 6 Batty/HFAR 37 (rest of the Bde was being rearmed at artillery stations - Batties 1 to 5/HFAR 37 at Laibach, Hvy HFAR 37 at St Veit a.d. Glan)
 - . IX Corps HQ (forming; led by FML Schneider Edler von Manns-Au with Lt Col. Ritter von Hüttenbrenner as C/Staff)
 - . k.u.k. artillery attached to various German units - Hvy FAR 11, 54, 59, 72; Mtn AR 8 (9 batties); Batties 1, 3 & 12/Hvy AR 1, 10/Hvy AR 6, 13/Hvy AR 8, 1 & 2/Hvy AR 9, 10/Hvy AR 10, 14/Hvy AR 11
 - . k.u.k. Etappen "HQ West" (Col. Edmund Ritter von Wallenstein)

TOTALS for Aus-Hung. units in the West - 45 ¾ bns, 4 mntd sqdns, 96 batties, 8 tech comps, 2 balloon comps; about 18,000 foot, 400 horse, 360 guns

In Turkey - An artillery HQ over a Field How Batty; 1 & 2 Mtn Batties, 10.4 cm Cannon Batty, 15 cm How Batty. Also five truck columns.

In the Interior (Assistenz service; see preceding section for further details)

- . 32nd ID (was to move to the Kövess' Army Group in the second half of October; FML Bellmond Edler von Adlerhorst)
 - . 63 Bde (GM Tanczos) - IR 23 (3), 70 (3)
 - . 64 Bde (Col. Zuna Edler von Kratky) - IR 86 (3), 123 (3)

- . Sturm Bn 32 (detached to XXVI Corps), Sap Comp 1/32
- . Also - FJB 15, 26, k.k. Lst Bns 24, 153. Field Assistenz Bns I through XIX.

The Operational Fleet

Commander = Counter Admiral Horthy von Nagybanya

- . 1st Heavy Division (currently no commander) - Dreadnoughts *Viribus unitis*, *Tegetthoff*, *Prinz Eugen*
- . 2nd Heavy Division (L-Sch Kapt. and Commodore Lauffer) - Battleships *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*, *Zrinyi*, *Radetzky*
- . Cruiser Flotilla (L-Sch Kapt. and Commodore Seitz)
 - . 3rd Heavy Division (Seitz's personal command) - Battleships *Erzherzog Karl*, *Erzherzog Ferdinand Max*, *Erzherzog Friedrich*
 - . Cruiser Group (Freg-Kapt. Ritter von Pokorny) - Cruisers *Novara*, *Saida*
- . 1st Torpedo Flotilla (Freg-Kapt. Freih. von Marschall)
 - . Command vessel - Cruiser "Helgoland"
 - . Destroyers⁵⁰⁶ - *Tatra*, *Balaton*, *Csepel*, *Orjen*, *Triglav*, *Lika*, *Dukla*, *Uzsok*
 - . Torpedo Boats # 50, 51, 53, 54, 56, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
- . 2nd Torpedo Flotilla (Freg-Kapt. Morin)
 - . Command vessel - Cruiser "Admiral Spaun"
 - . Destroyers - *Dinara*, *Reka*, *Pandur*, *Csikos*, *Scharfschütze*, *Velebit*, *Turul*, *Uskoke*, *Ulan*, *Huszar*, *Warasdiner*
 - . Torpedo Boats # 52, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72
- . Torpedo support vessels (attached for administrative purposes to the 2nd Flotilla) - Old battleship *Budapest*; depot ship *Gäa*; supply vessels *Teodo*, *Pola*, and "Steamer 14"; Torpedo Boat # 18; steamers *Sebenico* and *Egida*
- . Submarine Flotilla - Boats # 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 40, 41, 43, 47
- . "S" Flotilla (anti-submarine service) - Vessels were *Monfalcone*, *Tatra*, *Knin*, *Senj*, *Arsa*, *Makarska*, *Nesazio*, *Cetina*, *Novi*, *Slavija* plus an un-named "Gleitboot"
- . *German Mediterranean Submarine Force* (was not under Horthy's

506 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Vessels smaller than cruisers have been added to this section from the Navy's official history (pp. 91 ff.), which however cautions that there is no "precise" information about the assignment of these vessels to the various higher HQ. Also the naval source is dated 28 August 1918 rather than 15 October, but there seem to have been few if any changes to the order of battle during the interval.

- overall command) -
- . 1st Flotilla - U.33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 63, 65. UB.52, 68, 105, 128, 129
- . 2nd Flotilla - U.47, 72, 73. UB.49, 50, 51. UC.20, 22, 25, 27, 34, 52, 53, 54, 67, 73, 74
- . Miscellaneous commands
 - . Pola Naval Defense Command - Had reserve and training vessels Adria, Arpad, Zara, Spalato, Alpha, Leopard, Gamma, Sen, Chamäleon, Salamander, Basilisk, Trabant, Blitz, Planet, Meteor, Herkules, Mars, Magnet. Mine-Sweepers # 21, 23, 24, 27, 32, 33, 37, 39, 40. Steamers Dolphin, Ante Starcevic, Fasana. Transports # 8, 18, 19, 20 and Najade.
 - . Naval District Commands
 - . Fiume - Steamers Elöre, Neretva, Risano, Cirkvenica, Liburnia, Bilinski
 - . Trieste
 - . Lagoon Flotilla - Gunboats I & III; Armored Motor Boats 1, 2 and "Linz"; Motor Boats Mia, Adria, Ruzica, Linz, Auto; Motor Boats # 2, 4, 6, 92, 103, 105, 130. Steamer Frankopan. A number of support vessels, tugs, etc.
 - . Torpedo Boats # 74, 75, 76, 79
 - . Mine-sweepers - Old TB # 3 and 4; M-S # 20, 34
 - . Sebenico - Cruiser Kaiser Karl VI. Old warships Komet, Schwarzenberg [Donau]. Old TB # 8, 10, 12, 14. Mine-sweepers # 19, 22, 25, 29, 31, 35. Steamers Vodice, Valona, Zadar, Quarnero, Adria. Work-hulk Vulkan
 - . Gulf of Cattaro (HQ ship - Kaiser Franz Joseph)
 - . Cruiser St Georg
 - . Mine-sweeping command - Command vessel was Kronprinz Erzherzog Rudolf. Had Dromedar, Mine-sweepers # 36 and 38, and TB # 98.
 - . Torpedo boat group - Command vessel was Satellit. Had TB # 13, 15, 16, 17
 - . Reserve, training and support vessels - Kaiser Max, Cyklop, Gigant, Vesta, Dalmat; Steamers # 7 and 10
 - . Miscellaneous vessels
 - . In reserve were Habsburg and Bellona
 - . Transport steamers with the Army - Salona, Pannonia, Gödöllö
 - . Six hospital ships of the Austrian Red Cross

The Danube flotilla

(Under operational command of Mackensen's Army Group)
Led by L-Sch Kapt. and Commodore Ratkovic

- . 1st Monitor Division - Bosna, Enns, Inn, Sava
- . 2nd Monitor Division - Temes, Bodrog, Szamos, Körös
- . Patrol Boat Division - Viza, Comp, Csuka, Fogas, Barsch, Wels
- . Also - A mine-sweeping detachment and supply vessels

b. The material and psychological situation through mid-OctoberThe material situation

Around the start of October, reports by the AOK's liaison officers with the armies of the Southwestern front clearly demonstrated how much the troops suffered because of the political and economic decline of the Monarchy. July and August had truly been months of hunger at the front. For many days the soldiers didn't receive a bit of meat or a gram of fat. For breakfast and supper they got just unsweetened black coffee; at noon they ate tasteless dried greens plus an inadequate ration of bread baked from low-quality grain. On good days lunch also included some cheese or pumpkins. Fresher vegetables were very seldom available.

On days when the troops didn't get meat they expressed great bitterness against the home front, since everyone believed that their problems were due to irresponsible disorder. The disintegrating political situation and rapid spread of corruption did allow heartless contractors in the interior to steal a good part of the available rations. These black-marketeers were becoming the real masters of the supply system, while the governments stood helpless. The enlisted men asserted that often their comrades didn't desert or go over to the enemy from war-weariness, but mainly because they were under-nourished. The deserters in the interior, even those who had to hide in the forests, could eat better than the soldiers at the front. Also there were hundreds of men, mainly Hungarians, who'd left the front without authorization in the last few months for a short time; they returned from their homes burdened with large quantities of white bread, cheese and bacon.

Several Hungarian regiments had imposed strict economy in their Ersatz battalions and thus were able to provide their men more to eat. But this had an unfavorable impact on morale among the neighboring troops, who wanted to know why the Hungarians got more rations than they did. In general the situation of the front-line soldiers was no worse than that of the men in the March formations and on the lines of communication. It was significant that a complete and fully-armed Honved detachment forced their way to the front without authorization so they could eat a few more grams of food than they could at the training grounds.

There was a slight improvement in September thanks to the favorable results of the latest harvest; at least there was more bread and, in many cases, more fresh vegetables. Nevertheless, it was still impossible to issue the full authorized rations. And the supplies of meat continued to decline since the number of animals being produced in the interior wasn't sufficient to make up for those who were slaughtered. The liaison officer attached to the Isonzo Army reported that the men "were living from hand to mouth. The commanders can never be sure that their troops will survive to the next day if the regular supply deliveries are interrupted."

The strength of the hungry and under-nourished troops was questionable in general, and in some units was worse than others. In the 20 Hon ID the average weight of the men was 50 kg (110 pounds) !

The wretched nourishment which the troops had received for the last year was the reason why both their power of resistance and capacity to work had noticeably declined; this was especially true for the very youngest and oldest men. The impact of under-nourishment was not only psychological; it had a direct negative impact on military skills since the personnel were no longer strong enough to undergo lengthy physical training. And naturally as the soldiers weakened they became less resistant to illness. Dysentery was the most prevalent disease in the armies. But on top of everything else the influenza epidemic spread among the troops in October, literally rendering many regiments ineffective.

The Isonzo Army on the lower Piave furthermore suffered from malaria, which decimated the ranks of the 14, 57 and 58 ID as well as the coast defense formations. In mid-August 600 to 800 men left the front of Boroevic's Army Group every day because of malaria. "It wasn't possible," writes GM Pitreich⁵⁰⁷, "to take the necessary prophylactic measures because of the continuing shortage of quinine. Moreover, there were cases where men seeking to shirk front-line duty would feign the symptoms of malaria or even risk infection by not taking medicine. To counter the latter trend, the authorities resorted to a trick; in the published daily reports they exaggerated the percentage of malaria cases which ended in death within the infected areas. To avoid infecting additional units, the three divisions named above weren't relieved, but deliberately kept in the line at reduced strength. As a result, the defensive screen in front of these divisions became ever thinner. Finally there were hardly enough

507Anton Pitreich, "Piavefront"

personnel left to man the most important outposts and to fire the signal guns. But we could tolerate the decreased security because conditions here were no better for the enemy on the other side of the Piave; malaria was devastating both sides in the river delta."

In September, 7 of the 15 divisions of the Isonzo Army had less than a third of their authorized number of riflemen; 3 had more than half, and only 5 divisions had more than two-thirds of the authorized strength. Companies with 100 men were a rarity. Because of the small size of most divisions, the companies were often used to garrison the trenches, and no longer could count on regular relief. The troops' health deteriorated further due to the arrival of poorer weather in fall, especially on the mountain front where the men garrisoning the lines were still wearing summer uniforms; they suffered from the cold and from their stays in damp caverns.

Shortages of clothing were even more deplorable than the lack of food. On average, each man had just one set of underwear but many had less than a full set. There was a similar shortage of even threadbare uniforms, and of shoes. In the regiments at the front, one man of every three lacked a coat. There were also detachments that couldn't move out because they lacked uniforms. Some men, without underwear or trousers, had to stand guard covered by just a short overcoat. In this regard the officer corps were also deprived. Young officers who didn't have peace-time uniforms to rely on had to borrow items from better-equipped comrades when they went on leave. It's significant that a soldier from one of the poorest areas of Dalmatia complained to a high-ranking officer, "We aren't heroes, but beggars!"

The psychological situation

It's understandable that the morale of these impoverished, worn-down troops was easily undermined, and in fact there were many such incidents. The enemy resumed their propaganda with somewhat greater intensity than in the spring, using ingenious methods. In their trenches the Italians played gramophone recordings of Czech and south Slavic folk songs. Groups of Slavic deserters also sang from the trenches, first at one point and then at another. Fresh-baked loaves of white bread were hoisted on bayonets to taunt the half-starved Austrians. Enemy patrols crossed the lines at night and were secretly received by Slavic troops.

Thus the nationalist feelings that had undermined the units in

the interior were beginning to appear at the front, which hitherto had been exempt from the problem. Nevertheless, the spirit of the troops on the Southwestern front was still considered satisfactory as of the start of October. Its strength had been proven by the energetic resistance against the enemy attacks in August and September; these local operations on the Venetian mountain front and in the Tonale sector had been limited in scope but carried out by rather large forces. Besides the Italians, the English and French had also taken part in the thrusts near Asiago. Soldiers from all nationalities of the Danube Monarchy - though badly fed, inadequately armed and neglected by their homeland - had resisted them under the most difficult conditions.⁵⁰⁸

But extreme war-weariness was evident among the enlisted men and even more so among the officers. The liaison officer at 11th Army HQ depicted the feeling of the troops as depressed, while noting that the rank and file still willingly followed orders. "The men are weary but determined to do their duty. The fresh and confident attitude of some of the Hungarian regiments is striking. Although the Szekler troops of IR # 82 have reported that hunger has made them too weak to fight as well as previously, they also declare that they will carry on as best they can." The report continued, "Unfortunately the men feel over-matched by their enemies, especially the English and French. But this is unavoidable, since every soldier recognizes the superiority of the enemy's air forces and, above all, of their artillery. The officers are depressed, and observing events in the West with great concern." Regarding attitudes to the ruling dynasty, this report frankly recommended that the younger archdukes should be employed at the front.

The AOK's liaison officer at 6th Army HQ reported that the units made up of Germans and Magyars were reliable. Some regiments of this Army - those containing a majority of Czechs, Poles or Ruthenes - had an unfavorable attitude. Even in these units the commissioned and non-commissioned officers had no reservations about their subordinates' willingness to fight, but it seemed questionable whether their confidence was justified. Some of the soldiers - former members of the Polish Legion, Heimkehrer who'd finally been brought to the front, and the shirkers from the large cities - had to be kept under constant surveillance and couldn't be trusted to man outposts. Nonetheless, there were few cases in which men from 6th Army had gone over to the enemy.

Opinions about the Romanians varied. In units where they were

508 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 332 ff.

carefully handled and led by officers fluent in their language, they could be counted on to carry out their duties. The Slovaks of upper Hungary, mixed in the ranks with Magyar personnel, were also judged favorably. This report made special mention of the confident assertions of German and Magyar troops that they'd hold their positions if the enemy did attack. It also appeared that in units which had come to the Southwestern front relatively recently the troops believed they could stand up to the Italians. Even the men who'd been engaged in the June fighting had overcome their misgivings. The Italian infantry weren't highly regarded. On the other hand the enemy artillery and air forces, against which we were helpless, were imposing.

The commanders of the reliable units in 6th Army even felt that their troops could be employed if necessary on the offensive. Other officers felt their men still needed better training before they could attack. But all agreed that under current conditions our units should stay on the defensive.

The report of the liaison officer with the Isonzo Army was also foreboding: "In the long run the lack of food and clothing will be unbearable. This is the root cause of the dissatisfaction which threatens to undermine military discipline; small-scale outbreaks are already spreading from the interior into the areas just behind the field armies."

This officer's report continued with a final angry protest against the forces of destruction and a personal cry in defense of an honorable tradition that was centuries old: "If basic changes aren't implemented soon, conditions in the interior will inevitably poison the Army's spirit. Until now the Army has been spiritually and mentally strong; it will stay so if our material situation improves and order is restored in the homeland. The hour to act cannot be delayed much longer, if we want to continue to fight with honor and preserve the state. I am absolutely convinced that the Army will fight on, if it must, even while hungry and naked; but first concrete actions must be taken to dispel the impression that the armed forces are regarded as a burden and a step-child by the government and the country."

On 10 October the HQ of the Tyrol Army Group reported to the k.u.k. high command that "lack of food and clothing is the principal cause of the general feeling of depression and the ever stronger desire of the men to go home. [But also to blame were] the desolate conditions in the interior, which causes both officers and men concern for their families and futures; the front, still intact and willing to fight, can only be held if

there is an immediate and radical restoration of order in the interior."

It was clear to everyone who'd observed the collapse of Russia in 1917 that the material need and disorganization in our country in fall 1918 were approaching the levels experienced in Russia just before the revolution. In Russia the economic crisis and the erratic and inadequate food supplies had caused the officers to lose their determination and their faith in the state. As a consequence, they also lost their authority over the rank and file and finally succumbed to Socialist agitation.

But the Supreme Warlord and the leading personalities of the k.u.k. high command were no longer able to halt the decline of the military spirit and to check the forces of destruction. The political and economic collapse, and the break-up of the Danube Monarchy into national states, were already too far advanced. The suffering homeland could no longer keep the Army supplied, and it even deprived the isolated field forces of moral support as the last trial of arms approached.

c. Preparations to evacuate Venetia

The k.u.k. high command observed the Italians' preparations to attack with great concern and unease. They feared how the fighting would turn out, since Austria-Hungary seemed be near collapse. Domestic political turmoil would inevitably affect the front. Even a minor thrust could lead to military catastrophe. Therefore GO Arz wanted to prevent an Italian offensive. Already on 5 October an Aus-Hung. armistice commission under GdI Weber had been formed at Trent so that negotiations could begin without delay. In the evening of 9 October the staff at Baden learned about Wilson's first response to Germany, in which the American president demanded the evacuation of the occupied territory. Thereupon the k.u.k. high command, apparently following the Emperor's orders, wanted to immediately send an envoy to their Italian counterparts to initiate armistice negotiations. But on the next day the Foreign Minister Graf Burian asked GO Arz to postpone this step for the time being. Also GFM Hindenburg requested, through the German plenipotentiary general at Baden, that his allies should await the outcome of discussions between Berlin and Washington; GO Arz agreed to do so.

On 11 October Boroevic's Army Group HQ received an order to evacuate back to the homeland all the valuable military equipment

which wasn't needed for battle. The AOK was considering whether to evacuate the positions in Venetia; this would frustrate the apparently imminent Italian offensive, since it would force the enemy to lose time by re-deploying their artillery before they could strike. It would also enable our armies to prepare to defend the Monarchy's borders as they awaited conclusion of the armistice.

On 14 October the leading members of the k.u.k. high command met at Baden with the chiefs of staff of the army groups and armies to discuss whether to evacuate Venetia. The majority were concerned that if the armies pulled back to the pre-war borders they wouldn't be able to make a stand there. It seemed certain that the Italian Army, which was already prepared to strike, wouldn't let the k.u.k. forces withdraw in peace, and that during the retreat our troops wouldn't be able to withstand the enemy pursuit. Also in these critical days the leadership were already anxious about possible revolution; they were concerned that enormous masses of soldiers departing the fronts might degenerate into groups of murderous bandits, fighting everyone in their path. Thus disturbances in the interest of various parties would break out all over the Monarchy's soil. These considerations and also the prevailing lack of transport - which made a quick evacuation of Venetia impossible - made it inadvisable to pull the front back prior to the oncoming storm.

Nonetheless, at this meeting in Baden all of the preparations necessary for an eventual evacuation were initiated. The armies were assigned areas to which they'd march to guard the border, and in which they'd be demobilized during the winter after the armistice was concluded. When the retreat started the Belluno Armeegruppe was to be dissolved - its XXVI Corps would be placed under 11th Army and the other corps under 6th Army; the three divisions in reserve, along with XXIV Corps HQ, would go to the Isonzo Army. The new army zones would be -

- . Isonzo Army - the coastal lands, Carniola, southern Styria and the Varasdin and Belovar counties [of Hungary];
- . 6th Army - Carinthia and southern Styria;
- . Archduke Joseph's Army Group - Tyrol and Salzburg.

The Isonzo Army would deploy four divisions to guard the Italian frontier between the sea and the border between Carinthia and the coast lands; 6th Army would leave two divisions on the Carinthian frontier, and 11th Army of Archduke Joseph's Army Group two more in the Luggau area (as far as the Sugana valley). 10th Army would guard the southern and western borders of Tyrol with as many units as they deemed necessary. All other troops were to be stationed along the railroads so they could be more easily

supplied. The actual evacuation of the occupied Venetian territory would take place gradually, and start on the lines of communication so it would be possible to save the enormous stocks of supplies accumulated there. Written orders were issued to the armies on 15 October. Archduke Joseph's Army Group sent out their own order on the 17th that everything not needed should be sent home.

While the first trains began to evacuate personnel and goods to the interior⁵⁰⁹, the initial measures set off panic on the lines of communication and among the March formations in the training areas. Although these signs of disintegration were already evident, the main body of the Army were still stationed in their positions opposite the foe. The commanding generals in the field were sincerely confident that their forces could honorably endure the last actions.

On 17 October FM Boroevic appealed to his troops in his order of the day: "Because of the overall situation we anticipate that the enemy will still try to also win military success in the Italian theater of operations. Our task is to ensure that under all circumstances the enemy recognizes that we're fully prepared to defend ourselves and that the start of an attack will be as costly and hopeless for them as it was on the Karst in the past. Commanders at all levels have to direct and complete the defensive measures, and to exert their direct influence on the troops to ensure that they're always alert and ready to fight. The attempt to initiate peace negotiations shouldn't divert our attention and activities from the enemy. We stand unbroken and in a favorable position deep in the enemy's country, and are strong enough to repulse any attack with bloody losses. Our honor and the well-being of the fatherland demand that we provide the basis for an honorable peace!"

GO Archduke Joseph also appealed to his men, using similar proud words. On 18 October he issued an order of the day to 10th and 11th Armies in which he asserted that any military defeat would only damage the prospects for peace. If the front weakened at all, our arch-enemy's greed for our territory would increase immeasurably. As previously, defensive measures should be planned intelligently and carried out devotedly. The order concluded, "Looking back at four years of glorious combat, we must and will succeed in keeping our honor and weaponry intact;

509FM Boroevic's Army Group were able to use just 20 trains per day; this number wasn't even enough to empty the field hospitals by sending home the thousands of men who were ill from influenza or malaria.

thus alone will we be able to favorably influence the impending peace."

d. Domestic and foreign political developments around mid-October

Repercussions from the Imperial manifesto

The Emperor's proclamation of 17 October was designed to announce his determination to guarantee the autonomy of the peoples of the Habsburg Monarchy - as Wilson had demanded - and at the same time to anticipate adverse decisions by the victorious powers. But it didn't succeed in achieving either goal. At an earlier time the manifesto addressed to the peoples of Austria and to the world would certainly have made an impact, since its concepts were a step in the direction that under better conditions could have preserved the Danube realm. But now the time of opportunity had long passed, and even the enemy states would hardly have been able to prevent the complete collapse of the Monarchy. And the contents of the manifesto revealed weaknesses that robbed the document of any value. Allowing the Poles to leave the state gave new impetus to the centrifugal forces. The South Slavs regarded the document, which left intact the "integrity" of Hungary, as a bitter mockery of their own aspirations, and the Czechs regarded it in similar fashion. The Imperial manifesto spoke at length about dividing the realm, but said hardly anything about a determination to preserve essential common institutions. Thus it did lay the groundwork for legally creating the new states, but at the same time accelerated the collapse of the great commonwealth which had lasted for centuries.

Anticipating the Emperor's manifesto and his objectives, a representative of one of the peoples antagonistic to the state already declared on 17 October (in a speech before the Austrian Delegation⁵¹⁰) that the question of the Monarchy now could be settled only at a peace conference. The Poles and Italians felt that the manifesto authorized their secession. A national council of the Ruthenes assembled at Lemberg (on the 19th), as did a similar council of the Romanians at Czernowitz. The latter demanded immediate union with their fellow-Romanians of

510 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The "Delegations" of Austria and Hungary were bodies chosen by their respective legislatures to address issues - finance, foreign affairs and military - which were common to both halves of the Dual Monarchy.

Transylvania. Also a declaration on the 19th by the Czech national council ("Narodni vybor") at Prague denounced the manifesto and referred to their Slovak cousins on Hungarian soil, whom they wanted to free from Magyar hegemony. Like the other nationalities, Germans representing the hereditary and Bohemian lands created a national council (at Vienna on 21 October), in which the middle-class members advocated a constitutional monarchy while the Social Democrats - already in the ascendant - wanted a republican form of government.⁵¹¹

Plans for creating a federation in Austria, under discussion even prior to the manifesto, increased sentiment for independence among the Magyars. The defenders of "the thousand-year-old Kingdom" felt that its existence was greatly imperiled by the ideas prevalent in their sister state and believed they could still save the integrity of Hungary against these ideas and against Wilson's plans at the eleventh hour by separating completely from Austria. The Kingdom of St Stephen could emerge from the general ruin as a fully independent centralized "national state" with its own foreign policy and its own army. The only common bond with Austria would be the ruling dynasty. The nationalities would be content with a limited amount of autonomy and therefore remain under the authority of the old Hungarian state.⁵¹²

On 16 October Wekerle announced to the Hungarian House of Representatives his decision that Hungary should seek to restrict its ties to Austria to a personal union. This provoked giddy joy throughout the agitated country, which was politically so touchy and impressionable. The leader of the opposition, Michael Karolyi, took advantage of the hour by immediately advocating

511See also Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 302 ff.

512The Emperor had already promised Wekerle an independent Hungarian army even before the latter became Minister President. At a meeting of the marshals, which took place at the start of January 1918, the Emperor had asked the military paladins of his realm whether the Army should be divided while the war was still in progress or after it was concluded. Except for GO Archduke Joseph, everyone present were against any action that would threaten the unity of the Army during the war (Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 210 ff. Archduke Joseph, Vol. V, pp. 870 ff. Polzer-Hoditz, "Kaiser Karl" [Vienna, 1929], p. 545). Afterwards many plans were developed for the eventual division of the Army. For Magyar attitudes in 1918, see also Spizmüller-Harmersbach, "Der letzte österreichisch-ungarische Ausgleich und der Zusammenbruch der Monarchie" (Berlin, 1929), pp. 79 ff.

wide-ranging measures; these included not only the separation from Austria, but also the immediate initiation of separate peace negotiation with the enemy powers and the return of Hungarian soldiers to defend Hungarian soil. The last demand in particular would have extraordinarily disastrous military consequences. But an even heavier blow fell on the next day when Graf Tisza, still considered the strongest man in the country, pronounced shocking words in Parliament - "We have lost the war." At the same time, in a few sentences the former Minister President renounced his entire political past - his belief that the best way to jealously guard Hungarian interests was in partnership with Austria and in alliance with Germany. He had always been the strongest supporter of the latter within Hungary.

Until now the field armies and their commanders had been able to observe the many difficult political storms at home from a distance; the troops had been little affected. But now attempts to prepare the men for the future with patriotic education had failed, and the Imperial manifesto created a new, bitter, and confusing situation. The Army order which accompanied the manifesto (quoted earlier) wasn't very well-suited for providing the soldiers a sure path out of their moral dilemma. In many instances the higher-ranking generals tried to keep information about the manifesto from reaching the front. When the news did find its way to the troops, inevitably at this late hour it could only accelerate a collapse which by now could hardly be averted. Creation of national states meant the creation of national armies with their own agenda, which could be determined only by the needs of the various individual states. Karolyi's call for Hungarian troops to return home was a temptation for many. Tisza's terrible revelation snatched hope away from the last soldiers whose faith had been unshaken.

When the high command recognized that the manifesto was having a destructive influence, they sent general staff officers to the most important national councils in an attempt to win the new power-holders over to the idea that the dissolution of the Army should be prevented until the troops could return home. Influential representatives of the national groups would visit the front to encourage the troops to hold out. But the high command didn't realize that the emerging new states - including Karolyi's Hungary - already considered themselves to be allies of the Entente.

Wilson's response and its consequences

In the midst of this crisis for the Monarchy and its Army,

Wilson's much-delayed response to Austria-Hungary's request for negotiations finally arrived. His note was dated on the 18th, and was received in Vienna and Budapest on the 20th. Its wording was worse than our darkest fears.⁵¹³ The President asserted that since he'd published his fourteen points the conditions necessary to implement the tenth point had changed. In the interim the Czecho-Slovakian National Council had been recognized as a government at war with Austria-Hungary and the German Empire, and the aspirations of the Yugoslavs for freedom had also been recognized "to the greatest extent." The response continued, "The President therefore no longer is free to regard the mere autonomy of these nationalities as the basis for peace, but is compelled to state that these peoples and no one else should judge which measures of the Aus-Hung. government will suffice to satisfy their aspirations and their conception of their rights and standing as members of the family of nations."

On 21 October there arrived, after some delay, a report from the k.u.k. military plenipotentiary at Constantinople that Turkey had requested an armistice and separate peace from the Entente. Thus a second ally had fallen away in the Balkans and the Near East.⁵¹⁴

Wilson's note, which threw cold water on the Ballhausplatz's peace initiative, was equivalent to a death sentence for the Habsburg Monarchy. It recognized the full freedom of the Czecho-Slovaks to negotiate. After the Poles and Italians had already renounced the state, the Romanians of Transylvania were seeking to do the same. The President's emphatic words put the seal on the large-scale destructive process throughout the Danube area.

On 21 October the Emperor assembled a Crown Council in Vienna to prepare a response to Wilson; they didn't view the situation as quite so hopeless. They wanted to interpret the note to say that Vienna should come to an understanding directly with the Czechs and South Slavs.⁵¹⁵ At any rate, as Burian emphasized, the Hungarians would have to be extremely cooperative with the Slovaks as well as with the Yugoslavs. Wekerle stated that the government at Budapest would now consider a trialistic solution to the South Slavic problem. However, the time when this tragically delayed decision could make a difference had long

513Burian, pp. 303 ff. Kerchnawe, p. 58

514Pomiankowski, p. 386. Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 306

515Glaise-Horstenau, "Katastrophe", pp. 319 ff. Opocensky, pp. 302 ff.

past. The assembled leaders didn't decide how to respond to Washington.

GO Arz addressed the military situation, stating that it was essential to quickly conclude peace. After the collapse of Bulgaria and Turkey the enemy would be free to deploy 27 to 30 divisions in the Balkans, against which we'd only be able to oppose 18½ German and Aus-Hung. divisions (assuming that Romania didn't re-enter the war). With this force we could hold the Danube-Sava-Drina river lines for a while if no further difficulties arose. But the domestic political situation was exerting a powerful influence on the reliability of the troops; any day there might be painful surprises at the fronts. "If order isn't restored in the interior in a short while, Bolshevism could appear in the Army within 14 days."⁵¹⁶ With thorough reasoning the Chief of the General Staff refuted the accusation by the Hungarian Minister President that the AOK was endangering the defense of the Kingdom by refusing to send Hungarian troops home. Arz demonstrated that the allied high commands had done everything possible to dispel the danger which developed after the collapse of the Macedonian front. When the crisis developed all available divisions had been quickly sent to the battlefield, although by chance they didn't include Hungarian troops. He reminded the council that the Southwestern front was facing an enemy force that was ready to attack and had been reinforced by divisions from the Western powers, and that all the men deployed there would be needed for its defense. It was impossible to simply pull Hungarian divisions from the front; this could be accomplished only gradually as other divisions became available to replace them or as their sectors could be covered by extending the lines of neighboring formations. Shipment of each infantry division, along with its supporting services, required 60 to 70 hundred-axle trains, and it would take a long time to move them due to lack of coal and the condition of the over-worked rail lines. The transfer of entire units and HQ couldn't be achieved in a twinkling of an eye.⁵¹⁷

The deepening Hungarian crisis

To calm the Hungarians and, if possible, to strengthen the southeastern borders the Emperor had meanwhile decided to summon from Tyrol GO Archduke Joseph, who was the most popular Army commander in the lands of St Stephen's Crown, and to entrust him with the supreme command on the Balkan front. On 22 October the Archduke met with the Monarch in the Wartholz castle near

516Arz, "Kampf und Sturz der Kaisermächte" (Vienna, 1934), p. 110

517Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 327 ff.

Reichenau and declared himself ready to take over the job on the Southeastern front; to succeed he asked only to be given enough troops, primarily Hungarians whom he could trust to defend the soil of their homeland. The Archduke asserted that the morale of the Hungarian regiments in Tyrol was deteriorating. Now it would still be possible to bring them back home in orderly fashion; soon, however, they would leave on their own responsibility, and no one would be able to hinder them. The Chief of the General Staff, who'd been summoned by the Emperor to the meeting with the Archduke, pointed out that the great Italian offensive was about to start and that the removal of the Hungarian units would have dangerous consequences. But Archduke Joseph empathically demanded that the regiments should entrain immediately, while it was still possible to save the King and the fatherland. "It's better to lose Venetia, which we have to evacuate anyway, than to concede a single millimeter of Hungarian territory!"⁵¹⁸ GO Arz was unable to prevail with his objections, and with a heavy heart he had to give in.

In that same evening the Emperor promoted GO Archduke Joseph to Field Marshal and named him to command FM Kövess' Army Group. FM Kövess in turn would take over the Archduke's original command in Tyrol. Apparently because of the first reports of mutinies on the Balkan front (which we'll describe later), the Monarch also basically promised the new commander that he'd be given the Hungarian regiments from the Southwest as soon as the situation of the railroads would permit. Before moving to Hungary the Archduke would return to Tyrol to pacify the Hungarian troops stationed there.

In Budapest the accumulating political tension led to an explosion in Parliament.⁵¹⁹ On 22 October Karolyi once more issued wide-ranging radical demands, summarized by these points: separation from Austria and Germany, separate peace, independent foreign policy, and return of the troops. Karolyi ended his speech with a threat that if the cabinet didn't adopt all these demands he'd take matters into his own hands. Some Hungarians were already calling for their own king, to reside at Budapest, or for a republic. Goaded by Karolyi, Minister President Wekerle replied sharply and revealed that his cabinet was also considering whether to establish an independent state. He declared "We also want to guard the integrity of the country and intend to bring the Hungarian regiments home; we're already negotiating this issue."⁵²⁰ Thus the head of the government admitted that he too was convinced that the only responsibility

⁵¹⁸Archduke Joseph, Vol. VII, pp. 493 ff.

⁵¹⁹Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 326 ff.

of the Hungarian soldier now was to guard the lands of St Stephen's Crown. This idea, disseminated at such an hour within the ranks of the Habsburgs' multi-national Army, inevitably shook the framework of the battle fronts. Who would wish to bleed on the Piave or in the south Tyrolean Alps for a cause which had already been abandoned at home? Who would wish to perish on foreign soil to protect someone else's borders, especially in a "lost" war? The Monarchy's common armed forces would succumb to the urgent call for the men to return home. A small-scale attack would suffice to ruin them.

At this difficult hour the Emperor and Empress traveled in the evening of 22 October from Vienna to Budapest. Financial issues were the reason for this long-planned but always-postponed visit. But it was also prompted by sentiment in the Empress' entourage that Hungary - where the will of the nation to save their country from the general calamity at the last moment was becoming a frenzy - might provide a refuge for the dynasty, a role which the obviously-collapsing Austrian half of the Monarchy could no longer play.

On 23 October the Imperial-Royal couple came to Debreczen to open a university; they were encouraged by signs of true fidelity, expressed by a jubilant and enthusiastic crowd.⁵²¹ But in the House of Representatives at Budapest there was a lively outcry because when the King arrived he was greeted with Haydn's "Austrian" hymn (as prescribed for the k.u.k. Army). Then a report arrived that mutiny had broken out among Croatian soldiers in the Royal free city of Fiume⁵²²; the resultant tumult in the enraged House forced Wekerle's cabinet to resign that evening.

The Emperor's appeal to the Pope

The peace initiative to Wilson had thus far brought no tangible result. Therefore the Monarch wanted to avoid an Italian offensive and further pointless bloodshed with a message from the Aus-Hung. to the Italian government; it would state that a new large-scale battle would cost hundreds of thousands of men on each side without affecting the outcome of the war. Thus Italy might be deferred from attacking. But Minister Burian objected that such an approach would have the opposite effect on the enemy, giving them the impression that the Aus-Hung. Army were

520Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 64

521Werkmann, p. 293

522A large Yugoslav rally had taken place on this day at Zagreb, and it spread to other cities.

too weak to defend themselves. So the Emperor tried another idea. In the afternoon of 23 October he addressed a similar appeal to Pope Benedict XV through the Papal Nuncio at Vienna. It stated, "There are increasing signs of an Italian offensive against us. We anticipate it calmly and confidently. But since the war won't be decided in Venetia, and anyway will soon end, I ask Your Holiness to request the Italian government to abandon this plan on purely humanitarian grounds. With this deed Your Holiness could save the lives of many thousands of men."

A negative answer wasn't received at Vienna until four days later (on the 27th). The Holy Father didn't think that the Emperor's initiative could succeed. Nevertheless he would have been willing to approach the Italian government if the offensive (which had started two days earlier) hadn't already made the attempt pointless.⁵²³

e. Evaluation of the situation by the principal commanders

In these fateful days there was frightful tension along the front. Shocking news arrived from the interior. The men learned about impending revolution and about the wide-ranging promises of the Emperor, which would grant autonomy to the various nations of the Monarchy. They also knew that a note had been received from Wilson, in which the Czechs had been recognized as a belligerent nation. Rumors were afoot that Hungary was separating from Austria, that new national states were being formed, and that armistice negotiations were imminent. But all the information was confused by the time it got to the trenches. No one knew anything definite, since the field mail service had been stopped and leave had been canceled. These measures made the field forces all the more mistrustful. Wild stories were circulating, even far up the chain of command, about rebellions in Tyrol due to hunger, about the proclamation of a republic in Bohemia, and about invasions of the Banat and Transylvania by Serbs and Romanians.

The analysis by the army groups and armies

In the midst of this gloomy, nervous period new fighting broke out on 21 October on the Asiago plateau, in the Mt Sisemol area. The Tyrol Army Group HQ expected the Italians and their allies to

523Arz, "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges", p. 333. Opocensky, p. 341

now open a major attack against the k.u.k. 11th Army. They wanted to evacuate the positions near Asiago, since they believed the troops were no longer capable of defending them.

On 21 October the Tyrol Army Group HQ reported to Baden "We must make some important decisions. 11th Army may soon come under serious attack. Army HQ doubts they'll be able to prevent a breakthrough. Army Group HQ unfortunately must concur with this opinion. Army Group HQ will therefore issue an order today that decisive fighting is to be avoided. 11th Army HQ has authority to decide the moment to start the retreat [into the positions prepared north of Asiago]. We are aware of the significance and seriousness of this decision. If the situation doesn't change, 11th Army HQ intend to start the retreat in the evening of the 22nd."

On 22 October the fighting on the mountain front temporarily tapered off, so 11th Army stayed in place. Except for the usual artillery fire, it was also quiet along the Piave. A report which FM Boroevic's Army Group sent to Baden on this day still judged that the situation and attitude of the troops were satisfactory. GdK Schönburg had stated, "The military situation of 6th Army is good for now. The Piave front is strong, the Army ready for battle. There are no indications that the morale of the troops has been substantially damaged by the latest events on other fronts and in the interior of the Monarchy. Thus there is reason to hope that if the enemy attack in the immediate future they will be defeated. But I don't think it's probable that the enemy will in fact open a major offensive now against 6th Army's front. Presently they don't have sufficient numerical superiority to succeed. Therefore it would be prudent for them to wait until circumstances are more favorable for an attack. The enemy anticipate that at any moment we'll evacuate Venetia. Therefore they intend to attack our Army during the retreat. Although the condition and morale of the men gives us a measure of confidence that the Piave can be defended for some time, I am of the opinion that the Aus-Hung. troops wouldn't be able to conduct a long retreat in contact with an opponent who has undisputed air superiority and undoubtedly a large number of tanks."

The commander of the Isonzo Army, GO Wurm, reported that his situation was in general good, and that the enemy's deployment and activity unchanged. There were no signs that an offensive was imminent. For the time being it seemed that the high water in the Piave precluded a major offensive; only smaller operations downstream from Ponte di Piave were possible. The condition of

the troops in the Isonzo Army was good. But unit strength "continued to sink badly, and was already a critical problem for the artillery on the lower Piave." The lack of all types of supplies was depressing; the uncertain conditions at home would inevitably have negative consequences at the front. GO Wurm believed that a major Italian attack still wasn't about to start anywhere along the front of Boroevic's Army Group. The enemy would probably carry out limited operations in the Grappa area for reasons of military prestige. It was also possible that the Italians hoped that by winning local successes they could cause our entire front to collapse; perhaps they believed that the k.u.k. Army had already been ripped apart and undermined like the Russian Army in 1917. General Oberst Wurm had ordered reserves to shift to the area between the Brenta and the Piave so as to ensure the security of this endangered area. The most important objective should be restoral of order in the interior.

FM Boroevic was of the opinion that now and for the immediate future we had to be prepared for a great offensive, even if for the time being the enemy were only able to make limited attacks. Italy would have to strike for reasons of politics and prestige. The Italians had in fact been preparing to attack since July and perhaps were ready. They had recently moved divisions into the area between the Montello and the Brenta. But FM Boroevic felt that these reinforcements still weren't enough to carry out a large-scale operation. Otherwise he endorsed the opinion of GO Wurm that a large attack over the Piave wasn't expected for now due to the high waters.

The HQ of the Belluno Armeegruppe, on the other hand, believed that the Italian offensive against our Piave front was imminent, and that it perhaps would include the sector between the Brenta and the Piave. However, there were few definite clues. Reconnaissance had been greatly hampered by the week-long rains and the poor visibility in the mountains.

The Tyrol Army Group HQ believed that the increased artillery fire in their sector was a diversion to conceal an upcoming Italian offensive on the Piave. As the fire of the guns on the Asiago plateau continued to intensify, the Hungarian troops of the k.u.k. 11th Army stationed in reserve became very uneasy. They were seized with apprehension that they might have to return to the fighting here just a few days before they were scheduled to return home. Everyone already knew that the Hungarian regiments were supposed to leave Tyrol. On 23 October Archduke Joseph, who'd been named to command the Balkan front, issued a farewell order - including a Magyar translation - in which he

pledged that the Hungarian troops of the Tyrol Army Group would soon be shipped home so they could take over the defense of the menaced southeastern border of their country and of the eastern Carpathians.

The Emperor's last general order

On the same day (23 October) the Emperor issued a last appeal to the Army and Navy which read: "Soldiers! The day of peace and of your homecoming draws near. The responsibilities which you still have to carry out at this moment are especially difficult. Your soldierly virtues, intelligence and willingness to sacrifice toady more than ever will affect the future of all peoples of the Monarchy, without exception or distinction. Your discipline, proven in countless battles, your loyalty and the iron obedience which has enabled you to accomplish incomparable deeds of glory, remain as always the granite rock on which all attacking waves must break. This is a time of serious disorder, which must not spread to the Army or Navy. The oath which you soldiers swore before the Almighty, like your duties, is clear and simple. Its meaning cannot be changed or explained away. All peoples of the Monarchy, in the same manner, have their home in the armed forces; this has enabled them to achieve great deeds. Just as during the war, the armed forces will overcome the present dangers, calmly and confidently, honorably and loyally, for the benefit of all the peoples! God bless you!"⁵²⁴

These proud words of the Emperor could no longer evoke the desired response. It was already too late for them to find their way to the soldiers' hearts. The radicals undermining the system had done their work all too well.

The first mutinies near the front

Rebellion was already breaking out on 23 October in the Royal Hungarian free city of Fiume, which was in FM Boroevic's area of responsibility. A March company of the Croatian IR # 79 mutinied, disarmed some Hungarian Honved, and then raised the Croatian flag over the barracks. The mutineers plundered buildings and engaged in fighting against Assistenz troops. These events coincided almost to the hour with the first large-scale cases of disobedience at the front.

In the evening of 23 October FM Boroevic reported to Baden of problems with units - particularly the March formations - of

524This general order was composed by General Staff Major Glaise-Horstenau.

various nationalities, especially those with Hungarian and South Slavic troops; they were asserting that due to the formation of new national states they were no longer obliged to fight on the Italian front and that they must hurry back to protect their own homelands. Now it had been learned that seven march companies of IR 39 (Magyars and Romanians) intended to depart on 24 October. Personnel of IR 69 (Magyars) had already left the area where their March units were stationed on the 21st; it wasn't possible to attack them. FM Boroevic emphasized in his report, "The Imperial manifesto and the speeches of political leaders in the parliaments and national assemblies have confused various units. Tisza's assertion that 'We have lost the war' is particularly unfortunate. The results could be incalculable. It's urgently necessary that intensive propaganda should be initiated by the legislative bodies and the interior that will make it clear to the troops that common measures are being taken to defend the homeland on all fronts and that troops of all nations have to defend their country shoulder to shoulder, wherever they are stationed."

While this shocking information was being telegraphed from Udine to Baden, alarming reports also arrived from the Belluno Armeegruppe. Here the round of mutinies was led off by a unit in reserve, the 83 Hon Inf Bde (HIR 25 and 26) of the Croatian 42 Hon ID; they refused to march to the front so they could relieve the regiments of their Division stationed in the Asolone sector. A few hours later some Bosniaks of 55 ID (two companies of BH IR 4) also refused to obey orders. A March company of the same Regiment was sent to restore order, but instead joined the mutineers. The rebels stated that "after the peace offer and the Emperor's proclamation the war is over"; finally they had to be disarmed by two battalions from the Carinthian IR 7. Finally some Czechs of SchR 25 wanted to march back to Udine; they stayed in place only because they feared to collide with Magyar troops.

Thus on 23 October the events at home caused the first outbreak right behind the front. Attempts were being made to pacify the mutinous detachments and to contain the contamination by quickly separating mutineers from the troops in the line. But on the 24th the disturbances spread to the Hungarians of the k.u.k. 11th Army. And at this highly critical moment the Italians opened their offensive.

**B. The last defensive battle on the Southwestern front,
24 to 29 October**

1. The Italian plan of attack

At the start of October the Viennese government had still hoped that since the Monarchy and its allies had requested an armistice the Italians wouldn't initiate any more attacks. Many of the higher-ranking commanders also doubted whether the enemy would risk an offensive, feeling they might prefer to await the apparently imminent end of the war without any more fighting.

Hesitation of the Italian high command

G.Lt Diaz had weighty reasons for postponing his offensive for so long. In his opinion any preparations to attack suffered from the unfavorable location of the Italian positions. In particular Diaz feared that his opponents could threaten the entire right wing of the Italian forces on the flank from their strong point on the Grappa massif. As late as 25 September he ordered the commander of 8th Italian Army, G.Lt Caviglia, to prepare for a "counterattack" in case the enemy struck from the Grappa mountains.⁵²⁵

On the other hand, G.Lt Diaz had the great advantage of numerous and excellent transportation lines. He could spread his reserves over a wide enough area to simultaneously assault the Aus-Hung fronts in the mountains east of the Astico and in the Venetian plains. But he felt his forces still weren't strong enough. Intelligence which reached the Italian HQ indicated that their opponents had sent just one division from Venetia to the Balkans; it also seemed that Germany was sending only a few divisions to Serbia. General Lord Cavan, commanding the English divisions in Italy, was upset because the Italian high command was delaying to attack for so long; he demanded that the English auxiliary troops should be moved back to France. Acquiescing with Cavan's demand, at the end of September G.Lt Diaz let one of the three English divisions stationed on the Asiago plateau (7 ID) prepare to depart⁵²⁶; the 23 ID were also in reserve, leaving just 48 ID in

525Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie del Piave", pp. 102 ff.

526TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The English 7 ID would only be allowed to actually depart once replaced by a worn-out unit from France (47 ID had been selected for this purpose). In the event the exchange didn't take place, as noted below. On the other

their old sector.

Toward the end of September, when Bulgaria had already asked for an armistice and the Turks were collapsing under the English blows, the Italian Prime Minister asked Marshal Foch "to decide on his own responsibility whether the situation would now permit an offensive by the Italian Army against Austria-Hungary."⁵²⁷ For this purpose the Italian high command asked that their allies send ten worn-out divisions, which could relieve battle-ready Italian divisions on the western and southern Tyrolean fronts and make them available for the assault. And at the same time G.Lt Diaz expressed hope that the inter-allied Supreme Military Council would change their minds about removing English troops from his front if the Italian high command decided to start an offensive. Marshal Foch, who had long accused his Italian allies of weakness, responded to Prime Minister Orlando on 28 September that now "when the entire German front between the North Sea and the Vosges is wavering, the only question can be whether the Italian high command believes they can face the risks which are inherent in any military operation."

It was now clear to the Italians that if they wanted to take part in the apparently imminent final victory of the Entente - and succeed in winning support from their allies for their territorial demands at the peace negotiations - they'd have to make a major effort this year. News arrived on 29 September that the Bulgarian request for an armistice had already been granted by the Entente. In mid-September Austria-Hungary had made new steps toward peace. The Italian government were concerned that the Danube Monarchy would follow Bulgaria's example and leave the war; they began to urgently press G.Lt Diaz to attack. Confidence in complete success now overcame all the doubts and hesitation in the Italian Commando Supremo. In the last days of September G.Lt Diaz, after his long reluctance and under pressure from his government, decided to strike the Danube Monarchy which was already shaken to its foundations. On 3 October Orlando could report to Marshal Foch that the Italian Army would attack with its full strength.

G.Lt Diaz's concept

And in fact G.Lt Diaz was now going all out. He had meanwhile

hand, the strength of the English infantry declined in September when all brigades were reduced from four to three battalions and the excess units went to France (English Official History, "Italy", pp. 260-261).

527Tournès, p. 297

abandoned Marshal Foch's suggestion to attack on the Asiago plateau and in the Pasubio area; now he intended to strike first not in these sectors but at the point where the mountain and the Piave fronts came together. From here a deep phalanx would break into the opposing lines as far as Vittorio, separating the parts of the Aus-Hung. forces on the mountain walls of the Trentino from those in the Venetian plains; then both groups could be rolled up from the flanks.

G.Lt Diaz based his confidence in a victorious conclusion on three factors:

1. Preparations for the great offensive were already complete, so the divisions chosen for the attack could be brought together quickly and deployed in the chosen sector in sufficient strength to guarantee numerical superiority.
2. Although the Italians hadn't been able to conceal signs that an attack was imminent, their opponents were deceived regarding the timing and direction of the main thrust; thus they wouldn't be able to quickly move their own troops to the decisive point.
3. The Italian Army had an enormous superiority in equipment and armaments, including guns, trench mortars and ammunition.

Diaz had available 57 divisions (51 Italian, 3 English, 2 French and 1 Czecho-Slovakian) plus an American regiment for a total of 704 battalions. He had more than 7700 guns (including 250 English and 200 French), and this artillery could fire 6 million rounds. Of this mighty force, 21 divisions with about 2750 guns were already at the front between the Brenta and the sea. They made up G.Lt Giardino's 4th Army in the Grappa sector, G.Lt Caviglia's 8th on the Montello, and the Duke of Aosta's 3rd Army on the lower Piave. To give the great blow sufficient force and overwhelming strength, 21 additional divisions would deploy opposite the area to be attacked, along with 1600 guns of all calibers and 500 trench mortars; these units would come from quiet sectors and the lines of communication. The breakthrough would be carried out by 22 divisions (including 2 English and 1 French) under two armies that took over parts of the existing lines of the 4th and 8th Armies. These new forces were designated Armies # 10 (under English General Lord Cavan) and 12 (under French General Graziani). 12th Army would enter the front between the 4th and 8th in the Mt Tomba - Pederobba sector and the 10th Army would do so between the 8th and 3rd opposite Papadopoli Island. 19 Italian divisions (15 infantry and 4 cavalry) plus the Czecho-Slovakian ID and the American regiment were deployed in the second line to back up these armies and to serve as a strategic reserve for the high command. Six of the reserve infantry divisions made up 9th Army (under G.Lt Morrone), and the

four cavalry divisions formed a corps under G.Lt the Count of Turin; both were directly under the Commando Supremo.

Deployment of the breakthrough group was completed between 26 September and 10 October. The troops marched mostly at night. To keep their intentions secret the Italian high command left the same divisions in position on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau and sought with large-scale storm troop operations on 11 and 21 October to divert their opponents' attention toward the mountain front and away from the target area. Also, Generals Cavan and Graziani weren't finally given their assignments until 6 and 11 October (respectively). Orders for the creation and deployment of 10th and 12th Armies were issued on 14 October. Very careful preparations were made to cross the Piave at many points, covered by overwhelming artillery fire. A new series of pioneer companies was formed and some of these units equipped with trucks for greater mobility. Twenty large military bridges and enough equipment to build 4500 meters of plank bridges were available. Furthermore a large number of boats were brought from the lagoons, rivers and canals of upper Italy to assist the operation. The troops who'd cross over were given rations for three days, with a reserve supply for five more. Enormous quantities of rifle cartridges were stored at the crossing points, where they could be shipped over the river and its islands by cables simultaneously with the troops. It was hoped that thus the bridgeheads established on the opposite side could be securely held and the troops would be spared the kind of setback which their opponents had suffered in the June battle.

The attack was originally supposed to start on 16 October. In the two preceding nights the English and French troops marched into their deployment areas. But several days previously the heavens had opened their gates above the fields of upper Italy, bringing flood waters into the Piave. Also some of the batteries still weren't in position. The high command had to postpone the attack. In the days which followed 400 more guns could be taken from the quiet sectors. They were sent to the 4th Italian Army in the Grappa area so that the Aus-Hung. front could be assaulted simultaneously in the Venetian plains and in the mountains between the Piave and the Brenta with assurance of success.

The final order for the offensive

The concept outlined above was the basis of the final order for the offensive which G.Lt Diaz issued on 21 October. The operation would include two attacks. The Brenta group (4th and 12th Armies) were instructed to first advance over the Grappa

massif, driving a wedge between the Aus-Hung. positions in Tyrol and those in the Italian plains. The other thrust - the main attack - would be made by 8th Army from the Montello and by 10th Army over the middle course of the Piave. The Italians wanted the thrust by 8th Army toward Vittorio to separate the k.u.k. 6th and Isonzo Armies and to cut the main transportation line of 6th Army, depriving that force of supplies of food and ammunition. 10th Army would face east to cover 8th Army's advance and to draw the Aus-Hung. reserves on the Livenza toward themselves.

After Vittorio was reached, Diaz planned to continue the attack toward the mountains. On one side 12th Army would advance against Feltre to fall upon the rear of the opposing group on the Grappa massif; on the other, 8th Army would drive to Belluno and from there to Agordo and Pieve di Cadore. Meanwhile the corps of 4th Army, after thrusting over the Grappa mountains, were to advance into the Cismon and Sugana valleys and attack the Aus-Hung. troops stationed in Tyrol from the flank.

To support the attack by 4th and 12th Armies, it was intended that units of 8th and 10th Armies would make a preliminary assault along the central Piave with the objective of capturing Papadopoli Island and thus making it easier to carry out the principal river crossing later.

The attack by 4th Army in the Grappa mountains was now scheduled to start on 24 October; it would be accompanied by the left wing of 12th Army. G.Lt Montuori's 6th Army, stationed on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, would help out with feint attacks and artillery fire. The crossing of the Piave by the right wing of 12th Army and by 8th and 10th Armies was supposed to start in the evening of the same day. 3rd Army, making up the right wing of the front along the lower Piave, were ordered to pin down their opponents. Similarly the 1st and 7th Armies, on the southern and western Tyrolean fronts, were to carry out diversionary assaults.

Between the Brenta and the middle course of the Piave G.Lt Diaz had 33 divisions to oppose 31½ Aus-Hung. divisions. Thus the forces seemed to be roughly equal in strength, but in fact this wasn't the case. Between the Brenta and the upper Piave there were 11 Italian divisions against 12 Aus-Hung. On the other hand, the 22 divisions between Pederobba and Ponte di Piave, which were to deliver the main blow, had to fight just 19 Aus-Hung. units. The Italians had an overwhelming advantage in airplanes and artillery. At the decisive point of the front they had more than 2600 field and 600 heavy guns against only 1200 field and 150 heavy guns of the k.u.k. forces.

2. The orders of battle⁵²⁸

The Italian and allied forces

Commando Supremo = King Vittorio Emanuele III
 Chief of Staff = Armando Diaz

- 7th Army (Giulio Tassoni)

III Corps (Vittorio Conte)

- . 75 ID [by Ortler] - Had just 5th Alpini Raggrup [2 Alp Group with Bns Intra, Saluzzo, Dronero; 15 Alp Group with Bns Mondovi, V. Orco, M. Ortler; 18 Alp Group with Bns V. Chiesa, M. Adamello, Ivrea], plus 9 Mountain Arty Group
- . 5 ID [by Adamello] - 4 Alp Raggrup [7 Alp Group with Bns V. Baltea, M. Mandrone, M. Cavento; 19 Alp Group with Bns Edolo, V. Intelvi]; 7 Alp Raggrup [8 Alp Group with Bns M. Clapier, Pinerolo, Susa, Tolmezzo; 16 Alp Group with Bns M. Rosa, V. Brenta, M. Matajur]; 7 Mountain Arty Group
- . Independent - 6 Alp Raggrup [12 Alp Group with Bns V. Cordevole, Pallanza, M. Granero; 14 Alp Group with Bns Fenestrelle, Moncenisio]

XXV Corps (Edoardo Ravazza)

Corps was in Judicarien sector

- . 4 ID - Bde Torino [81 & 82]; 3 Bersag Bde [17 Regt with Bns 64, 65 & 66; 18 Regt with Bns 67, 68, 69]; 41 Arty Regt
- . 11 ID - Bdes Pavia [27 & 28], Perugia [129 & 130]; 39 Arty Regt

Air Units

- . 9th Group - Fighter Sqdn # 72, Recce Sqdn # 112; Bomber/Recce Section # 6
- . 20th Group - Fighter Sqdn # 74; Recce Sqdns # 113, 120, 136

- 1st Army (Guglielmo, Conte Pecore-Giraldi)

XXIX Corps (Vittorio de Albertis)

Corps by Rovereto with just one Div, later reinforced by 32 ID

- . 26 ID - Bdes Pistoia [35 & 36], Vicenza [277, 278 & 279]; 12

⁵²⁸TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The original text doesn't include an Italian order of battle. The divisional assignments, however, are shown on the map at Beilage 31; information about composition of the allied divisions is derived from unit histories. The outline Aus-Hung. order of battle appears on Beilage 23; see the detailed order of battled dated 15 October (above) for the composition of individual divisions.

Arty Regt

V Corps (Giovanni Ghersi)

Corps was by Pasubio

- . 55 ID - Bdes Liguria [157 & 158], Piceno [235 & 236]; 15 Arty
- . 69 ID - Bde Pallanza [249 & 250]; 4 Bersag Bde [14 Regt with Bns 40, 54 & 61; 20 Regt with Bns 70, 71 & 72]; 31 Arty Regt

X Corps (Giovanni Cattaneo)

Corps was by Arsiero

- . 32 ID - Bdes Acqui [17 & 18], Volturbo [217 & 218]; 9 Arty
 - . Attached to 32 ID - 4 Alp Group (Bns M. Arvernis, Feltre, M. Pavione)
- . 6 ID - Bde Valtellina [65 & 66]; 3 Alp Raggrup [3 Alp Group with Bns V. Cenischio, Cuneo, M. Pasubio; 11 Alp Group, which was serving detached, had Bns M. Tonale, V. Tanaro, V. Maira, V. Camenica]; 16 Arty Regt

Air Units

. 3rd Group - Recce Sqdns # 1, 61, 134; Fighter Sqdn # 75;

Idrovolanti Sqdns # 1, 2

. 16th Group - Recce Sqdns # 31, 121; Fighter Sqdn # 71

- **6th Army** (Luca Montuori)

XII Corps (Giuseppe Pennella)

Corps was by Asiago

- . 20 ID - Bdes Parma [49 & 50], Lario [233 & 234]; 58 Arty Regt
- . 48 UK ID - 143 Bde (5, 6 & 7 R War Bns), 144 Bde (4, 6 & 7 Glouc Bns), 145 Bde (4 O.B.L.I., 1 Bucks/O.B.L.I., 4 R Berks); 240 & 241 Field Arty Bdes
- . 27 ID (in reserve) - Bdes Marche [55 & 56], Taro [207 & 208]; 29 Arty Regt

XIII Corps (Ugo Sani)

Corps was by Mount Sisemol

- . 24 French ID - IR 50, 108, 126; 34th Arty Regt
- . 14 ID - Bdes Pinerolo [13 & 14], Lecce [265 & 266]; 51 (?) Arty

XX Corps (Giuseppe Ferrari)

Corps was by Col del Rosso

- . 29 ID - Bdes Treviso [99 & 100], Murge [259 & 260]; 59 Arty
- . 7 ID - Bdes Bergamo [25 & 26], Ancona [69 & 70]; 49 Arty Regt

Air Units

. 7th Group - Recce Sqdns # 26, 32, 33

. 24th Group - Fighter Sqdn # 83, plus a Recce/Bomber Section

- **4th Army** = Gaetano Giardino

IX Corps (Emilio De Bono)

Corps was on the Brenta River

- . 17 ID - Bdes Abruzzi [57 & 58], Basilicata [91 & 92]; 1st Arty
- . 18 ID - Bdes Calabria [59 & 60], Bari [139 & 140]; 33 Arty Regt
- . 21 ID (in reserve) - Bdes Siena [31 & 32], Forli [43 & 44]; 28 Arty Regt

VI Corps (Stefano Lombardi)

Corps was by Mount Grappa

- . 22 ID - Bdes Roma [79 & 80], Firenze [127 & 128]; 46 Arty Regt
- . 15 ID - Bdes Cremona [21 & 22], Pesaro [239 & 240]; 19 Arty
- . 59 ID - Bdes Modena [41 & 42], Massa Carrara [251 & 252]; 50 Arty Regt

XXX Corps (Umberto Montanari)

Corps was by Mount Grappa

- . 47 ID - Bdes Bologna [39 & 40], Lombardia [73 & 74]; 57 Arty
- . 50 ID - Bdes Aosta [5 & 6], Udine [95 & 96]; unknown artillery
- . 80 ID (in reserve) - 8 Alp Raggrup [6 Alp Group with Bns M. Levanna, Aosta, V. Toce; 13 Alp Group with Bns M. Antelao, Pieve di Cadore, V. Cismon]; 9 Alp Raggrup [17 Alp Group had Bns M. Delmo, Exilles, M. Suello; 20 Alp Group had Bns M. Cervino, Cividale, M. Saccarello]; 1 Mountain Arty Group

Air Units

- . 2nd Group - Recce Sqdns # 27, 48
- . 6th Group - Fighter Sqdns # 76, 81
- . 11th Group - Recce Sqdns # 22, 36
- . Independent - Recce Sqdn # 21; Recce/Bomber Sqdn # 57

- **12th Army** (French General Jean Graziani)

XII French Corps (also led by Graziani)

Corps deployed from Mount Tomba to the Piave

- . 70 Italian ID - Bdes Re [1 & 2], Trapani [149 & 150]; 23 Arty
- . 23 French ID - IR 78, 107, 138; 21 Arty Regt; 5th Bn of 112 Heavy Arty Regt
- . Corps troops (French) - 21 Chasseur a Cheval Regt; 52 Arty Regt, 112 Heavy Arty Regt (2 bns)

Ist Corps (Donato Etna)

Corps was in reserve by Assolo

- . 24 ID - Bdes Taranto [141 & 142], Gaeta [263 & 264]; 21 Arty
- . 52 ID - 1st Alp Raggrup [1st Alp Group with Bns Tirano, M. Stelvio, Morbegno; 9 Alp Group with Bns Verona, Bassano,

M. Baldo, Sette Communi]; 2 Alp Raggrup [5 Alp Group with Bns Splurga, Vesone, Valtellina; 10 Alp Group with Bns Vicenza, M. Berico, V. Adige]; 10 Mountain Arty Group

Air Units

- . French Recce Sqdns # 22 and 254
- . Also one fighter section

- **8th** Army (Enrico Caviglia)

XXVII Corps (Antonio Cavaliere di Giorgi)

Corps was in the Cornuda-Vidor sector

- . 51 ID - Bde Reggio [45 & 46], Campania [135 & 136]; 20 Arty
- . 66 ID (in reserve) - Bdes Cuneo [7 & 8], Messina [93 & 94]; 7 Arty Regt
- . 2 ID (in reserve) - Bdes Regina [9 & 10], Livorno [33 & 34]; 45 Arty Regt

XXII Corps (Giuseppe Vacari)

Corps was by the Montello

- . 1st Assault Div - 1st Assault Group [10 & 20 Assault Parties; 1st Bersag Bn], 2 Assault Group [12 & 13 Parties; 7 Bersag Bn], 3 Assault Group [8 & 22 Parties; 9 Bersag Bn]; 5th Sqdn of 18 Cav Regt; 9 Mountain Arty Group (9 Mtn Arty also listed in 57 ID?)
- . 60 ID - Bdes Piemonte [3 & 4], Porto Maurizio [253 & 254]; 30 Arty Regt
- . Independent - 5th Bersag Regt (detached from 5 Bersag Bde; had Bns 14, 24 & 46)
- . 57 ID (in reserve) - Bdes Pisa [29 & 30], Mantova [113 & 114]; 3 Arty Regt
- . 12 ID (in reserve) - Bde Casale [11 & 12]; 5 Bersag Bde [5 Regt was detached; 19 Regt had Bns 41, 42, 45]; 54 Arty Regt

VIII Corps (Francesco Grazioli)

Corps was by Nervesa

- . 48 ID - Bdes Tevere [215 & 216], Aquila [269 & 270]; 52 Arty
- . 58 ID - Bdes Piacenza [111 & 112], Lucca [163 & 164]; 14 Arty
- . 2 Assault Div (in reserve) - 4 Assault Group [14 & 25 Assault Parties; 3 Bersag Bn], 5 Assault Group [1 & 5 Parties; 15 Bersag Bn]; 6 Assault Group [6 & 30 Parties; 55 Bersag Bn]; 6th Sqdn of 18 Cav Regt; unknown artillery
- . 33 ID (in reserve) - Bdes Sassari [151 & 152], Bisagno [209 & 210]; 11 Arty Regt

XVIII Corps (Luigi Basso)

Corps was in deep reserve

- . 1st ID - Bdes Umbria [53 & 54], Emilia [119 & 120]; 25 Arty

- . 10 ID - Bde Toscana [77 & 78]; 1st Bersag Bde [6 Regt with Bns 6, 13 & 19; 12 Regt with Bns 21, 23 & 36]; 56 Arty Regt
- . 56 ID - Bdes Como [23 & 24], Ravenna [37 & 38]; 13 Arty Regt

Assault Corps (Francesco Grazioli)

The HQ had no troops assigned; 1st & 2nd Assault Divs were attached to other HQ; the Corps HQ later entered the line in the Montello sector

Air Units

- . 15th Group - Bomber Sqdn # 56, Recce Sqdn # 115
- . 19th Group - Recce Sqdns # 23, 114, 118
- . 23rd Group - Fighter Sqdns # 78 & 79

- **10th Army** (English General Frederick Cavan)

XIV UK Corps (James Babington)

Corps attacked Papadopoli Island

- . 23 UK ID - 68 Bde (10 & 11 NF, 12 DLI Bns), 69 Bde (11 W York, 8 Gr How, 10 Duke's), 70 Bde (8 KOYLI, 8 & 9 York and Lanc); 52 & 53 Field Arty Bdes
- . 7 UK ID - 20 Bde (2 Bord, 2 Gord Hld, 8 Devon), 22 Bde (2 Roy War, 1 RWF, 2/1 HAC), 91 Bde (2 Queen's, 1 S Staff, 22 Manch); 22 & 35 Field Arty Bdes

XI Corps (Giuseppe Paolini)

Corps deployed between Papadopoli Island and Ponte di Piave

- . 37 ID - Bdes Macerata [121 & 122], Foggia [280, 281 & 282]; 42 Arty Regt
- . 23 ID - 6 Bersag Bde [8 Regt with Bns 5, 12 & 38; 13 Regt with Bns 59, 60 & 62]; 7 Bersag Bde [2 Regt with Bns 4, 17 & 53; 3 Regt with Bns 18, 20 & 35]; 40 Arty Regt
- . Also attached by the end of the offensive in Nov - 332 American IR (from 31 Italian ID)

Independent in 10th Army

- . 1st (or 39) "Friuli" Cav Div (in reserve by Treviso) - 1st Bde [13 & 20 Cav Regts], 2 Bde [4 & 5 Cav Regts]; 1st Horse Arty Group

Air Units

- . 14 UK Air Wing - Recce Sqdns # 34, 39; Fighter Sqdns # 28, 66
- **3rd Army** (Emanuele Filiberto, Duca d'Aosta)

XXVIII Corps (Giovanni Croce)

Corps was by Naventa di Piave

- . 53 ID - Bdes Ionio [221 & 222], Potenza [271, 272 & 273]; unknown artillery
- . 25 ID - Bdes Ferrara [47 & 48], Avellino [231 & 232]; 8 Arty

XXVI Corps (Vittorio Alfieri)

On the Piave, down to the sea

- . 45 ID - Bdes Sesia [201 & 202], Cosenza [243 & 244]; 47 Arty Regt
- . 54 ID - Bdes Sardegna [1 & 2 Granatieri], Novara [153 & 154]; 6 Arty Regt

Air Units

- . 1st Group - Recce Sqdn # 131; Recce/Bomber Section # 5
- . 5th Group - Recce Sqdns # 28, 38, 39
- . 13th Group - Fighter Sqdns # 77, 80
- . "Special" Group - Bomber Sqdn # 9 plus two recce sections

- **9th Army** (Paolo Morrone)

Components were spread out in reserve behind 6, 4, 8, 10 and 3 Armies

XIV Corps (Pier Sagramoso)

- . 9 ID - Bde Catanzaro [141 & 142]; 2 Bersag Bde [7 Regt with Bns 8, 10 & 44; 11 Regt with Bns 27, 33 & 39]; 5 Arty Regt
- . 28 ID - Bdes Padova [117 & 118], Teramo [241 & 242]; 23 Arty
- . 34 ID - Bdes Venezia [83 & 84], Friuli [87 & 88]; 18 Arty Regt

XXIII Corps (Carlo Pettiti di Roreto)

- . 31 ID - Bdes Caserta [267 & 268], Veneto [255 & 256]; attached was the 332 American IR (Regt later to front with XI Corps); 44 Arty Regt
- . 61 ID - Bdes Catania [145 & 146], Arezzo [225 & 226]; 34 Arty
- . 6 Czecho-Slovak ID - 21 Bde [31 & 32], 22 Bde [33 & 34]; no assigned artillery

- Independent under **SHQ**

Cavalry Corps (Vittorio Emanuele di Savoia, Count of Turin)

Corps was in reserve north of Padua

- . 2 [40] Cav Div - 3 Bde [7 & 10 Regts], 4 Bde [6 & 25 Regts]; 2 Horse Arty Group
- . 3 [41] Cav Div - 5 Bde [12 & 24 Regts], 6 Bde [3 & 8 Regts]; 3 Horse Arty Group
- . 4 [42] Cav Div - 7 Bde [1 & 26 Regts], 8 Bde [19 & 28 Regts]; 4 Horse Arty Group

Independent Infantry Bde

- . Chieti Bde [123 & 124]

Miscellaneous

- . San Marco Marine Regt [4 bns - Monfalcone, Grado, Caorle and one other] - on the Piave
- . 16 Bersag Regt (Bns 57, 58 & 63) existed on paper, but hadn't been in line since Caporetto
- . Bersaglieri Bicycle Bns (mostly served behind lines on the lower Piave, not engaged; one Bn was attached to each of the two Assault Divs) - Bns # 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11 and 12 (the missing numbers had been dissolved in June)
- . Following cavalry regts served in the rear (on line of communication, etc.) - # 2, 9, 11, 14, 16 [minus two sqdns], 17, 21, 23 [minus two sqdns], 27, 29

Air Units

- . Five dirigibles
- . Heavy bomber Groups - 4 = Sqdns # 1, 5, 8, 13; 11 = Sqdns # 4, 6; 16 = Sqdns # 2, 7, 10
- . 10th Group (fighter) = Sqdns # 70, 82, 91
- . 22 Group (recce/bomber) = Sqdns # 87, 89

The Aus-Hung. forces

GO Archduke Joseph's Army Group (re-assigned on 26 October to FM Krobatin)

- . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (from the Swiss border to Tonale Pass)
 - . 164 Inf Bde
 - . 22nd Sch Div (with 163 Inf Bde attached)
 - . XX Corps (from the Tonale Pass to Lake Garda)
 - . 49th ID (with attached IR 50 from 19th ID)
 - . Riva Sector
 - . XXI Corps (from Lake Garda to the Col Santo)
 - . 3rd Cav Div
 - . 56th Sch Div
 - . Reserves near Rovereto - 159 Inf Bde; IR 111 (from 19th ID)
 - . XIV (Edelweiss) Corps (Col Santo to Mt Cimone)
 - . Kaiser Jaeger Div
 - . Half of 19th ID
 - . Reserves - 74th Hon ID (by Bozen), 10th CD (leaving Pergine by train for Belgrade)
- . 11th Army
 - . III Corps (Mt Cimone to Asiago)
 - . 6th Cav Div

- . 6th ID
- . 52nd ID
- . Reserves (by Pergine) - Half of 16th ID, a third of 5th ID
- . XIII Corps (Asiago to Mt di Val Bella)
 - . 27th ID
 - . Two-thirds of 38th Hon ID
 - . Reserves - Two-thirds of 5th ID by Roncogno; half of 16th ID and one third of 38th Hon ID by Levico
- . VI Corps (Mt di Val Bella to the Brenta River)
 - . 53rd ID
 - . 18th ID
 - . 39th Hon ID
 - . Reserves - Edelweiss Div (half at Bozen, half moving to Feltre)

FM von Boroeric's Army Group

- . The Belluno Armeegruppe
 - . XXVI Corps (from the Brenta to Mt Pertica)
 - . 40th Hon ID
 - . 4th ID
 - . Half of 42nd Hon ID
 - . Reserves - 28th ID west of Feltre; half of 42nd Hon ID marching to Fiera di Primiero
 - . I Corps (Mt Pertica to Mt Spinuccia)
 - . 48th ID
 - . 13th Sch Div
 - . 17th ID
 - . Reserves - 60th ID marching from S. Giustina to Feltre; 55th ID marching from Belluno to Feltre
 - . XV Corps (Mt Spinuccia to the Piave)
 - . 50th ID
 - . 20th Hon ID
 - . Reserves - 21st Sch Div (southwest of Belluno, near Trichiana)
- . 6th Army (along the Piave from Pederobba to Papadopoli Island)
 - . II Corps
 - . 31st ID
 - . 25th ID
 - . 11th Hon Cav Div
 - . 12th Reitende Sch Div
 - . Reserves - 34th ID east of Vittorio; 36th ID arriving (after 21 October) from Bozen in the Sacile area; 43rd Sch Div near Sacile
 - . XXIV Corps
 - . 41st Hon ID
 - . 51st Hon ID

- . Reserves - 10th ID south of Sacile
- . Army of the Isonzo (on the Piave, Papadopoli Island to the sea)
 - . XVI Corps
 - . 29th ID
 - . 7th ID
 - . Reserves - 201 Lst Inf Bde near Codognè; 26th Sch Div east of Pordenone
 - . IV Corps
 - . 64th Hon ID
 - . 70th Hon ID
 - . Reserves - 8th Cav Div north of Motta di Livenza; 44th Sch Div near Codroipo (latter under Army Group HQ)
 - . VII Corps
 - . 33rd ID
 - . 12th ID
 - . Reserves - 24th ID by Pramaggiore
 - . XXIII Corps
 - . 46th Sch Div
 - . 58th ID
 - . XXII Corps
 - . 14th ID
 - . 2nd ID
 - . Reserves - 57th ID near Portoguardo

3. Defensive victory in the Grappa mountains, 24-28 October

On 24 October, exactly one year after the breakthrough at Flitsch and Tolmein, the Italians opened their long-prepared offensive with a powerful cannonade between the Brenta and the Piave. Clouds and mist hung over the mountains, obscuring the battle which now raged in the Grappa area. It seemed that the end had now come for the old Habsburg Army. Thousands of guns were thundering; this was a truly terrible symphony, which heralded the last trial of arms for our unfortunate Army.

After powerful artillery and trench mortar fire, which reached its greatest strength around 7:00 AM, the enemy infantry attacked. Six divisions of the 4th Italian Army advanced against the positions of the Belluno Armeegruppe between the Col Caprile and Mt Spinuccia. Two more divisions stood ready in the second echelon. Two divisions of 12th Italian Army accompanied this thrust from the Mt Tomba area. East of the Brenta the Italians, English and French of the 6th Army on the Asiago plateau supported the attack with artillery fire and strong local thrusts.

For weeks the Aus-Hung. troops, worn down by hunger, had awaited the end of the war. They knew that armistice negotiations were imminent. But when they were again attacked on 24 October these abandoned soldiers resisted the enemy onslaught desperately, exerting their last strength with inner determination. The courage of these k.u.k. regiments, drawn from almost all the nationalities of the Monarchy, was unshakeable. Germans and Magyars, Poles and Czechs, Croats and Serbs, Romanians, Slovenes and Slovaks - all stood together one more time in self-sacrificing comradeship. Untroubled by the events in the homeland, they held out, driven by their devotion to duty and the instinct of self-preservation. They bitterly resisted this attack, which they had hardly expected any more, resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible or to avoid the threat of being taken prisoner so shortly before the end of the war.

And so a miracle happened. In days of severe battle the 4th Italian Army suffered a bloody repulse at the hands of the Belluno Armeegruppe.

24 October

When the Italian columns stormed ahead in the morning of 24 October they were met everywhere by destructive fire from the defenders' machine guns and artillery. In the western part of the front held by GdI Horsetzky's k.u.k. XXVI Corps⁵²⁹ the 17th Division of IX Italian Corps were unable to drive FML Edler von Nagy's 40 Hon ID from the southern slopes of the Col Caprile. Italian storm detachments that did penetrate the lines of 40 Hon ID in the Val Grande, near Meneguzza and west of Heights # 1440, were chased out again by the Magyars and Romanians of Hon IR 30.

In the Mt Asalone area a brigade of the Italian 18 ID broke through the foremost positions of the k.u.k. XXVI Corp in their first onslaught that morning; however, the Italians were driven back by parts of Infantry Regiments 9 (Poles and Ukrainians) and 99 (south Moravians).⁵³⁰ The enemy directed new attacks against 40 Hon ID (around 11:00 AM) and against the eastern wing of FML Haas' 4 ID (at 3:00 PM), but they didn't develop very far. Meanwhile GdI Horsetzky moved forward his reserves, the regiments of 28 ID which had been stationed next to Fonzaso.

That morning the VI Italian Corps advanced against GdI Kosak's I

529Horsetzky, "Der Kampf um den Mt Asalone Ende Okotober 1918" (in "Mil. wiss. Mitt."; Vienna, 1927 edition, pp. 257 ff.)

530Gallian, pp. 148 ff.

k.u.k. Corps. While GM Edler von Grtner's 48 ID were able to check the enemy onslaught at Mt Pertica, troops of 15 Italian ID were able to penetrate deep into the defenders' lines northeast of this mountain. The Italians were already appearing on the Prassolan ridge. Meanwhile under the neighboring 13 Sch Div (FML Kindl) the Lower Austrian SchR 24 were outflanked by the enemy but still gallantly held out in their positions on the Tasson. Toward evening the Eger-land soldiers of Infantry Regiment 73 started a counter-thrust, and the fighting turned in favor of the defenders. Suffering heavy losses, the Italians withdrew from the Prassolan and from Mt Pertica, and back to their starting points.

The 47 ID of XXX Italian Corps gained a limited success on the western slope of the Col dell'Orso. Here FML Strher's 17 ID lost to the enemy their forward position on Mt Forcelletta. But the Italian 47 ID bled themselves in vain against the steep incline of Mt Solarolo, all of which was retained by the k.u.k. 17 ID. About a kilometer east of Mt Solarolo a brigade of 50 Italian ID fell upon IR # 43 and captured the so-called "Star Knoll" (Valderoa).

In the sector of FML Le Beau's k.u.k. XV Corps, the new IR 129 (Germans, Magyars, Serbs and Romanians) of FML Gerabek's 50 ID held Mt Spinuccia against all enemy thrusts. The 70th Division of I Italian Corps moved forward from Mt Tomba and the ridges of Mt Monfenera up to the southern slope of the Pta. Zoc and to the northern bank of the Torrente Ornigo. An enemy penetration into the Alano basin (the outpost area of 50 ID and of GM Stadler's 20 Hon ID) was wiped out in a counterattack by Honved IR 17.

Thus the attack by Giardino's Army had been completely shattered along the still-solid front of the Belluno Armeegruppe by evening of the first day of the battle in the Grappa mountains.

Meanwhile Cavan's Army on the central Piave had captured Papadopoli Island; however, the crossing of the Piave scheduled for 25 October had to be postponed once more due to renewed rainstorms. There was now a danger that the entire operation might be spoiled. Therefore G.Lt Diaz decided to continue to attack between the Brenta and the Piave.⁵³¹

25 October

Around 8:00 AM on 25 October Italian drumfire once more broke out against the positions of the Belluno Armeegruppe. IX Italian

531Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie del Piave", pp. 169 ff. Tosti, pp. 315 ff. Valori, pp. 485 ff. Rocca, pp. 91 ff.

Corps again attacked the Col Caprile and Mt Asolone. 40 Hon ID retained their positions on the Col Caprile; in the fighting parts of Hon IR 30 once more demonstrated their steadiness. Mt Asolone was contested on this day with indescribable bitterness. The defenders were repeatedly bombed by Italian air squadrons. Aus-Hung. ground-support and fighter companies also appeared over the battlefield in the afternoon, intervening successfully in the fighting.

Around 8:45 AM an assault group from the 18 Italian ID had already penetrated the lines of the k.u.k. 4 ID on Mt Asolone, but after an action that lasted about an hour they were forced to retreat by the south Moravian IR # 99. Toward noon the enemy attacked again and advanced to the eastern slope of Mt Asolone; in close-up combat that lasted for many hours this assault was eventually defeated by freshly-deployed infantry battalions (II and III/49)⁵³² and by reserves from the Hon IR 27 of 42 Hon ID. From 1:00 to 1:30 PM Italian batteries of all calibers pounded the mountain with a hale of iron. At 3:00 PM the enemy infantry advanced again; for a third time they penetrated the positions of 4 ID on the eastern side of hotly-contested Mt Asolone, but this thrust also finally broke apart thanks to the gallant defenders. Due to the heroism of our infantry and the brilliant conduct of our artillery all the fortifications were still in the hands of XXVI Corps that evening.

A principal goal of VI Italian Corps on this day was once again Mt Pertica, in the defensive sector of the k.u.k. I Corps. After two unsuccessful assaults the 15 Italian ID finally reached the summit of the ridge around 9:00 AM. But IR 73 and a battalion of the new IR 120 recovered their positions back with a counter-thrust. Around noon the assaulting waves of the VI Italian Corps came forward a fourth time. Now the summit of Mt Pertica finally fell into enemy hands, although the remnants of the heroic IR 73 stood fast on the mountain's northern slope. During the afternoon the Italians also pushed against the positions on the south-western slope. The hard-pressed troops of 48 ID, which had thrown its last reserves against the enemy, weren't able to recover the summit of Mt Pertica, which had been fought over for so long.

Farther east the 13 Sch Div continued to hold onto the Tasson Ridge. Troops from 17 ID were able in their second attempt to recapture Mt Forcelletta (on the western slope of the Col dell'Orso); however this advanced position finally had to be relinquished to a renewed enemy assault.

532 "Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. III, pp. 67 ff.

On the 25th the XXX Italian Corps strove in vain to capture Mounts Solarolo and Spinuccia. On the Solarolo the Szeged IR 46 offered such stubborn resistance that the enemy could gain no ground at all. But the k.u.k. I Corps' plan to recapture Mt Valderoa had to be postponed for the time being, since parts of 17 ID's reserves which were supposed to participate in the operation had to deploy instead to repel the enemy in the Solarolo area. BH IR 1, which was being lent by 50 ID, still hadn't fully arrived.

In the night of 24-25 October and during the day, XV Corps defeated six assaults by 50 Italian ID on Mt Spinuccia and the heights farther east. Thrusts by I Italian Corps in the Alano basin didn't get past the Ornigo; they were checked by the troops of our 50 ID and 20 Hon ID.

26 October

On 26 October Giardino's Army once more attacked the Belluno Armeegruppe. Strong, destructive enemy fire commenced already that morning against the entire front of the k.u.k. XXVI Corps. A brigade of the enemy IX Corps tried to storm the Col Caprile. This initial thrust was checked by 40 Hon ID, but at 7:45 the Italians tried again - in vain. In a third attempt at 11:00 AM and in fourth and fifth tries in the afternoon the enemy sought to advance on the mountain heights east of the Brenta. But all these thrusts were thwarted by 40 Hon ID.

The full weight of the assault by IX Italian Corps was once more directed against the ridge running from Mt Asolone through Mt Spiedon to the Col della Berretta. During the night the HQ of 4 ID had relieved the fully-exhausted IR 9 on the Asolone summit with IR 49. The heights east of the mountain top were still held by IR 99, now reduced to three weak companies. It seemed that the enemy were trying to win at any price. Committing fresh forces (21 ID), they struck Mt Asolone and the ridge stretching to the Col della Berretta with greatly-superior strength in the morning and afternoon. But all their attacks shattered on the unyielding resistance of k.u.k. Infantry Regiments 49 and 99 which, supported by Heavy Field Artillery Regiments 4 and 6 - as well as by batteries from FAR 32 - erased enemy penetrations with counterattacks.

After costly fighting all the lost positions in the Asolone sector were once again in the hands of the gallant defenders by 5:00 PM. In the night the remnants of the worn-out IR 99 were

relieved by the last reserves of 4 ID (two battalions of IR 8). Infantry Regiments 11 and 28 deployed right behind the Asolone sector. New reserves had also been assigned to XXVI Corps. After a request from GdI Horsetzky, the HQ of the Armeegruppe brought Sturm Battalion 3 and the Upper Austrian IR 114 of the Edelweiss Division from 11th Army's area, as well as the Hungarian IR 105 from 60 ID. These units assembled in Fonzaso and Arsie.

On 26 October the I Corps were as heavily engaged as XXVI Corps. On this day the VI Italian Corps attempted again with all their strength to gain ground on Mt Pertica. In the morning the enemy pushed over the southwestern slope of the mountain and deep into the lines of 48 ID; they were already extending their penetration into the flank and rear of 42 Hon ID, toward the Cesilla valley. Hon IR 28, which the day before had created a hook-shaped position facing north with their regimental reserves, were saved from their precarious situation thanks to a bold thrust by one of 42 Hon ID's storm companies. Troops from 28 ID - detachments from IR 47 and BH IR 7 - meanwhile began to counterattack from the northwest. At the same time parts of IR 73 and 120 (of 48 ID) struck from the north. These units, along with the storm detachments of 42 Hon ID, were able to thrust to a point directly below the summit of Mt Pertica, where remnants from IR 73 were still holding out. The enemy had also been driven already from the position on the slope northeast of the summit. Since the Italians were falling back, it was hoped that all of Mt Pertica could be re-occupied. But in the afternoon a new enemy attack drove back our troops on the mountain's northern slope. Here the decimated regiments of 48 ID rallied and prevented the Italians from gaining any more ground.

Farther east, for a third day the Lower Austrian SchR 24 of 13 Sch Div stood fast against enemy pressure on the Tasson Ridge.⁵³³ With equal gallantry the Viennese SchR 1 held out in the sector on both sides of the Val di Pez.⁵³⁴ The defenders' arms were less successful on the western slopes of the Col dell'Orso. Here on 26 October SchR 14 lost the Col del Cuck after seesaw fighting. On the other hand, all the efforts of the XXX Italian Corps were thwarted by 17 ID on the Solarolo Ridge and by 50 ID on Mt Spinuccia. In the defensive sector near Alano the 70 ID of I Italian Corps also sought in vain to break through the outpost lines of 50 ID and 20 Hon ID on the Ornigo Brook.

533Sichelstiel, "Geschichte der k.k. Schützen Regimentes Wien Nr. 24" (Vienna, 1928), pp. 192 ff.

534Klumpner-Hellrigl, "Das Schützen Regiment Wien Nr. 1 im Weltkrieg" (self-published), pp. 75 ff.

With these fruitless attacks on 26 October the 4th Italian Army had fully exhausted their strength. The seizure of Mt Pertica, the forward positions at Col del Cuck and Mt Forcelletta (on the western slope of the Col dell'Orso) and of the Valderoa Heights east of Mt Solarolo had cost the Italians almost 35,000 men dead, wounded or missing. When G.Lt Giardino compared the ground gained with the heavy casualties, he recognized that the failed attack in the Grappa mountains was a defeat. The outcome of these three days of combat clearly indicated that the strength and cohesion of the Aus-Hung. divisions guarding the positions in Armeegruppe Belluno's sector hadn't declined as much as had been hoped on the Italian side. G.Lt Giardino therefore didn't attempt any further attacks. He was content to keep his opponents' fortifications on the heights under artillery fire. Most troops of 4th Italian Army rested after the bloody contest.

27-28 October

On the other hand, the exhausted Belluno Armeegruppe were encouraged by their defensive victory; on 27 October they rallied and began to counterattack. GdI Kosak, commanding I Corps, felt it was a point of honor to recover Mt Pertica from the enemy. Early in the morning the Storm Battalion of 48 ID and the distinguished Carinthian IR 7 of 55 ID advanced against these hotly-contested heights after a short but destructive burst of artillery fire.⁵³⁵ Around 7:00 AM the brave battalions did storm the summit of Mt Pertica, but couldn't retain it because in the dust and smoke they came under fire from our own batteries and suffered heavy casualties. The k.u.k. troops had to pull back to a position under the summit, where they regrouped and held on. Around noon Italian forces assembled in the ravines southeast of Mt Pertica, but destructive fire by the guns of I and XXVI Corps prevented the enemy from developing an attack. In the morning parts of the Brünn SchR 14 attacked toward the Col del Cuck; our troops reached these heights, but also had to withdraw again under enemy pressure.

In the night of 26-27 October a counterattack group was formed from IR 46 (of 17 ID) and parts of BH IR 2 (of 55 ID) and placed under Col. Graf Zedtwitz. They recovered the Valderoa Heights south of Fontana secca, which had been lost by 17 ID, and held them against enemy counter-thrusts in the afternoon. Only the eastern slope of the Valderoa stayed in Italian hands, because here the attacking group of 50 ID had been unable to push forward due to fog on the high ground and insufficient support from the artillery.

On 28 October the battle in the mountains between the Brenta and the Piave was limited to artillery fire by both sides. After four days of heavy combat the greatly reduced divisions of the Belluno Armeegruppe were at the end of their strength. In continuous fighting which surged back and forth the combat strength of the regiments in the forward lines of XXVI and I Corps had shrunk to an average of 150 to 300 riflemen. The troops in the positions of XV Corps had also suffered greatly. Casualties were particularly great in the 4th, 48th and 17th Divisions. But the heroism of the k.u.k. regiments was unshaken. They had always held on against the oncoming enemy; finally supported on the fourth day by several battalions of 55 ID, which had come forward from the Belluno area, they sealed off the

535 Assam, "Der Kärntner Infanterie Regimenter Graf von Khevenhüller Nr. 7 letztes Ringen und Ende" (Graz, 1935), pp. 22 ff.

Italian penetrations on Mt Pertica, the western slope of the Col dell'Orso and the heights east of the Solarolo. The artillery had substantially aided the successful defense as well as the numerous counterattacks.

FM Boroevic thanked the troops of the Belluno Armeegruppe and recognized their "heroic demeanor and self-sacrificing courage", which to him was a guarantee "that they won't leave the job half-finished and will once more convince the enemy that they are shedding their blood in vain."

The surprising defensive victory in the Grappa mountains greatly increased the confidence of FM Boroevic. It gave him grounds to believe that it might still be possible to hold out until tolerable terms could be secured for an armistice. But his confidence was soon shattered by news from the Tyrolean front and from the Piave.

4. Italian pinning attacks on the Asiago plateau, 24-28 October

While Giardino's Army attacked the Belluno Armeegruppe between the Brenta and the Piave, the 7th and 1st Italian Armies on the western and southern fronts of Tyrol increased their activities. There were heavy artillery bombardments and numerous patrol operations in the Tonale sector, on both sides of the Adige valley and in the Pasubio area, all designed to pin down the forces of the k.u.k. 10th Army in their positions on the mountains. The 6th Italian Army launched stronger thrusts on the Asiago plateau in support of the offensive in the Grappa mountains.

Already at midnight on 23-24 October the enemy artillery began to fire for destruction along the entire front from the Assa Ravine to the Brenta; the intensity was supposed to simulate the start of a major attack. A thick haze of shells fell upon the Aus-Hung. positions and the area behind them. Our batteries were also heavily bombarded; in places they were stricken by gas or by artificial fog. After an hour of this destructive fire, around 1:00 AM on the 24th some Italian assault groups moved forward against GO Martiny's k.u.k. III Corps. The enemy penetrated a small part of the front, but were immediately driven out completely. Also unsuccessful - thanks to the accurate fire of the defending batteries - were strong attacks against the western wing of FML Molnar's XIII Corps, in which detachments from the English 48th Division struck the positions of the k.u.k. 27 ID

south of Asiago.

38 Hon ID were engaged in the heaviest fighting in this sector. It centered on Mt Sisemol, the most important tactical point along the entire Sieben Gemeinde front and the scene of many earlier actions. The Hungarians fought battalions of the French 24th Division for control of the summit, which changed hands repeatedly in fierce combat. Finally the enemy secured the peak at 7:00 AM after a hurricane bombardment that lasted for three hours. A counterattack, launched by the nearest reserves of 38 Hon ID around noon, was unable to break through but did prevent the enemy from gaining further ground toward the north. Our line now ran along the mountain's northern slope.

Farther east, in the sector of the k.u.k. VI Corps, the enemy directed many strong attacks against the positions of 53 ID north of Mt di Val Bella. The enemy broke in at two points, but then were all hurled back. An Italian assault on 18 ID north of the Col del Rosso collapsed under the defenders' fire. On the southern slope of the Sasso Rosso the outposts of 39 Hon ID endured stubborn fighting.

While the k.u.k. 11th Army withstood these local attacks in the morning, the enemy artillery again increased their fire; however, it was reduced toward noon. GO Scheuchenstuel meanwhile placed 31 Inf Bde of 16 ID (which was in reserve on the plateau) under 38 Hon ID so that Mt Sisemol could be recaptured. But before the counterattack started the French voluntarily evacuated the mountain around 11:00 PM.

Impressed by the defensive success of the k.u.k. 11th Army, the Tyrol Army Group HQ reported to Baden on 24 October that the front could be held "as long as the ammunition lasts." Except for isolated riots in some March units provoked by insufficient rations, there were no signs of disintegration. But the Army Group HQ were already expressing serious fears: "It's conceivable that the rapidly developing events in the interior will have an accelerated, ruinous impact upon the troops at the front; in the worst case scenario the cohesion of the units will collapse despite the efforts of the officers and the good conduct of the prudent elements among the men....If in fact this scenario comes to pass the results will be far more serious here than elsewhere, since there is only one route home the troops can take, and it leads through the heart of Tyrol. We don't need to describe the catastrophic consequences - not all of which can even be foreseen - for the Army and the homeland if the land is flooded by unregulated and uncontrollable mobs of poorly-clothed

and hungry soldiers who have weapons of all kinds."

In the night of 24-25 October storm troops of the Italians and their allies once more thrust against the positions of the k.u.k. 11th Army on the Asiago plateau. A stronger enemy detachment broke into the trenches of III Corps near Stella around 2:00 AM, but were quickly driven out. Also in the following days the 6th Italian Army carried out limited operations at dawn, usually after a strong and destructive artillery bombardment; thus local fighting was constantly breaking out in the Canove and Asiago sectors as well as in the areas around Mt di Val Bella and the Col del Rosso. Throughout the days the enemy guns kept the front and rear areas of 11th Army under lively disruptive fire. But there were no larger operations. In reports about the actions the Army HQ praised the particularly good demeanor of Infantry Regiments 27, 81 and 127 (from 6 ID). They also noted the gallantry of Infantry Regiments 82, 125 and 131 (from 53 ID), of Hon IR 9 (39 Hon ID) and of DR 8 (6 CD). The artillery had also played a substantial role in checking the enemy incursions.

On 28 October quiet reigned over the Asiago plateau, other than the usual disruptive fire from the enemy's artillery and the lively activity of their air forces. 11th Army HQ had been aware for some time that 6th Italian Army wouldn't make a serious attack, but were just conducting a feint. Nevertheless the HQ of the Tyrol Army Group were very concerned about the immediate future, since meanwhile in addition to the Croats the Hungarian regiments stationed in reserve were starting to disobey orders.

5. Mutinies behind the front of 11th Army

The disturbances in the 27th Division

Already on 24 October the II Battalion of the Losoncz IR 25 (of 27 ID, XIII Corps), stationed in reserve behind the Asiago plateau, were no longer following orders. The Battalion was supposed to take part along with 38 Hon ID in an (ultimately unnecessary) counterattack at Mt Sisemol, but the men declared they were no longer willing to fight for Austria. They demanded to be sent home to Hungary. The officers appealed in vain for the men to be reasonable. Personnel from the other battalions of IR 25 made common cause with the mutineers and decided they wouldn't leave their camp. As soon as GM Sallagar, the divisional commander, learned of these developments he came to the Regiment, but had to turn back because the mutineers were tossing hand grenades on the road to the camp. So he summoned a

delegation from the Regiment to come to divisional HQ. Two lower-grade officers and two NCO's appeared; they had recently returned to the Regiment from the interior. They declared that now - when the bonds between Austria and Hungary were being loosened - they as Hungarians no longer had any duty to fight for Austria.

In the morning of the 25th FML Molnar, the acting commander of XIII Corps, came to the HQ of 27 ID where he met with some of the officers, NCO's and men of IR 25. He got the impression that the soldiers were still devoted to their officers, but emphatically refusing to again be put in a position where they'd risk their lives for Austria in the trenches. They justified their demand to return to Hungary on the grounds that they needed to guard the borders against Serbia. Representatives from the Regiment sought support among the other components of 27 ID. The Division had entered the line in mid-October after six weeks of recuperation, and the sentiment was such that the other regiments would probably also leave the front if IR 25 departed. The situation was similar in the neighboring 38 Hon ID, which also had recently returned to the front; after the June fighting they'd been in the interior and then rested in the Sugana valley. The Division's Hon IR "Maros Vasarhely" # 22, still near Levico, were refusing to march to the plateau.

Attempts to defuse the situation

At 1:30 PM on 25 October GO Arz sent a telegram to FM Archduke Joseph, who was preparing to travel to Budapest; Arz asked the former commander of the Tyrol Army Group to immediately try to pacify both divisions (27 ID and 38 Hon ID). Before leaving for 11th Army's front, the Archduke reported to the Emperor (through FM Krobatin) that it would be necessary to promise the Hungarian troops that they'd be sent to Hungary as soon as traffic on the railroad permitted. He begged the Emperor "to conclude an armistice or peace without wasting time, even under the harshest conditions; thus at least the Army will be protected from total collapse and its disciplined portions can maintain some order in the interior of the Monarchy."

GO Arz then sought to prevent the impending departure of the Hungarian troops by appealing to the conscience and interests of their nation. In the evening of the 25th he informed Hungary's Defense Minister (GdI Freih. von Szurmay) and Minister President (Wekerle) that a number of their troops - influenced by political pronouncements in the Parliament and press - were refusing to fight and demanding to be sent to their homeland. This

development, which could all too easily spread to all the troops, inevitably would cause the entire front to collapse. And this would also be a very serious danger in the interior; as the masses of soldiers fell back they would plunder and murder not only in Carniola, Carinthia and Tyrol, but also in Hungary and Croatia. They would spread Bolshevism and undermine the entire social order. Such a development must be prevented at any price. The AOK therefore requested that the Hungarian government and press should try by all possible means to immediately pacify the troops.

Meanwhile Archduke Joseph traveled to 11th Army; he tried in vain to induce Hon IR 22, stationed in reserve near Levico, to move forward to a position in the lines on the plateau. The soldiers declared to the Archduke that they wouldn't go to the front, and demanded to be sent home to Transylvania. In the evening the Archduke came to the HQ of XIII Corps in Larici. From here he couldn't go to the troops on the plateau, because IR 25 had by now entrenched in their camp. They were firing machine guns and hurling grenades at anyone who approached. It was feared that the regiments of 27 ID and 38 Hon ID stationed at the front, which were demanding to be relieved and sent home, would openly rebel at any moment. Even before traveling to the front the Archduke had been convinced that it had become necessary to send the mutinous Hungarian troops home. He now decided to let both divisions have their way and ordered 11th Army HQ to relieve and entrain them. In Hungary they could be disciplined and brought to reason. In the night of 25-26 October the Archduke reported to the Emperor that he couldn't complete his mission, and was returning to Bozen; he also renewed his urgent request that an armistice be concluded immediately. In the morning of the 26th, before departing for Budapest, the Archduke suggested to the AOK that they should shorten the front of 11th Army by pulling III and XIII Corps back to the prepared positions behind the Assa valley and north of Asiago, since other units would follow the example of IR 25 and Hon IR 22. The AOK concurred. The two Hungarian divisions would be relieved by the half of the Edelweiss Division (IR 14 and 59) stationed near Trent and by the reserves of 10th Army (IR 111 from 19 ID, II and III Battalions of KJR 4, and four Landsturm battalions). But the AOK doubted whether it would be possible to maintain the positions on 11th Army's front if the enemy decided to attack in earnest.

In the afternoon of 26 October FM Boroevic sent a telegram to Baden, objecting in the sharpest terms against sending the two Hungarian divisions away. He emphasized that this development would have an impact on his Army Group and lead directly to a

catastrophe for the armed forces and the state. But his objections were in vain.

Meanwhile in the night of 25-26 October the Hungarian cabinet had decided to ignore the AOK's request that they should try to influence the Hungarian troops; they declined to issue any proclamation to the regiments. This was because the Hungarian government believed - as GdI Szurmay informed Baden by wire - that "the urge to go home can only be satisfied if the AOK promises the troops that they will be relieved, and if the movement home actually begins." The AOK had no choice but to bow to the wishes of the Budapest government and of Archduke Joseph. On 26 October GO Arz gave the Tyrol Army Group HQ an order from the Emperor; they were to immediately inform 27 ID and 38 Hon ID (and the other Hungarian troops of 11th Army, if necessary) that in the next few days they'd be relieved and sent to Hungary. The two divisions would depart as soon as the movement of the last trains carrying 10 CD was complete.⁵³⁶ At least two trains each day would carry the Hungarians home.

The mutinies spread

Mutinies were already spreading quickly among the Hungarian units of the k.u.k. 11th Army. In the morning of 26 October two companies of IR 67 (27 ID) left their positions near Asiago without orders. Two other companies joined them on the march that night. Sturm Battalion 27 refused to go to the front. On the 27th the HQ of 11th Army reported that IR 34 were also unreliable and that IR 85 were only willing to stay in their positions for another 48 hours. IR 25 left the plateau after burning their camp and the funicular rail station in Portule. 150 men from IR 138 (16 ID), who'd been mildly sick and were now supposed to rejoin their Regiment in the Sisemol sector, disobeyed orders; led by an officer and the regimental chaplain they marched to the rear. IR 2 of the same Division also demanded to be relieved and sent to recuperate in the rear. The Hungarian IR 103 of 5 ID were supposed to stay under XIII Corps until the scheduled arrival of battalions from 10th Army; however, they mutinied in Borgo and refused to march to the plateau. The personnel declared they would no longer fight for Austria. GM Demus-Moran, commanding 10 Inf Bde, spoke to the soldiers; he pointed out that in the years 1914 to 1916 Tyrolean troops had defended Hungary, even though the enemy were invading their own land. His words fell on deaf ears.

536 10 CD had started to leave Tyrol on 23 October to join Boroevic's Army Group.

News about the mutiny by Hungarian troops spread like a wild fire along the Southwestern front. The fact that the mutineers not only hadn't been punished, but had been promised to be sent home because of their stance, quickly became an example to others. Disobedience was already spreading to the Machine Gun Company of Sturm Battalion 18, to the Slovenian IR 117 (18 ID) and to the Olmütz IR 54 (5 ID). In 49 ID of 10th Army the Infantry Regiments 118 and 136 plus BH IR 8 were completely unreliable. Signs of disaffection were also evident among the Standschützen in XIV Corps' sector because of rumors that southern Tyrol would be given to Italy.

The crisis intensified when some of the hitherto distinguished troops from the Alpine lands refused to relieve the two Hungarian divisions which were being sent home. The first unit affected were the III Battalion of KJR 4; they had just left Mt Majo but now were instructed to march to the Sieben Gemeinde plateau. They frankly expressed their unwillingness to fight in place of the departing Hungarians. Therefore the Battalion had to be left at Chiesa near Lavarone.

In the afternoon of 27 October, trains carrying the 27 ID back home were rolling through Trent. At this time the I Battalion of the Edelweiss Division's Linz IR 14 were at the station to entrain for the front. Derisive shouts from the Hungarian soldiers caused the Battalion's 3rd Company to become disobedient. "We won't go to the front; we won't allow ourselves to be shot to pieces at the last moment." It was necessary to detrain the Battalion, which on the next day were finally sent to Grigno. Similar signs of dissent began to appear among the parts of the Salzburg IR 59 still in Trent.⁵³⁷

By 28 October reports were arriving of robbery and acts of defiance by Hungarian March units in the lower Inn valley, and of mutinies by various replacement forces in Auer and at the storm troop training grounds of 10th Army in Schabs. Parts of the Czech IR 111 (19 ID), which had arrived in 11th Army's sector, refused to continue marching to the trenches. Also the I and II Battalions of IR 59 at Grigno weren't inclined to march to the plateau. Two battalions of IR 14 already on the plateau wouldn't enter the positions. Two companies of this Regiment moved into the Sugana valley without orders.

While all this was going on, the III and XIII Corps evacuated the forward defensive zone near Asiago. In the evening of the 28th they pulled back to the prepared positions behind the Assa Ravine

⁵³⁷Hoen, "IR 59 im Weltkrieg", pp. 729 ff.

and along the line of heights from Mt Rasta through Katze to Mt Sisemol. The enemy didn't interfere with them. Although the length of the front had been reduced, it was fully clear to 11th Army HQ that they'd be able to hold the trenches on the plateau against small-scale operations for only a short time. And even this was due to the artillery, which were still presenting a solid, unshaken front against the enemy. But in certain places the only infantry guarding the front of XIII Corps made up a thin screen of patrols. The mutinous Hungarian troops had already marched away without waiting for orders, and almost all the battalions of 10th Army which were supposed to relieve them had refused to enter the positions. The attitude of the troops of III and VI Corps was also deteriorating. To cover the gaps in XIII Corps' front, a battalion of IR 42 (52 ID) were sent to the Asiago sector. But this battalion also refused to man the trenches. The Hungarian IR 26 angrily demanded to be sent home. Disturbances suddenly broke out also in IR 81 (of 6 ID).

The Tyrol Army Group HQ, now led by FM Krobatin, were made aware of the seriousness of the situation by the ongoing disintegration of units which hitherto had been reliable. The rapid collapse made it unlikely that 11th Army's troops would be able to hold their ground in the Sugana valley or near Asiago. The enemy would thus be able to reach Trent quickly, before the XIV, XXI and XX Corps could withdraw from their positions in the high mountains. By the same token, an Italian advance in the Adige valley through Rovereto could cut off the retreat of XIV Corps, 11th Army, and also XX Corps. To anticipate these looming dangers the 10th Army, which had already been greatly weakened by sending troops to 11th Army, were told to gather all the troops that were half-way ready for battle (several Kaiser Schützen and Landsturm battalions) in the area around Trent, in the Adige valley and on the Lavarone plateau.

6. The main allied assault on the Piave, 24-28 October

a. Preliminary fighting on Papadopoli Island, 24-26 October

On the Piave front, troops of the 7th English Division had already landed on Papadopoli Island, upstream from Ponte di Piave, in the evening of 23 October. Under cover of darkness and fog, they surprised and penetrated the outpost line held by FML Edler von Baumgartner's 7 k.u.k. ID (of XVI Corps). In the

morning of the 24th there was a heavy bombardment by artillery and trench mortars against the entire front of 6th Army and against the northern wing of the Isonzo Army. But except for isolated patrol actions on the Piave islands near Pederobba, there were no infantry operations in 6th Army's sector.

On the northern wing of the Isonzo Army, at dawn the English pushed 7 ID's outposts from the north part of Papadopoli Island toward the dam that crossed to the left bank of the Piave. An enemy attack toward the crossing point at Cimadolmo was quickly brought to a halt by a counter-thrust of four hastily-assembled companies, but by evening most of the Island was in enemy hands. Only in the southeastern part a battalion of the k.u.k. IR 37 were able to hold out against attacks by the Italian 37 ID. The temporary commander of XVI Corps, FML Ritter von Berndt, ordered 7 ID to recapture the Island.⁵³⁸ But before a counter-thrust could be carried out, in the evening of the 25th the isolated battalion of IR 37 had to pull back to the Piave dam after heavy fighting. Early on the 26th the 7 English ID secured the entire northern bank of the island, from which they'd be able to cross the principal arm of the Piave. FML Berndt now abandoned plans to recover the Island; he wanted instead to hold back his Corps' reserves (201 Lst Inf Bde) to defend against a larger enemy attack. For this purpose he held the Brigade in readiness near Vazzola, behind our 7 ID.

The commander of the Isonzo Army, GO Wurm, believed initially that he was dealing with just a local diversionary attack by the Italians on Papadopoli Island. He was strengthened in this opinion when enemy artillery activity along the Piave front didn't exceed the normal levels on 25 and even 26 October. Only the positions opposite Papadopoli Island in the Susegana area were subjected to lively fire. But the sudden appearance of English troops in front of the k.u.k. XVI Corps was ominous. Now it was learned that French forces were deploying in the Pederobba sector. Busy enemy traffic on the Montello was interrupted by our artillery. Many hostile planes appeared over the entire area of Boroevic's Army Group and dominated the air above the trenches. 6th Army HQ had the impression that the enemy were preparing to make their main effort on both sides of the Montello and were waiting to strike only until the water level dropped in the Piave improved and the progress of the operation already under way in the Grappa area would ban any possible danger from the north.

⁵³⁸Berndt, "Letzter Kampf und Ende der 29. Infanterie Division" (Reichenberg, 1928), pp. 30 ff.

Boroevic's Army Group HQ were holding substantial reserves in readiness in the Belluno basin - 55 and 60 ID plus 21 Sch Div. Since 24 October they gradually brought these units forward toward Feltre so they could join the battle against the Italian offensive in the Grappa sector. The majority of 55 ID's troops and a regiment (the 105th) of 60 ID were used to reinforce the battered divisions of XXVI and I Corps. Also the parts of the Edelweiss Division that had come from Tyrol were attached to the Belluno Armeegruppe. On 26 October the other available reserves - 10, 24 and 57 ID; 26, 43 and 44 Sch Divs; 8 Cav Div - were still stationed far behind Boroevic's left wing, on and behind the Livenza and in the Codroipo area.

Meanwhile Diaz had actually initiated his major thrust by occupying Papadopoli Island, and was preparing to attack the Aus-Hung. positions on the left bank of the Piave. On 26 October the weather improved and the water level fell in the river. That morning G.Lt Diaz ordered the 12th, 8th and 10th Armies to start crossing the Piave in the coming night. During the day enemy artillery fire increased against the k.u.k. 6th Army; toward evening the trench mortars joined in. Very significantly the commander of this Army, GdK Schönburg, reported just a few hours before the battle started that the spirit of his troops was good. There were some problems due to the political confusion at home and due to events in France and in the Balkans, but reports of the defensive victory in the Grappa Mountains were encouraging. The anticipated enemy assault over the Piave would find 6th Army ready to fight. There was reason to hope that the attack would be repulsed and that success would greatly lift the spirit of the troops.

b. The first two days of battle, 27 and 28 October

At 11:30 PM on 26 October the Italian 12th, 8th and 10th Armies initiated their artillery preparation against the Aus-Hung. positions on the left bank of the Piave. The enemy batteries fired shells against the assembly areas of our reserves and made liberal use of gas rounds. In the same night the Italians and their allies started to cross the river. Assault troops came over the Piave on hastily erected bridges and boats of every description. It was a very dark night; a strong storm made it difficult for the defenders to reconnoiter and to report information. But the stormy weather was also disadvantageous to the attackers. The waters of the Piave were still swollen; of the eleven bridges which were supposed to span the river, the Italian pioneers were only able to complete six during that

night - one in 12th Army's sector near Pederobba, two on 8th Army's front between Vidor and Falzé, and three on 10th Army's front from Papadopoli Island over the river's principal arm. Units from the three armies crossed on the bridges that were complete to follow the storm troops who'd come over to the left bank during the night. In the morning of 27 October it started to rain again; it appeared that the bad weather which had saved the Italians in June would now also protect the Aus-Hung. Army from catastrophe. The raging stream and the fire of the k.u.k. artillery partly destroyed the bridges which had been constructed with so much toil. But the rain subsided as the day went on, the heavens cleared, and the rest of the fighting took place in excellent weather.

27 October - the k.u.k. 6th Army's sector

On the northern wing of the k.u.k. 6th Army, assault troops from the French 23 ID had already penetrated the defenses of GdI Rudolf Krauss' II Corps before dawn; they drove into the foremost lines of FM Lieb's Hungarian 31 ID south of Valdobbiadene. The Budapest IR 32 panicked and fled to the rear. The attacking French battalions then thrust toward Mt Perlo, but were checked by the intervention of parts of IR 44 and of BH IR 3. In the afternoon 31 ID counterattacked, along with reserves from the neighboring 20 Hon ID, and pushed the enemy back to the northern bank of the Piave. But meanwhile Graziani's Army had brought an entire regiment of 23 French ID and three Alpini battalions over the river; moreover a regiment of 51 Italian ID (8th Army) had crossed the Piave near Pederobba. By evening all these troops were firmly entrenched at St Vito and in the area south of Valdobbiadene. The badly-damaged regiments of the k.u.k. 31 ID pulled back from their forward defenses and into the positions on Mt Perlo and on the slopes near Valdobbiadene.

G.Lt Caviglia's 8th Italian Army managed during the night to throw strong units of XXII Corps over the Piave south of Moriago. Two regiments⁵³⁹ of GM von Jony's 11 Hon CD were stationed at the front; they offered only scanty resistance when they were overrun by the Italians at dawn. The Honved hussars fled their positions, except for hundreds who surrendered to the enemy. The commander of 11 Hon CD had lost control of his troops. The divisional reserves weren't able to rally for a counterattack and

539 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The identity of the two regiments isn't clear. Per the map (Beilage 33, Skizze 1) they were Hon HR 2 and 9. However, the text states that Hon HR 2, at least, were in reserve at the outset and used later for a counterattack (see below).

instead pulled back to the heights of Farra di Soglio to escape the enemy's artillery barrage. This failure was mainly responsible for the fact that the situation on the southern wing of II Corps had become critical after the opening blow. The 57 Italian ID thrust north through the gap in the line into the Sernaglia area. All of the Aus-Hung. artillery in this sector, about 20 guns, fell into enemy hands after firing to the last moment.

GM Edler von Karapancza's 12 Reit Sch Div, driven out of their positions on the river bank, were still fighting desperately in the morning around their guns on the right wing near Sernaglia. But the Division's left wing was also soon in extreme danger.⁵⁴⁰ Here the 1st Italian Assault Division broke into the trenches near Chiesola and Falzé; moreover, they pushed the right wing of FML von Schamschula's 41 Hon ID back over the Soligo Brook in wild and very costly fighting. Farther downstream, at the northeastern foot of the Montello and near Pta. Priula, all attempts to cross by VIII Italian Corps were shattered under the fire of the second division of the k.u.k. XXIV Corps, GM Daubner's 51 Hon ID.

Similarly the XXVII Italian Corps near Vidor were unable to cross the river because of the firm stand by GM Edler von Werz's Lower Austrian 25 ID. The penetration into the positions near Moriago and Sernaglia and the flight of the Honved cavalry enabled the Italians to send troops from 66 ID over the Piave downstream from Vidor, enveloping the open left flank of the k.u.k. 25 ID. But this gallant unit didn't abandon their fortifications on the bank, and established a switch position facing east with their reserves.

In the morning GdI Krauss had already sent most of his Corps' reserves - IR 128 (25 ID), Hon HR 2 (11 Hon CD) and Reit SchR 5 (12 Reit Sch Div) - to the Soligo area where they were supposed to mount a coordinated counterattack toward Sernaglia under the commander of 21 Hon Cav Bde, GM Hegedüs. The divisional reserve of 25 ID, IR 84, would join this thrust. But some of the Corps' reserves were far in the rear, and came forward so slowly that GM Hegedüs still wasn't able to start the counterattack with the troops under his command in the late afternoon. Thus the gap near Sernaglia remained open. And meanwhile the assembly points of the Corps' reserves came under fire from enemy batteries; the troops from 25 ID who were still stubbornly holding out on the

⁵⁴⁰Serda-Teodorski, "Der letzte Kampf der k.k. 12. Reitende Schützen Division" (in the "Mil. wiss. Mitt.", Vienna, 1928 edition, pp. 785 ff.)

Mosnigo-Giussin switch position were now in danger of being pushed back. At this critical moment the gallant and often-distinguished Lower Austrian IR 84 threw themselves into the gap from the west. The Regiment struck with *elan*, pushing the enemy back at some points; but in front of Sernaglia and near Mosnigo they encountered much larger Italian forces and had to entrench upon the open and rain-soaked battlefield, under destructive fire from the enemy artillery.⁵⁴¹

The 12 Reit Sch Div, which had been pushed back from the left bank of the Piave northeast to the Soligo Brook, also sent their reserves to counterattack in the afternoon. Helped by parts of 41 Hon ID they were able to drive the enemy from the Falzé area. But counterattacks directed toward Sernaglia from the east encountered strong enemy resistance. The operations of 12 Reit Sch Div bogged down as the Italians mounted counter-thrusts. After darkness fell the Schützen squadrons, badly damaged by casualties, were pulled back behind the Soligo Brook. Meanwhile GM Hegedüs' group finally began to attack toward Sernaglia from the north. But IR 128 lost their way in the dark and blundered into the rear of Hon HR 2; the latter unit were still engaged in front of Sernaglia around midnight, but then withdrew to Pieve del Trevisan.

Thus despite all the efforts by II Corps they were unable to restore the situation near Sernaglia with the help of the divisional and corps reserves. Nevertheless at the time the HQ of 6th Army didn't believe the enemy penetration into the Soligo basin was dangerous, especially since upon their request the Army Group HQ had restored their authority over FML Luxardo's Hungarian 34 ID (which had been supposed to join the Belluno Armeegruppe). This Division was assigned to II Corps. Along with 12 Reit Sch Div, IR 128 and the remnants of 11 Hon CD, FML Luxardo was supposed to lead 34 ID on the next day in another counterattack toward Sernaglia.

27 October - the Isonzo Army's sector

On the northern wing of the Isonzo Army, after a drumfire bombardment the troops of English XIV Corps stationed on the large Papadopoli Island opened their attack between 7:00 and 8:00 AM on the 27th.⁵⁴² The Magyars and South Slavs of the k.u.k. 7 ID

541 Michel and Wohl, "Der Vierundachtzigerbuch" (Vienna, 1919), pp. 243 ff.

542 Kerrich, "Der Übergang der Engländer über den Piave im Oktober 1918" (in "Mil. wiss. Mitt."; Vienna, 1929 edition, pp. 488 ff.) English Official History, "Italy", pp. 289 ff.

didn't stand up against this onslaught. Parts of IR 68, stationed in reserve, refused to enter the fighting and left the battlefield without orders. The appearance of the English led to a mass panic. The beaten regiments of 7 ID fled to the northeast. The artillery left the infantry in the lurch and pulled back into the second position (the so-called "King's Zone") behind the Monticano Brook. The wreckage of IR 68 retreated to Rai and S Polo, the remnants of IR 132 withdrew even beyond the Monticano. On the left wing of FML Kloiber's 29 ID parts of IR 92 were caught up in the retreat. After hard fighting the brave 29 ID pulled their entire left wing and center back from the left bank of the Piave to the Piavesella.

Meanwhile the enemy also widened their penetration to the east, against the right wing of FZM von Tamasy's IV Corps. First the k.u. Lst IR 6 (of 64 Hon ID) were drawn into the retreat of IR 37 of 7 ID. Soon afterwards k.u. Lst IR 19 found themselves being rolled up from the west; they withdrew from their positions on the bank and the dam, suffering heavy casualties.

When 7 ID collapsed under the powerful English blow and the troops of this Division retreated in confusion, FML Berndt immediately decided to throw the enemy back onto Papadopoli Island. He placed his Corps reserves (Col. Freih. von Rast's 201 Lst Inf Bde plus IR 137 which was stationed behind 29 ID) under GM Majewski, the commander of 57 Inf Bde. Berndt ordered Majewski to use these troops for a coordinated counterattack toward Tezze. At the same time the IV Corps were instructed by the HQ of the Isonzo Army, based on a request from Berndt, to commit all available forces in an attack against the enemy who were advancing from Papadopoli Island. Furthermore GO Wurm alerted the two reserve units stationed behind the right wing of the Isonzo Army - 26 Sch Div and 24 ID, which were still east of the Livenza - so they could be brought forward to XVI Corps on the Monticano.

Preparations by GM Majewski's group for the counterattack were delayed into the afternoon. Meanwhile by noon the English and Italians had already penetrated XVI Corps' network of positions to a depth of 4 km along a 12 km front, and reached the road from Tezze to S Polo. The troops of XI Italian Corps, fighting to the

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The English account quotes extensively from this paragraph but, perhaps significantly, omits the sentence describing how IR 68 refused to fight. Probably in an attempt to magnify their victory, the English don't dwell on the fact that the Aus-Hung. forces were already disintegrating prior to the attack.

right of the Englishmen, were everywhere pushing 64 Hon ID back past Ormello [Ormelle] to Roncadelle and Negrisia. Col. Körner, the Chief of Staff of the Isonzo Army, reported to XXIV Corps that they had to anticipate a retreat of the neighboring XVI Corps to the Monticano; thereupon FML Schamschula, commanding XXIV Corps, sent two reserve battalions of 51 Hon ID to help the hard-pressed 29 ID. He also had GM Watterich's 10 ID, assigned to him as a reserve formation, march from the area around Gajarine and Brugnera to a point east of Conegliano.

But the reserve divisions of the Isonzo Army, coming from far in the rear, wouldn't arrive on the Monticano and become available for a counterattack until the next day. Therefore an attempt would have to be made with just the troops of XVI Corps and the available reserves of IV Corps to throw the enemy back from Tezze and S Polo and to at least limit their advance from Papadopoli Island.

FML Berndt pinned all his hopes on the counter-thrust by GM Majewski's group. But this urgently-important operation unfolded under an unlucky star. In the morning the commander of IR 137 and his staff had already been taken prisoner by the English. Leaderless and without any contact with 201 Lst Inf Bde, the Regiment attacked toward Tezze around 2:00 PM. The attack moved forward only slowly through thickly-cultivated terrain that was criss-crossed by irrigation ditches and pounded by powerful enemy artillery fire. The Regiment did reach the area south of Tezze where some troops from 29 ID were still fighting desperately. But after an hour of fruitless combat the 137th Regiment, along with the gallant fighters from 29 ID, had to pull back behind the Piavesella under pressure from the English. The 201 Lst Inf Bde fared no better. They weren't able to establish communications with the commander of the entire attacking group (GM Majewski). The Brigade came to a halt in front of Tezze, after suffering heavy losses; despite all the urging of FML Berndt they also were unable to gain further ground that night.

The counterattack by the reserves of IV Corps from the east reached the area west of Ormelle late in the afternoon; they brought relief to the remnants of 7 ID who were still holding on near S Polo and Rai. By Ormelle and farther south near Roncadelle and Negrisia the Italians were pushed back at some points by 64 Hon ID. But in the evening and night the fighting bogged down as troops of Italian XI Corps, to the right of the Englishmen, came over the Piave. 64 Hon ID wanted above all to recover the Negrisia line so that in the next morning, reinforced by a regiment from 70 Hon ID, they could continue the counterattack from the Ormelle area and through Roncadelle.

The night of 27-28 October

In the evening of the first day of the battle, Graziani's Army had gained only a relatively small amount of ground on the opposite side of the Piave. The armies of Caviglia and Cavan had achieved a deeper penetration of their opponent's defensive system at Sernaglia and opposite Papadopoli Island. These two penetrations were very unfortunate for the defenders, but not catastrophic. It was less important to retain every square kilometer of ground than it was to maintain the cohesiveness of the defenses of the k.u.k. 6th and Isonzo Armies. And above all the outcome would depend on whether the numerous available reserves could intervene in time.

Both Army commanders hoped that they could eliminate the bulges in the line which the enemy had created in the Soligo basin and near Tezze. Most of the troops of the reserve divisions hadn't entered the fighting on the 27th. Besides the three units already mentioned (10 and 24 ID, 26 Sch Div), the 43 Sch Div would be coming up from the Sacile area to the Monticano. After a request from GdK Schönburg, two more divisions - 36 ID which were arriving at Pordenone from Tyrol and 44 Sch Div which had been resting around Codroipo - were placed by Army Group HQ at the disposal of 6th Army to halt the enemy. And finally the HQ of the Isonzo Army ordered 8 CD up from the Livenza to Oderzo. Thus it could be expected that during 28 October four divisions would be thrown against the enemy who'd broken through from Papadopoli Island - 10 ID, 26 Sch Div and 24 ID from the north, 8 CD from the east. On the same day 34 ID were supposed to seal off the enemy penetration in the Soligo basin.

Also in the night of 27-28 October FM Boroevic sent all the air units in his sector into action in an attempt to bomb the bridges over the Piave. At the same time the 6th and Isonzo Armies kept the enemy's crossing points under artillery fire to interrupt the

movement of fresh units to the left bank. In fact they had some success in the evening, wrecking the bridge near Pederobba with a direct hit. It wasn't possible to effectively bombard the crossing points south of Fontigo because so much of the artillery of 11 Hon CD and of 12 Reit Sch Div had been lost. Nevertheless here also the Italians couldn't use the bridges continuously, in part due to the still-raging waters of the swollen river.

The troops of Caviglia's Army who'd advanced into the Soligo basin were already confronted with a crisis in the evening of the 27th. They were cut off from the right bank of the Piave, and separated from the left wing of Cavan's Army by a considerable distance. And this group also had to fend off desperate counter-thrusts by their opponents. Ammunition was already running low. In this critical moment, some of the Italians considered whether they should withdraw from Sernaglia and Mosnigo back to the river. But G.Lt Caviglia did everything possible to supply the isolated troops beyond the Piave with food and ammunition by plane. After toiling very hard, the Italian pioneers were able to repair the bridges near Fontigo around midnight. Caviglia ordered 60 ID and parts of 66 ID to cross the river; some of the men started to move that night. But before dawn the hastily-repaired bridges were wrecked and blocked again. The Italian troops couldn't get over the Piave.⁵⁴³

But the Austro-Hungarians weren't able to take advantage of this favorable development. GM Hegedüs' group, engaged in front of Sernaglia, didn't advance any further during the night. The troops of 12 Reit Sch Div, completely exhausted by their counter-attacks, had to withdraw behind the Soligo Brook, although in good order. 25 ID learned from an intercepted enemy order that the Italians wanted to send three divisions through Fontigo to attack the heights of Farra di Soligo. Divisional HQ felt that this movement would pose a great danger to their left flank and therefore during the night they pulled their front back to the line Bigolino-Colbertaldo-Farra, where 34 ID would arrive in preparation for the counterattack. In their old positions on the river bank 25 ID left only some rear guards, who checked several attempts by the Italians to cross near Vidor.

Early in the morning of 28 October the 41 Hon ID, which had been covering the way to the Soligo Brook, finally had to abandon Chiesola and Falzé to the enemy. Near Nervesa some weak forces of VIII Italian Corps had managed to establish a foothold on the northern bank during the night, but they were driven out by a counter-thrust from 51 Hon ID. As previously, both of these

543 Rocca, pp. 170 ff.

Honved divisions retained their positions on the left bank of the Piave opposite the northeastern foot of the Montello.

The troops of 12th Italian Army who'd advanced into the Soligo basin didn't dare to continue their attack in the morning of the 28th. They held Sernaglia and Mosnigo with strong garrisons and waited for reinforcements to arrive. On the other hand, during the morning the bombardment by the enemy's guns on the Montello swelled to a great intensity. All of the approach routes and assembly points behind the front of the k.u.k. II Corps were repeatedly hit by gas shells.

28 October - the Isonzo Army's sector

On the right wing of the Isonzo Army fighting began to rage again early in the morning of 28 October. English troops penetrated the new position of the k.u.k. XVI Corps near Tezze, and couldn't be driven out. At the same time the Sturm Battalion of 64 Hon ID recaptured Roncadelle; however, once in the village they were enveloped by the Italians and had to fight their way back through enemy lines to avoid encirclement.

After these bitter actions, activity during the morning was at first restricted to artillery fire from both sides. The combatants also brought up new divisions. Behind the battered k.u.k. XVI Corps the 10 ID, 26 Sch Div and 24 ID were now arriving on the Monticano; the 8 CD near Oderzo were preparing to counter-attack through Ormelle. Reserves from 70 Hon ID reinforced the front of 64 Hon ID, which now was bent back toward the north near Roncadelle; preparations were afoot to recover this town and the Negrisia line. 36 ID, 43 Sch Div and half of 44 Sch Div were marching slowly from Sacile and Pordenone to the area east of Conegliano. Early on the 28th the commander of 6th Army, Gdk Schönburg, intended to use the latter three divisions as an assault group under the command of FML Nöhring (of 36 ID). This group, along with 10 ID and the three reserve divisions of the Isonzo Army, would defeat the English and Italians west of Oderzo and throw them back over the Piave. But the powerful joint counterattack by all these forces couldn't take place until the 29th.

Meanwhile a significant decision had also been made on the Italian side. On the right wing of Caviglia's Army all crossing attempts by VIII Italian Corps had been thwarted by the stout defenders of the 51 Hon ID. Thus there was a large gap between the two enemy groups which had established firm footholds on the left bank of the Piave at Fontigo and Tezze. Therefore in the

evening of the 27th G.Lt Caviglia had decided to transfer to Cavan's force the 33 ID, which was in his second line, and 56 ID from his Army's reserves. XVIII Italian Corps HQ would lead both of these divisions over the Piave on the bridges built by the English near Salettuol; from the area occupied by XIV English Corps they would carry out an envelopment, striking the rear of the Hungarians who were still standing fast opposite the northeastern foot of the Montello.⁵⁴⁴ This would open the way over the Piave to the Conegliano heights, and then to Vittorio, for the hitherto stationary VIII Italian Corps.

In the morning of the 28th the foremost troops of the newly-deployed XVIII Italian Corps crossed the Piave behind the Englishmen of Cavan's Army. Shortly thereafter the English XIV Corps resumed their attack near Tezze. The XI Italian Corps joined this thrust at S Polo and farther south. Around 9:00 AM the enemy once more broke into the brittle front of 7 ID near S Polo and continued their thrust in a northeasterly direction. The northern wing of 64 Hon ID, stationed about 1 km west of the village of Ormelle, had to bend back. It was necessary to deploy 8 CD in the area west of Oderzo so they could seal off the dangerous new penetration and close the gap separating IV and XIV Corps prior to the arrival of 24 ID.

Toward 10:00 AM the right wing of the k.u.k. XVI Corps also gave way to the English pressure. First the 201 Lst Inf Bde were thrown back from Tezze to Vazzola. Soon afterwards the completely exhausted 29 ID fell back fighting from the Piavesella toward the northeast. Once more, as on the previous day, units in some areas withdrew in panic, while at the front isolated groups of gallant soldiers from 29 ID continued to defend themselves desperately. Enemy airplanes struck deep behind the lines, shooting machine guns or dropping bombs on our shaken infantry in the assembly points of the reserves, and striking the supply train columns.

At 10:00 AM the XXIV Corps learned that 29 ID had received an order to retreat behind the Monticano Brook; then 51 Hon ID withdrew from their old positions to the line Marcatelli - St Lucia. The gap that had developed between XXIV and XVI Corps (from Campagnola to Mareno) was closed by 10 ID. Now the center of the Honved units of XXIV Corps stood fast like a rock in the sea; although the rest of the front was wavering, they held on between the two switch positions (on the Soligo Brook and the Marcatelli - St Lucia line). But opposite the left flank of this Corps the troops of Italian XVIII Corps, who'd come up behind the

⁵⁴⁴Valori, pp. 491 ff. Rocca, pp. 208 ff.

English, were already deploying around noon. At the same time the pressure by the English XIV against the k.u.k. XVI Corps was greatly increasing. FML Berndt wanted to hang onto the southern bank of the Monticano regardless of conditions, so that it would be possible for the reserve divisions to cross this brook as they arrived for the counterattack. But all his efforts to stiffen the line were in vain. In the afternoon the left wing of XXIV Corps, already bent toward the north, was attacked by larger enemy forces near S Lucia and pushed back. The troops of XVI Corps still engaged west and east of Vazzola (29 ID and 201 Lst Inf Bde plus the remnants of 7 ID) withdrew behind the Monticano. English troops occupied Vazzola and in the evening came right up to the brook.

On the right wing of IV Corps the 64 Hon ID, reinforced by a regiment from 70 Hon ID, counterattacked in the morning of the 28th and gained some ground near Roncadelle. Then they fought for the rest of the morning along the Negrisia line. But the planned assault by 8 CD through Ormelle wasn't carried out because the battered XVI Corps retreated over the Monticano and because as reserves arrived in this sector they had to be used to plug gaps which appeared in the crumbling front. In further heavy fighting on the right wing of IV Corps that afternoon it was impossible to keep the Italians from advancing east through Tempio, Ormelle and Roncadelle. But here the Italian XI Corps' attack finally came to a halt along the new positions of 64 Hon ID. West of the railroad the 70 Hon ID had to bend back their right wing to the north so they could stay linked with 64 Hon ID; 70 Hon ID did retain their old positions on the river bank near Ponte di Piave.

The penetration by the enemy forces from Papadopoli Island had already reached a depth of more than 10 km on a front of 20 km. In the western part of this bulge the two fresh Italian divisions of XVIII Corps were stationed in the evening of the 28th opposite the flank of 51 Hon ID and ready to thrust to Conegliano. To thwart this enemy force and to extend the lines of 51 Hon ID to the east the defenders deployed 10 ID, composed of Bohemian and Galician troops. This Division was linked up with the remnants of 29 ID, which had retreated behind the Monticano and been reinforced by parts of 26 Sch Div. The group created from 29 ID and 26 Sch Div was led by FML Podhajsky, the commander of the latter Division. On their left the 201 Lst Inf Bde supported the scanty remnants of 7 ID, which were relieved from the front in the night of 28-29 October. Between Fontanelle and Lutrano FML Urbarz's Galician 24 ID were now entering the line, while farther south the 8 CD (consisting of mostly Slavic soldiers) were able

to maintain a link with the right wing of IV Corps which was now withdrawing from the Piave. It was still planned that FML Nöhring's group, assembling in the area east of Conegliano, would counterattack over the Monticano. But it was quite unlikely that this operation would alleviate the situation on the Isonzo Army's right wing, which had now become so critical. In the evening of the 28th FML Nöhring had available only eight battalions from his three divisions (36 ID; 43 and 44 Sch Divs). All the others were refusing to obey orders and thus wouldn't take part in the battle.

28 October - 6th Army's sector

Meanwhile the situation of 6th Army had also considerably deteriorated. Already during the long autumn night of 27-28 October Graziani was able to resume sending troops over the river on the restored bridge near Pederobba. The entire XII French Corps deployed in the bridgehead that had been established the day before. In the next morning all the units of 12th Army, on both sides of the Piave, attacked toward the north; thus they threatened the left flank of the Belluno Armeegruppe which was still standing fast in the Grappa area. Graziani's objective was Mt Cesen, which dominates the Feltre basin.

On the eastern wing of the Belluno Armeegruppe, in the defensive sector of the k.u.k. XV Corps, Italian detachments were repulsed in the night of 27-28 October in outpost fighting near Alano. In the morning the I Italian Corps attacked and captured Alano. North of this town the Hungarian IR 133 of 50 ID defeated four enemy thrusts in the afternoon, but toward evening the Italians were able to reach the southern slopes of the Pta. Zoc and of Mt Madal. The right wing of 20 Hon ID was stationed on the side arm of the Piave near Faveri; the Division's left wing fought alongside 31 ID of the k.u.k. II Corps.

Here, on the left bank of the Piave by S Vito and in the area of Mt Perlo, the enemy thrust forward in the morning after powerful artillery preparation. The weak forces of the Budapest 31 ID, minus IR 44 which they had to detach to the neighboring 25 ID on the left, defended themselves desperately. Pushed back on the right wing and in the center, 31 ID gradually withdrew to the north; their left wing were able to maintain a link with 25 ID at Bigolino, though only with great difficulty. The French took S Vito, the Italians Valdobbiadene. In the afternoon the French 23 ID climbed Mt Perlo. Although the "Szekesgehervar" Hon IR 17 of 20 Hon ID still fought bravely here, BH IR 3 of 31 ID offered only slight resistance. The defenders who did hold out were cut

off in the mountain terrain, which was broken up by many ravines, and then taken prisoner. Parts of 20 Hon ID withdrew to Segusino while the remnants of 31 ID retreated to the heights north of Valdobbiadene and to S Stefano.

Parts of two more divisions of Caviglia's Army had already crossed the Piave on the restored bridges south of Fontigo during the night; they reinforced the Italian troops that had advanced into the Soligo basin. On the Aus-Hung. side the 34 ID meanwhile came up to the battle front near Farra di Soligo. But it was no longer possible to carry out the counterattack by FML Luxardo's group (34 ID, remnants of 11 Hon CD, 12 Reit Sch Div, IR 128) which had been scheduled to start at noon. During the approach march three battalions of 34 ID had already mutinied, and the attitude of the Division's other troops was so questionable that they could be used only to garrison the positions at Farra di Soligo.

After a long artillery duel, in the afternoon the Italian XXVII and XXII Corps attacked the battered eastern wing of the k.u.k. II Corps. Lines of enemy skirmishers advanced slowly and hesitantly from Mosnigo and Sernaglia. Around 3:00 PM the 25 ID, standing guard between Colbertaldo and Farra di Soligo, learned that the lines of the neighboring Budapest 31 ID had been broken and that the Italians had taken Valdobbiadene. The leading enemy troops were already nearing the rear of 25 ID in the S Pietro area. At the same time the Italian XXVII and XXII Corps were spreading out from Mosnigo and Sernaglia throughout most of the Soligo basin and were now approaching the ridge of heights north of Farra di Soligo. And meanwhile the position of 6th Army's left wing had become untenable due to the appearance of XVIII Italian Corps opposite the left flank of the k.u.k. XXIV Corps and to the retreat of FML Berndt's Corps behind the Monticano. Under these circumstances the HQ of 6th Army had no choice but to withdraw 25 ID, threatened on both flanks, and XXIV Corps which were also menaced by a double envelopment. Army HQ issued orders for the retreat that afternoon. All of 6th Army would be led back to a second line which ran from Segusino through Mt Barberie to Mt Moncader (the heights south of Miane) and then over the high ground west and south of Conegliano to link up with the Isonzo Army on the Monticano. Some positions had been hastily prepared along this line, but it was by no means ready for the defenders.

When darkness fell the 25 ID began to retreat to the heights of Farra di Soligo. They were able to withdraw only after actions with the pursuing enemy. On the other hand the XXIV Corps

weren't followed when they withdrew behind a screen of rear guards to the high ground by Conegliano. But during this night-time march the morale of the Corps' hitherto gallant Honved troops - who shortly before had shown such courage in the face of the attackers - began to significantly deteriorate.

c. Mutiny spreads to the front-line troops of Boroevic's Army Group

While the battle raged on the Piave the disintegration of the Army, which had begun with the mutiny of South Slavic and Hungarian regiments on the Tyrolean front, spread through Boroevic's Army Group. The tragic events followed the same pattern that had already emerged in Tyrol - the troops in the foremost lines succumbed more slowly to the infection than did the men stationed in reserve, who'd been out of the fighting for a longer time but were more susceptible to the influence of political developments in the interior and to the disturbances on the lines of communication.

The course of the disturbances

It was particularly evident in the Belluno Armeegruppe that a large portion of the units behind the battlefield were already completely unreliable, while the soldiers at the front were still contending successfully with the Italian assaults and displaying great heroism under the most difficult conditions. As we narrated above, the series of mutinies in the rear of the gallant units defending the lines of the Belluno Armeegruppe had already started on 23 October among the Croats (Hon IR 25 and 26) of 42 Hon ID. Their bad example was followed by the Serbs and Croats of BH IR 4 in 55 ID.⁵⁴⁵ A few hours later some Czechs joined the movement. In the evening of the 24th the II Battalion of the Czech SchR 8 (which belonged to 21 Sch Div) erupted in open rebellion in the Belluno area at the moment when they were

545 TRANSLATOR'S FRONT: It's not clear whether the phrase "Serbs and Croats" is designed specifically to exclude the Bosnian Muslims from the mutinous elements. The original never addresses the attitude of the Muslims of the Bosnian units and whether it differed from that of the Orthodox or Catholic Slavic soldiers. A detailed account of the mutiny of 4th Regt appears in Schachinger, "Die Bosniaken Kommen" (Graz, 1989), pp.251 ff. Schachinger states that there were no disturbances in any of the other BH infantry units, but the next paragraph indicates that the authorities had trouble with BH IR 5.

ordered to move to the front. Leaflets were immediately distributed to the soldiers - "Halt! We won't go to the front any more! Independence has been proclaimed in Bohemia!" At the same hour turmoil broke out in Codroipo. Slovenian soldiers of Mtn SchR 2 (44 Sch Div) took their officers prisoner and started to hurl hand grenades and fire rifles. The Carinthian Mtn SchR 1 had to be used to quell the mutiny.

In the next few days the spirit of disobedience spread with frightening speed to all the reserve units of the Belluno Armee-gruppe.⁵⁴⁶ Soon the (mostly German) Eger-land men of SchR 6 were the only reliable troops left in the Prague 21 Sch Div; all the other units (SchR 7, 8 and 28) went out of control while they were being sent to Feltre. Also the majority of the troops of 60 ID - Hungarian IR 105 at Fonzaso plus the Moravian IR 108 and BH IR 5 at Feltre - refused to keep marching to the front. Meanwhile discontent was also spreading here and there to the battlefield itself. This was first noted in the Mt Pertica area where the Czech IR 119 (48 ID), in the second echelon, refused to deploy in the trenches. Units from 55 ID that had come to 48 ID's sector - the Hungarian IR 6 and Sturm Battalion 55 - followed the bad example of the 119th and couldn't be deployed. Similarly the Czech SchR 25 of 13 Sch Div, fighting in the Mt Pertica area, could no longer be employed in the foremost line. Finally the Czech SchR 14 of the same Division became disobedient.

Considerable unrest developed among the regiments of 40 Hon ID, which were engaged on the Col Caprile; this was due to rumors in the trenches about an impending enemy invasion of Transylvania and south Hungary, about the insurrection in Fiume, and about Czech aspirations to seize Hungarian territory. On 25 October GdK Schönburg was also reporting about the increasing discontent of the Hungarian troops under his authority. The commander of 6th Army urged the k.u.k. high command and the Budapest government to counteract the Hungarian troops' rowdy requests to return home with "reassuring declarations." FM Boroevic sent an equally forceful appeal to the k.u.k. high command on 27 October. At the same time he reported, "The demands by the Hungarian troops to transfer to Hungary to defend their own homeland are constantly increasing, especially among the March formations, and accompanied by violations of discipline and refusals to fight at the front here....Several regimental commanders have stated unanimously that they can no longer control this movement with force."

⁵⁴⁶Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 69 ff.

Meanwhile the k.u.k. 6th Army and the north wing of the Isonzo Army were engaged in heavy fighting. In the morning of the 27th the AOK at Baden received the first reports from the Piave indicating that the troops of 11 Hon CD and 7 ID (almost purely Magyar units⁵⁴⁷) had completely failed to fight and thus allowed the enemy to advance.

The AOK sought to counteract the movement among the Hungarian troops with an order issued in the afternoon of the same day, announcing that the Emperor-King was aware of their wish to return home to defend Hungary's borders. But for the time being Hungary wasn't in danger from either the Serbs or Romanians. Thus the Hungarian troops should remain on the Piave, since here as well as on the borders of their fatherland they would be able to guard "Hungary's holy soil."

But this order could no longer keep the Hungarians at the front. Later on the 27th the Budapest FJB 24 of the Hungarian 34 ID, in 6th Army's sector, refused to march to the battlefield to assist the hard-pressed k.u.k. II Corps. Although it was possible to bring this Battalion back under control, soon afterwards the Feld Jaeger Battalions 28 (Romanian) and 32 (Slovakian) marched away toward Vittorio without orders⁵⁴⁸. Thus the authorities couldn't use 34 ID for the planned counterattack in the Soligo basin, especially since the attitude of the Division's other units was very questionable.

Meanwhile the Czech SchR 30 at Caneva had also refused to move to the front. On the 28th the Czech IR 21 of 10 ID followed this bad example, and marched from Sacile back to Pordenone. On the same day the Poles and Ukrainians of IR 77 (under the Galician 24th Division) mutinied in the rear of the Isonzo Army. The Tarnow IR 57 declared they were no longer willing to fight for the Monarchy since Poland had declared its independence. IR 122

547 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The 11 Hon CD, like most hussar units, was deliberately maintained as a mainly-Magyar division. All of the regiments of 7 ID had a large Magyar majority except for IR 37 where they made up 49% of the personnel (35% were Romanian); the reference earlier in the original to the "Magyars and South Slavs" of 7 ID is therefore misleading. (Data on national composition is from the appendices to Plaschka's "Innere Front.")

548 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually in both FJB 28 and 32 the nationalities mentioned here were outnumbered by the Magyars. The figures were: FJB 28 - 49% Magyar to 34.5% Romanian; FJB 32 - 46% Magyar to 39% Slovak. (Plaschka, p. 343)

of the same Division, composed of Serbs and Croats from Dalmatia and Slovenes from the coastal lands, also renounced their allegiance. Developments were similar in the north Bohemian 26 Sch Div. Despite all appeals, Hvy FAR 26 were unwilling to deploy on the Monticano. Schützen Regiments 10, 11 and 12 - made up primarily of Czech personnel - did march toward the Monticano but made no effort to hide their unruly attitude along the way.

The condition of the troops assigned to FML Nöhring's group for the planned counterattack was poor. In the Croatian 36 ID, IR 116 had already refused to march to the front while back at Vittorio. IR 78 wouldn't move past Scomigo. IR 53 also mutinied. Thus only one battalion from the entire 36 ID was in place behind the Monticano in the evening of the 28th. After SchR 30 deserted, the 43 Sch Div reached the area east of Conegliano with just 2000 combat troops. Only the two Schützen Regiments (2 and 21) of 44 Sch Div were sent forward since the Carinthian Mtn SchR 1 - which wasn't completely reliable anyway - were still in the Codroipo area due to the mutiny of Mtn SchR 2.

The impact of the mutinies

At 9:00 AM on 28 October FM Boroevic reported to the high command: "The ability of our troops to resist is declining with shocking speed. The number of disobedient units increases greatly because of news concerning the manifesto and the independence of the Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak and South Slavic states, and we don't have the means to force them to obey. It is of the greatest importance that we immediately recognize the impact of this development and make the necessary political decisions. Otherwise the result will be anarchy and thus a catastrophe for the Monarchy and the Army, with unforeseeable consequences."

In a telegram which arrived at Udine around 1:00 PM, the k.u.k. high command replied that the Aus-Hung. government were seeking a separate peace and an immediate armistice from Wilson. They currently anticipated that Wilson would answer in two to three days. Then the armistice could be concluded and the evacuation of Venetia could begin. For now the AOK's wire message included a final appeal to Boroevic's Army Group: "If the front doesn't hold, it's questionable whether the Entente will be willing to negotiate; then their troops will advance to Trent and Villach and they will dictate terms to us....Therefore we need to pacify the troops and persuade them to hold out until next week. Then we can count on gaining an honorable armistice and peace."

FM Boroevic declared in another telegram to the AOK that neither the dynasty nor the Monarchy - nor for that matter the new national states that were forming - could survive if they didn't master the crisis of the Army, which was swelling like an avalanche. Morale couldn't be raised by promises that an armistice would soon be concluded. Recourse should be had to more effective measures; the political leaders of the nationalities, who bore responsibility for the current situation because of their rhetoric, should try to calm the troops.

Influenced by this suggestion, on the same day GO Arz informed the Vienna and Budapest governments of the catastrophic situation of the Army and demanded that they send a delegation of political leaders to the front. They should also forward the contents of FM Boroevic's telegram to the representatives of the national states in an attempt to have them send delegations also. He himself would gladly provide the nationalities' leaders with data about the situation.

Meanwhile the revolution of the nations and the deterioration of the Army made it the duty of the k.u.k. high command to seek an immediate armistice by all possible means, thus putting an end to the completely pointless bloodshed on the Southwestern front.⁵⁴⁹ Therefore at 3:45 PM on 28 October the armistice commission which had been established at Trent received an order to initiate negotiations with the Italian HQ. They were to accept any conditions that wouldn't besmirch the honor of the Army as long as they didn't capitulate unconditionally.

FM Boroevic was informed of this measure at 5:00 PM. Meanwhile the HQ of 6th Army reported to Udine that additional reserve units were disregarding orders, refusing to fight, and leaving the front on their own authority. There were no longer any reliable troops left to put down the mutineers by force. Any tactical analysis and planning had become impossible since even troops that had hitherto been completely responsive could no longer be trusted. The news from the Isonzo Army was no better. During the 28th the Army Group HQ at Udine learned that the right wing of the Isonzo Army had retreated behind the Monticano and that 6th Army were withdrawing to their second defensive position. By evening FM Boroevic was convinced that he'd have to evacuate the Venetian plains entirely in order to save his armies. If the enemy's further advance couldn't be halted, he intended to gradually withdraw both armies in an attempt to preserve the cohesion of the units.

549Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 345 ff.

The AOK approved this plan and in the night of 28-29 October issued a new order to FM Boroevic: "The destruction of the Army must be prevented; by timely movement we can avoid a catastrophic defeat." The same order was sent to FM Krobatin's Army Group in Tyrol.

Meanwhile deterioration was also affecting the Navy.⁵⁵⁰ On 27 October the naval command reported that the personnel wanted to leave their vessels and return home by 1 November at the latest. The Army units attached to the naval bases could no longer be counted on. On the next day, as instructed by the Emperor, it was announced that an armistice and the return of peace were imminent; the men should hold out just a little longer. The commander of the Pola Military Harbor demanded to be reinforced by a full-strength, reliable infantry brigade plus two batteries. FM Boroevic had to turn down this request since he no longer had such a force available. There apparently were no resources to repel an enemy offensive, or even a raid, against the ships and the coastal installations. Revolutionary sailors' committees were already forming, mostly with nationalist orientations. Counter-Admiral von Horthy, the naval commander-in-chief, was doing all he could to hold down this movement; like Boroevic, he suggested to Baden that political representatives of the individual nationalities should speak to the sailors in an attempt to calm them.

550 Kriegsarchiv (Marine-Archiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-18", pp. 710 ff.

Translator's appendix - summary of the mutinies

At this point we are including two documents which summarize the course of the mutinies. The first is from a chart (Beilage 35) in the original text which shows the deterioration of the units on the Southwestern front on a daily basis. The second is a report from GO Arz (published in his memoirs) which lists the units on all fronts which were involved in the disturbances.

Deterioration of the units on the Southwestern front

The information is arranged by dates; each division or independent brigade is shown with a figure (in parentheses) that estimates the percentage of men in the unit which were still reliable.

24 October

- . GO Archduke Joseph's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps (100%) - 49 ID, Riva Sector
 - . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
 - . XIV Corps (100%) - KJ Div, 19 ID
 - . Reserves (100%) - 74 ID, main body of 36 ID (leaving), $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div; 159 Bde
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps (100%) - 6 CD, 6 ID, 52 ID
 - . XIII Corps - 27 ID (75%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%)
 - . VI Corps (100%) - 53, 18 and 39 ID
 - . Reserves (100%) - 10 CD (leaving); 5 and 16 ID; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID
- . FM von Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps (100%) - 40 ID, 4 ID, half of 42 ID
 - . I Corps - 48 ID (100%), 13 ID (87%), 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps (100%) - 50 and 20 ID
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (100%), 60 ID (100%), 21 ID (75%), 55 ID (66%); half of 42 ID (0%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 31 ID (87%), 25 ID (100%), 11 CD (100%), 12 CD (100%)
 - . XXIV Corps (100%) - 41 and 51 ID
 - . Reserves (100%) - 34, 43, 10 ID; parts of 38 ID
 - . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps (100%) - 29 and 7 ID
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps (100%) - 46 and 58 ID

- . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
- . Reserves - 26 ID (100%), 44 ID (75%), 8 CD (100%), 24 ID (100%), 57 ID (100%); 201 Bde (100%)

25 October

- . GO Archduke Joseph's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps (100%) - 49 ID, Riva Sector
 - . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
 - . XIV Corps (100%) - KJ Div, 19 ID
 - . Reserves (100%) - 74 ID, parts of 36 ID (leaving), $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div; 159 Bde
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps (100%) - 6 CD, 6 ID, 52 ID
 - . XIII Corps - 27 ID (66%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (87%), half of 16 ID (100%)
 - . VI Corps (100%) - 53, 18 and 39 ID
 - . Reserves - 10 CD (leaving; 100%); 5 ID (100%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div (100%)
- . FM Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps (100%) - 40 ID, 4 ID, half of 42 ID
 - . I Corps - 48 ID (75%), 13 ID (87%), 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%), 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (100%), 60 ID (100%), 21 ID (50%), 55 ID (66%); half of 42 ID (0%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 31 ID (87%), 25 ID (100%), 11 CD (100%), 12 CD (100%)
 - . XXIV Corps (100%) - 41 and 51 ID
 - . Reserves (100%) - 34, 43, 10 ID; parts of 36 ID
 - . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps (100%) - 29 and 7 ID
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps (100%) - 46 and 58 ID
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 26 ID (100%), 44 ID (75%), 8 CD (100%), 24 ID (100%), 57 ID (100%); 201 Bde (100%)

26 October

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps (100%) - 49 ID, Riva Sector

- . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
- . XIV Corps - KJ Div (87%), 19 ID (100%)
- . Reserves (100%) - 74 ID, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div; 159 Bde
- . 11th Army
 - . III Corps (100%) - 6 CD, 6 ID, 52 ID
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (75%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%), half of 16 ID (100%)
 - . VI Corps (100%) - 53, 18 and 39 ID
 - . Reserves - Parts of 10 CD (leaving; 100%); 5 ID (100%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 27 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div (100%)
- . FM Borojevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - 40 ID (75%), 4 ID (100%), half of 42 ID (100%)
 - . I Corps - 48 ID (75%), 13 ID (75%), 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%), 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (100%), 60 ID (75%), 21 ID (50%), 55 ID (66%; IR # 7 leaving); half of 42 ID (0%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 31 ID (87%), 25 ID (100%), 11 CD (100%), 12 CD (100%)
 - . XXIV Corps (100%) - 41 and 51 ID
 - . Reserves (100%) - 34, 43, 10 ID; half of 36 ID, half of 44 ID
 - . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps (100%) - 29 and 7 ID
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps (100%) - 46 and 58 ID
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 26 ID (100%), 8 CD (100%), 24 ID (100%), 57 ID (100%); 201 Bde (100%); half of 44 ID (50%)

27 October

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (87%), 19 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div (75%; leaving); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps (100%) - 6 CD, 6 ID, 52 ID
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (66%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%),

- half of 16 ID (50%)
- . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (100%)
- . Reserves - Parts of 10 CD (leaving; 100%); 5 ID (50%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 27 ID (0% and leaving); $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Edelweiss Div (100%)
- . FM Boroëvic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - 40 ID (75%), 4 ID (100%), half of 42 ID (100%)
 - . I Corps - 48 ID (75%), 13 ID (75%), 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%), 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (100%), 60 ID (75%), 21 ID (50%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 55 ID (50%); half of 42 ID (0%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 31 ID (87%), 25 ID (100%), 11 CD (25%; mostly leaving), 12 CD (100%)
 - . XXIV Corps (100%) - 41 and 51 ID
 - . Reserves - 34 ID (66%), 43 ID (75%), 10 ID (100%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 36 ID (100%), half of 44 ID (100%)
 - . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 29 ID (100%), 7 ID (50%; parts leaving); 201 Bde (100%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps (100%) - 46 and 58 ID
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 26 ID (100%; leaving), 8 CD (100%), 24 ID (100%), 57 ID (100%); half of 44 ID (50%)

28 October

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (87%), 19 ID (75%)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps - 6 CD (100%), 6 ID (75%), 52 ID (66%)
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (66%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%), half of 16 ID (50%)
 - . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 5 ID (50%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); half of the Edelweiss Div (13%)
- . FM Boroëvic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - 40 ID (75%), 4 ID (100%), half of 42 ID

- (100%)
 - . I Corps - 48 ID (75%), 13 ID (66%), 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%), 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (100%), 60 ID (25%), 21 ID (25%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 55 ID (50%); half of 42 ID (0%), half of Edelweiss Div (100%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 25 ID (87%), 34 ID (66%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 11 CD (100%), 12 CD (100%); remnants of 31 ID (50%)
 - . XXIV Corps - 41 ID (100%), 51 ID (100%), 10 ID (75% but unreliable regt leaving)
 - . Reserves - 43 ID (75%), 36 ID (25%); half of 44 ID (100%)
 - . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 26 ID (25%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 7 ID (50%); 201 Bde (100%); remnants of 29 ID (100%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 8 CD; 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps (100%) - 46 and 58 ID
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 24 ID (75%), 57 ID (50%); half of 44 ID (25%)

29 October

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (87%), 19 ID (75%)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps - 6 CD (100%), 6 ID (75%), 52 ID (66%)
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (66%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%), half of 16 ID (50%)
 - . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 5 ID (50%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); parts of the Edelweiss Div (13%)
- . FM Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - 40 ID (75%; unreliable regt leaving), 4 ID (100%), half of 42 ID (100%)
 - . I Corps - 48 ID (75%; unreliable regt leaving), 13 ID (50%; unreliable units leaving), 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%), 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (100%), 60 ID (25%; parts leaving), 21 ID (0%; parts leaving), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 55 ID (0%; parts

- leaving); half of 42 ID (0%; leaving), half of Edelweiss Div (100%)
- . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 25 ID (87%), 34 ID (66%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 11 CD (0%), 12 CD (100%); remnants of 31 ID (50%)
 - . XXIV Corps - 41 ID (100%), 51 ID (100%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 10 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 43 ID (50%; parts leaving), 36 ID (25%; parts leaving); half of 44 ID (100%)
- . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 26 ID (25%); 201 Bde (100%), 24 ID (75%); remnants of 29 ID (50%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 8 CD; 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps - 46 ID (100%), 58 ID (75%)
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 57 ID (50%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 7 ID (33%); half of 44 ID (0%)

30 October⁵⁵¹

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps (100%) - 3 CD, 56 ID
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (87%), 19 ID (75%)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps - 6 CD (100%), 6 ID (75%), 52 ID (66%)
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (66%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%), half of 16 ID (50%)
 - . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 5 ID (50%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); parts of the Edelweiss Div (13%)

551From this point forward the corps assignments and the distinction between front-line and reserve units is no longer clear in the original, and probably wasn't clear at the time.

- . FM Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 40 ID (100%); 4 ID (100%), half of 42 ID (100%)
 - . I Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 48 ID (100%); half of 13 ID (100%); 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%), 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 28 ID (25%), half of 60 ID (0%); half of 21 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 55 ID (0%); half of Edelweiss Div (100%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 25 ID (87%), 34 ID (66%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 11 CD (0%), 12 CD (100%); remnants of 31 ID (50%)
 - . XXIV Corps - 41 ID (100%), 51 ID (100%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 10 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - Half of 43 ID (100%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 36 ID (33%); half of 44 ID (100%)
 - . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 26 ID (25%); 201 Bde (100%), 24 ID (75%); remnants of 29 ID (50%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 8 CD; 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps - 46 ID (87%), 58 ID (75%)
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 57 ID (50%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 7 ID (33%); half of 44 ID (0%)

31 October

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps - 3 CD (25%), 56 ID (87%)
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (75%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 19 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps - 6 CD (100%), 6 ID (75%), 52 ID (66%)
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (66%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (100%), half of 16 ID (50%)
 - . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 5 ID (25%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); parts of the Edelweiss Div (13%)
- . FM Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 40 ID (100%); remnants of 4 ID (100%); half of 42 ID (100%)

- . I Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 48 ID (100%); half of 13 ID (100%); 17 ID (87%)
- . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%); remnants of 20 ID (100%)
- . Reserves - 28 ID (25%), half of 60 ID (0%); half of 21 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 55 ID (0%); half of Edelweiss Div (33%)
- . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 25 ID (87%), 34 ID (66%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 11 CD (0%), 12 CD (100%); remnants of 31 ID (50%)
 - . XXIV Corps - 41 ID (100%), 51 ID (100%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 10 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - Half of 43 ID (100%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 36 ID (33%); half of 44 ID (100%)
- . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 26 ID (25%); 201 Bde (100%), 24 ID (75%); remnants of 29 ID (50%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 8 CD; 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps - 46 ID (87%), 58 ID (75%)
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 57 ID (50%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 7 ID (33%)

1 November

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps - 3 CD (25%), 56 ID (87%)
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (75%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 19 ID (66%; unreliable regt leaving)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps - 6 CD (87%; unreliable troops leaving), 6 ID (50%), 52 ID (66%)
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (0%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (66%), half of 16 ID (50%)
 - . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 5 ID (25%; half the Div leaving); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); parts of the Edelweiss Div (13%)
- . FM Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 40 ID (100%); remnants of 4 ID (100%); half of 42 ID (0%; leaving)
 - . I Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 48 ID (100%); half of 13 ID (100%); 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%); remnants of 20 ID (100%)

- . Reserves - 28 ID (25%; one regt leaving), half of 60 ID (0%; one regt leaving); half of 21 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 55 ID (0%); half of Edelweiss Div (33%)
- . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 25 ID (87%), 34 ID (66%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 11 CD (0%), 12 CD (100%); remnants of 31 ID (50%)
 - . XXIV Corps - 41 ID (100%), 51 ID (100%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 10 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - Half of 43 ID (100%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 36 ID (33%); half of 44 ID (100%)
- . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 26 ID (25%); 201 Bde (100%), 24 ID (75%); remnants of 29 ID (50%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 8 CD; 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps - 46 ID (87%), 58 ID (75%)
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 57 ID (50%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 7 ID (33%)

2 November

- . FM Freiherr von Krobatin's Army Group
 - . 10th Army
 - . V Corps (100%) - 164 Bde, 22 ID, 163 Bde
 - . XX Corps - 49 ID (25%), Riva Sector (100%)
 - . XXI Corps - 3 CD (25%); remnants of 56 ID (100%)
 - . XIV Corps - KJ Div (75%), half of 19 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - 74 ID (100%); 159 Bde (100%)
 - . 11th Army
 - . III Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 6 CD (100%), 6 ID (50%); remnants of 52 ID (100%)
 - . XIII Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 27 ID (0%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 38 ID (66%), half of 16 ID (50%; unreliable regt leaving)
 - . VI Corps - 53 ID (100%), 18 ID (75%), 39 ID (75%; unreliable regt leaving)
 - . Reserves - 5 ID (50%); half of 16 ID (100%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 38 ID (0%); parts of the Edelweiss Div (13%)
- . FM Boroevic's Army Group
 - . Armeegruppe Belluno
 - . XXVI Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 40 ID (66%); remnants of 4 ID (100%)
 - . I Corps - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 48 ID (100%); half of 13 ID (100%); 17 ID (87%)
 - . XV Corps - 50 ID (75%); remnants of 20 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - $\frac{3}{4}$ of 28 ID (33%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 60 ID (0%); half of 21 ID (0%); $\frac{1}{4}$ of 55 ID (0%); half of Edelweiss Div (33%)
 - . 6th Army
 - . II Corps - 25 ID (87%), 34 ID (66%), $\frac{1}{4}$ of 11 CD (0%), 12 CD (100%); remnants of 31 ID (50%)
 - . XXIV Corps - 41 ID (100%), 51 ID (100%), $\frac{3}{4}$ of 10 ID (100%)
 - . Reserves - Half of 43 ID (100%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 36 ID (33%); half of 44 ID (100%)
- . Isonzo Army
 - . XVI Corps - 26 ID (25%); 201 Bde (100%), 24 ID (75%); remnants of 29 ID (50%)
 - . IV Corps (100%) - 8 CD; 64 and 70 ID
 - . VII Corps (100%) - 33 and 12 ID
 - . XXIII Corps - 46 ID (87%), 58 ID (75%)
 - . XXII Corps (100%) - 14 and 2 ID
 - . Reserves - 57 ID (50%); $\frac{3}{4}$ of 7 ID (33%)

GO Arz's summary of the mutinies

The following quotation is from a report he published in "Zur

"Geschichte des Grossen Krieges" (pp. 358-60). He doesn't give the date of the report, but from the context it appears to have been sent on 29 October to the War Minister and to General Weber.

"To date mutinies (refusals to obey orders) have been reported involving the following troops:

On the Southwestern front the first cases occurred in Infantry Regiment Nr. 25 and Honved Infantry Regiment Nr. 22. Both regiments refused to march to the front and declared they would fight only for Hungary. The same sentiment soon spread throughout the 27th Infantry Division and 38th Honved Infantry Division. Honved Infantry Regiment Nr. 25 and parts of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Infantry Regiment Nr. 4 refused to relieve other units or to enter the front under any circumstances. The following units later refused to obey orders - Infantry Regiments Nr. 6, 14, 16, 57, 59 and 68; parts of the 7th and 36th Infantry Divisions; Infantry Regiments Nr. 103, 105, 111, 114, 119 and 122; Tyrol Kaiser Jaeger Regiment Nr. 4; Feld Jaeger Battalion Nr. 4 (which marched to the rear rather than to the front); Schützen Regiments Nr. 7, 8, 14, 25, 28 and 30; Mountain Schützen Regiment Nr. 2; and Heavy [Field] Artillery Regiment Nr. 26. Parts of the 21st Schützen Division and of Schützen Regiment Nr. 30 marched to the rear on their own authority. 26th Schützen Division isn't showing any desire to fight. Parts of Honved Infantry Regiment Nr. 26 are marching away without orders, in conjunction with Honved Infantry Regiment Nr. 25.

Honved Infantry Regiment Nr. 13, stationed on the Western front, is demanding to be sent back to Hungary.

The 40th Honved Infantry Division and parts of 28th Infantry Division are very unruly. Many March formations have also mutinied.

But the list of troops who've mutinied is still not ended.

On the southern [Balkan] front the following mutinied - Infantry Regiment Nr. 41, Feld Jaeger Battalions Nr. 3 and 27, III Battalion of k.k. Landsturm Regiment Nr. 27, III Battalion of k.k. Landsturm Regiment Nr. 5, and Uhlan Regiment Nr. 13.

In Ukraine the hussar regiments of 2nd Cavalry Division have become unreliable and are demanding to be sent home, as are Battalions V/48 (Hungarian), V/78 (Croatian) and V/103 (Hungarian)."

d. The day of decision - 29 October

On 29 October the Italians on the western and southern Tyrolean fronts, as well as on the Asiago plateau, still restricted their activity to pinning attacks designed to tie down their opponents (who still occupied their original positions) in local fighting. But the battle in Venetia raged on to a decision.

The Belluno Armeegruppe's sector

In the Grappa Mountains, on this day G.Lt Giardino's 4th Italian Army - which had received fresh reserves (18 and 80 ID) - renewed their attacks against the Belluno Armeegruppe. The successes which the Armies of Graziani, Caviglia and Cavan had won on the Piave apparently gave Giardino's Army reason to hope that they also could finally win a victory.

Destructive Italian artillery fire resumed against the k.u.k. XXVI Corps' positions on the heights around 9:00 AM.⁵⁵² An hour later infantry attacked the Col Caprile area and Mt Asolone, where the Aus-Hung. units consumed their last strength to continue to oppose the enemy. In bloody fighting which lasted several hours they threw back the Italians. At 10:00 AM and during the afternoon the 40 Hon ID repulsed several thrusts. In the evening the Italians attacked the position in the Brenta valley, also in vain. In the Asolone sector six assault detachments of the IX Italian Corps, followed in the second echelon by a brigade of 18 ID, stormed ahead after prolonged artillery preparation. Their opponents were the weakened units of the k.u.k. 4 ID.⁵⁵³ Covered by fog on the high ground, the enemy were able to advance to the Spiedon, but here they were thrown back in a counter-thrust by the gallant Lower Austrian IR 49.⁵⁵⁴ New fighting broke out on the hotly-contested Asolone during the afternoon. The technical infantry company of IR 49 threw themselves against the attackers, pushed them back, thrust into the Italian trenches, and returned with a large number of prisoners. The heroism of this Lower Austrian regiment was unshaken. Gallant Czech troops (battalions of the Moravian IR 8 and several companies of the Bohemian IR 28) fought with equal stubbornness. The fighting ended around 6:00 PM. Thanks to the gallant stand by the k.u.k. 4 ID, all of Mt Asolone remained in the defenders' hands after the difficult action.

552 Horsetzky, "Asolone", pp. 272 ff.

553 Dupont, pp. 185 ff.

554 "Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. III, pp. 67 ff.

The neighboring I Corps also engaged in bitter fighting on 29 October, next to Mt Pertica. Around 10:00 AM assault troops of VI Italian Corps attacked out of the Cesilla valley toward the Cra. Cima, but their effort shattered due to the firm stand by BH IR 7 (from 28 ID) which had been inserted into the sector of 48 ID. On the Tasson Ridge and the western slope of the Col dell'Orso the worn-out Schützen Regiments # 1 and 24 (of 13 Sch Div) still held their old lines, while 17 ID were maintaining their defense gallantly in the Mt Solarolo area.

The fighting on 29 October was equally heavy east of Mt Spinuccia. Here Graziani's Army, whose objective was Feltre, pushed north on both sides of the Piave. I Italian Corps attacked the k.u.k. 50 ID (of FML Le Beau's XV Corps); this Division managed to stand their ground north of Alano, on Mt Madal, and further west on the Calcino Brook. However, the enemy were already able to drive through Faveri and out of the Piave valley into the Quero basin.

In the area east of the Piave, on the morning of the 29th the 20 Hon ID withdrew fighting from the vicinity of Mt Perlo to Segusino and to a line on the high ground between Mounts Balcon and Barberie. Meanwhile the remnants of 31 ID (of the k.u.k. II Corps) retreated from the heights north of Valdobbiadene and from S Pietro toward Follina. These two Hungarian divisions were pursued by the French 23 and Italian 52 ID. In the operation the French and Italians captured 1000 men and 18 guns.⁵⁵⁵

The 20 Hon ID were already being assaulted along their new line of resistance in the afternoon. Despite gallant resistance the Honved lost Segusino to the French. The worn-down troops of 20 Hon ID were still able to hold onto Mounts Balcon and Barberie, though with some difficulty. They were endangered by Alpini detachments of the 52 Italian ID which advanced toward Mt Cesen.

6th Army's sector

In the evening of the 28th Caviglia's Army hadn't advanced past the Soligo basin, and their right wing was still hanging back at the northeastern foot of the Montello. G.Lt Caviglia therefore issued a "fiery appeal" in which he called on his troops to overcome all obstacles and any resistance from their opponents so they could reach their all-important objective, Vittorio.⁵⁵⁶

555Rocca, p. 235

556Valori, p. 492

The opposing k.u.k. 6th Army had meanwhile already begun to retreat to the line of heights north of S Pietro - Pieve del Trevisan and into the hilly terrain around Conegliano. In the night of 28-29 October defensive fire from the batteries of the Honved units of XXIV Corps stopped completely on the northern bank of the Piave. Now the VIII Italian Corps could finally cross the river near Nervesa, undisturbed by their foes. This Corps found that the route through the abandoned positions on the northern bank was open. In the next morning, fighting with rear guards, they advanced through Susegana toward the new defensive lines of the k.u.k. XXIV Corps near Conegliano.

Meanwhile on the left wing of 8th Italian Army the XXVII and XXII Corps, urged on by Caviglia's appeal, quickly followed the k.u.k. II Corps as they withdrew to their second position. Since daybreak the entire front of the k.u.k. 6th Army was being pounded by the enemy's overwhelming mass of guns. Nevertheless, for some time the HQ of II Corps had the impression that the Italian drumfire was directed only against the positions that had already been evacuated and that their infantry weren't attacking seriously. But in the center of II Corps Luxardo's group (made up of IR 128 from 25 ID, the 34 ID which were already quite unreliable and the battered remnants of 11 Hon CD and of 12 Reit Sch Div) were already starting to break apart at 8:00 AM under effective enemy artillery fire. During the morning the reluctant troops of Luxardo's group gave way to increasing pressure from XXII Italian Corps. It seemed that in their rapid progress this enemy force were about to occupy the Vittorio-Cison road, menacing 25 ID, still stationed on Mt Moncader, and 31 ID which was pulling back to Follina. Therefore before the morning ended the HQ of 6th Army ordered all of II Corps to retreat to an intermediate position running through Mt Palon (west of Tovena), Rolle and the Mondragon Heights, then through the hills east of Refrontolo. It was hoped that here for at least several hours they could cover the mountain road that leads through the S Ubaldo Pass to Belluno.

For the entire morning 41 Hon ID of the k.u.k. XXIV Corps stood fast on the heights est of Conegliano against half-hearted attacks by a larger Italian force (60 ID and VIII Corps). Toward noon, as the remnants of 12 Reit Sch Div withdrew toward Refrontolo, the Honved Division were forced to bend their right wing back in the area southeast of this town. As the enemy attack gained strength in the afternoon the 41 Hon ID were no longer able to withstand it. They retreated behind the Cervano Brook, which was necessary also because the fighting near Conegliano had been decided in favor of the enemy.

In the morning the 51 Hon ID, guarding the approaches to Conegliano, began to feel strong pressure from the advance of XVIII Italian Corps through S Lucia. Here the enemy 33 ID sought to battle their way to the town.⁵⁵⁷ Bitter fighting erupted when their detachments broke into the lines of 51 Hon ID near Bin (west of Ramera). The Honved continued to defend their positions stubbornly and at first were able to hold them with counter-attacks. But in the afternoon the Italians managed to gain some ground in the direction of Conegliano. And meanwhile the situation on the extreme left wing of XXIV Corps, held by part of 10 ID near Ramera, had become very critical because the enemy had penetrated over the Monticano.

The Isonzo Army's sector

As narrated earlier, opposite the right wing of the k.u.k. XVI Corps (FML Podhajsky's group - 29 ID, 26 Sch Div, 201 Lst Inf Bde) the leading troops of the XIV English Corps (of Cavan's Army) had already advanced right up to the Monticano in the evening of the 28th. But the night of 28-29 October passed in relative quiet along the entire front of XVI Corps. In case the enemy strongly attacked the neighboring XXIV Corps in the direction of Conegliano on the 29th, FML Berndt intended to counterattack over the Monticano with the reinforcements which had arrived there (26 Sch Div and 24 ID). Therefore the bridges were left intact. IV Corps planned to thrust forward simultaneously with XVI Corps through Ormelle - S Polo with the parts of 8 CD which were standing ready behind 64 Hon ID near Oderzo. Also 6th Army HQ hadn't yet abandoned the plan of a counterattack with FML Nöhring's group, which had been placed under their jurisdiction. After consulting with the HQ of the Isonzo Army, however, they altered the assignment of this group; Nöhring wouldn't start to attack until the moment when the enemy thrust over the Monticano.

Cavan's Army intended that on the 29th the English XIV and Italian XI Corps would at first stay in place to pin down their opponents until 8th Italian Army had gained ground toward Vittorio and thus created the conditions necessary for a further advance by 10th Army. But before dawn on 29 October some dismounted English cavalry (the Northamptonshire Yeomanry) managed to drive away 26 Sch Div's advanced troops who were stationed on the south bank of the Monticano near Vazzola. Soon afterward the outposts of 201 Lst Inf Bde were pushed out of Visna. At the same time fighting broke out north of Mareno in

557 Valori, pp. 492 ff.

the sectors of 10 and 29 ID. In the morning there were also actions at Fontanellette (involving outposts of 24 ID) and at Tempio, Ormelle, Gere and Roncadelle in the sector of 64 Hon ID; this combat, however, soon subsided.

As daylight increased, enemy planes cruised over the battle lines of XVI Corps; they dropped bombs, thrust deep behind the front, and strafed our already shaken infantry with machine guns. SchR 12 couldn't withstand this hitherto-unknown tactic; they evacuated their positions on the northern end of the Monticano embankment after offering hardly any resistance. A dismounted English cavalry detachment took advantage of the situation; around 10:00 AM they occupied the undamaged bridge northeast of Vazzola and advanced onto the opposite bank. Threatened from the flank and rear, SchR 10 now also fell back from the northern embankment. The reserves of 26 Sch Div were at the same time caught up in the retreat. English infantry quickly followed their cavalry over the brook. By noon the English XIV Corps had already crossed the Monticano at several points, and the enemy had also been able to penetrate the sector of 201 Lst Inf Bde near Grison. FML Podhajsky deployed all of the reserves still available to plug the gaps torn in the front.

Col. Rast's gallant 201 Lst Inf Bde were able to regain the ground they'd lost near Grison. Sturm Battalion 26, the Leitmeritz SchR 9 and the Linz Lst IR 2 were twice able to wrest Cimetta away from the Englishmen.⁵⁵⁸ But the front farther west remained broken. It was possible to get the retreating detachments of 26 Sch Div to halt temporarily, and they were joined by troops from FML Nöhring's group who came forward from the road west of Campo Cervaro. But the troops of Schützen Regiments 10, 11 and 12 - the majority of whom were Czech - didn't want to fight any further. Now a group from 29 ID which had been ordered to counterattack (they were the remnants of IR 121) also fell back to Campanelle. It was necessary to order this weak group forward once more, along with Hon IR 300 of 51 Hon ID which had marched to the rear due to a misunderstanding. Meanwhile the troops of English XIV Corps who'd broken over the Monticano spread out toward the northwest. This compelled the portions of 29 ID which were still bravely holding out west of the penetration to also retreat.⁵⁵⁹

The situation was extremely critical. The English had already

⁵⁵⁸Wiss Haupt, "Die 52. Landwehr-Infanterie-Brigade im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Reichenberg, 1928), pp. 449 ff.

⁵⁵⁹Broudre, "Oktober und November-tage 1918" (in "Der Heimat Söhne im Weltkrieg. Der 92er", 1930 issue)

broken into the area where XVI Corps had stationed their artillery. Some gallant batteries, often changing their positions, fired shrapnel rounds until the last moment; others withdrew to new firing points in the rear. A large part of the guns fell into enemy hands. Meanwhile under FML Nöhring's counterattack group the still reliable part of 36 ID (just IR 78), 86 Sch Bde of 43 Div and SchR 2 of 44 Sch Div had to be used to support the crumbling front on both sides of Ramera and to seal off the penetration near C Valdoni. 87 Sch Bde (44 Sch Div) had been held in readiness west of Camp Cervaro and in the morning had eventually assembled four battalions (three from SchR 21 and the III Battalion of Mtn SchR 1); however, they felt they were too weak to attack.⁵⁶⁰ The counterattack was finally scheduled to start at 3:00 PM. But when 87 Sch Bde finished preparations around this time it was too late for any effective counter-thrust, especially since parts of the Brigade had joined the withdrawal of 26 Sch Div.

By 4:00 PM the western wing of FML Podhajsky's group were no longer capable of resistance anywhere along the front. Around this hour the English reached the road west of Campo Cavere. To avoid complete encirclement, the troops who were still holding out near Cimetta (Sturm Battalion 26 plus parts of SchR 9 and of Lst IR 2) withdrew to Camp di mezzo after an honorable but hopeless struggle.

The enemy breakthrough had driven a deep wedge into the western wing of the Isonzo Army. West of the penetration, however, the left wing of XXIV Corps stood fast, supported by part of Nöhring's group; east of the breach parts of the gallant 201 Lst Inf Bde were still fighting on the Monticano. FML Podhajsky was trying to build a new front along the Codognè-Campanelle road; he used 29 ID, the remnants of the war-weary 26 Sch Div and the last scraps of 7 ID which had been relieved in the Lutrano sector by 24 ID.⁵⁶¹ But the unchecked retreat and the refusal of a large portion of the troops to fight made further resistance near Codognè impossible. Thus toward evening FML Berndt had to decide to withdraw Podhajsky's beaten group, which could no longer get the help it needed from Nöhring's counterattack group; Podhajsky pulled back behind the Livenza.

The general retreat of FM Boroevic's Army Group

Around noon, when the dimensions of the enemy breakthrough over

560Berndt, pp. 68 ff.

561This final remnant of 7 ID consisted of just 200 soldiers who'd been thrown together from various parts of the Division.

the Monticano were already evident, the HQ of the Isonzo Army informed HQ of 6th Army that a retreat to the Livenza - if still possible - was becoming unavoidable. The English thrust over the Monticano seemed to threaten above all the k.u.k. XXIV Corps, which were hanging on near Conegliano only with difficulty. It was feared that the enemy would continue their thrust from the area they'd penetrated toward Sacile, cutting off this Corps' line of retreat to the Livenza and driving the entire 6th Army back into the mountains. Because of this danger, at 4:30 PM the HQ of 6th Army ordered the retreat to continue to a line that would run from Col Vincentin (8 km north of Vittorio) along the foot of the high ground through Sarmeida and Stevena to Sacile and then over the Livenza to Brugnera. HQ of 6th Army left Vittorio around 6:00 PM for a new station at Pordenone.

The retreat of II Corps past the lines Mt Palon - Mondragon and Tovena - Trichiana would leave open to the enemy the route to Belluno. This would make it impossible for 6th Army to remain linked with the Belluno Armeegruppe (still holding their lines unchanged west of the Piave). Therefore the HQ of 6th Army ordered II Corps to guard the mountain crossing-point near S Ubaldo with a division (31 ID). However, the weak remnants of this burn-out unit wouldn't provide a reliable garrison for the pass. As II Corps pivoted northeast to the foot of the high ground north of Vittorio, a wide gap was developing between 6th Army and the Belluno Armeegruppe and there were no reserves to fill it.

FZM Goglia recognized the danger. In the afternoon he wired an order to XV Corps to send all forces available west of the Piave into this gap in an attempt to maintain the link between the heavily-engaged 20 Hon ID and the retreating right wing of 6th Army. Mounts Cesen, Federa and Crep were to be occupied immediately while the remnants of 31 ID (now re-assigned to XV Corps) blocked the S Ubaldo Pass. Furthermore all reserves of the Belluno Armeegruppe still willing to fight were to be hurriedly collected and brought together at Mel and Trichiana; these were IR 114 and the Sturm Battalion from the Edelweiss Division, Sturm Battalions 21 and 60, three Feld Jaeger Battalions (# 12 and 19 plus BH Bn 4) from 60 ID, one battalion of Hon IR 4 (20 Hon ID) and three mountain batteries. These units were placed under the HQ of 60 ID with the assignment of occupying the mountain crossing-points south of Belluno and thus closing the gap that was developing in the front.

On 29 October the lines of FM Borojevic's Army Group had been broken again at two points (near Soligno and southeast of

Conegliano on the Monticano), and the rear areas were in an uproar due to the mutiny of the reserves. Frankly, the situation was hopeless.

For the moment there was nothing behind the 30 km gap between Valdobbiadene and Serravalle (north of Vittorio) but mutinous reserves who were trying to go home. Near Belluno were Schützen Regiments 8 and 28 of 21 Sch Div, IR 6 and BH IR 4 of 55 ID and IR 108 of 60 ID. It was necessary to send Schützen Regiments 14 and 25 of 13 Sch Div back through Feltre, and several regiments back through Fonzaso (IR 105 of 60 ID, IR 119 of 48 ID and Hon IR 20 of 40 Hon ID).⁵⁶² Honved Infantry Regiments 25 and 26 of 42 Hon ID were already making their way home through Fiera di Primiero.

The situation of 6th Army was no better. Here it was no longer possible to employ 31, 34 and 36 ID, 43 and 44 Sch Divs, or 11 Hon CD and 12 Reit Sch Div. The mutinies in 36 ID had now spread to IR 16. It was necessary to send Feld Jaeger Battalions 28 and 32 (of 34 ID) "honorably" back to Hungary. SchR 30 of 43 Sch Div marched toward home "in good order", followed by SchR 29 and a mountain battery. Even the two hitherto-reliable battalions of the Carinthian Mtn SchR 1, which were supposed to move forward from Casarsa to Sacile, refused to obey. When both battalions came upon other soldiers in Pordenone who were plundering on the way home, they declared that they would only defend the borders of their own province. A surprise attack by enemy planes completed the ruin of these battalions which had once been so gallant. They had to be sent back to Cividale.

Under the Isonzo Army the Croatian IR 96 of 58 ID refused to enter a position on the lower Piave. Along with 7 ID, three regiments of 26 Sch Div had completely failed in action. There were no reliable reserves left in the Isonzo Army. The March formations on the lines of communication had already been in complete disorder for days. Food supplies were being plundered everywhere, as reported from Follina, Codroipo and Pordenone. The situation continued to unravel every hour.

6th Army HQ reported around noon that a very large part of their artillery had been lost. They indicated, as earlier, that the main cause of the rapid collapse of morale was the "destructive influence of events in the interior of the Monarchy." Troops who'd been completely reliable a few days earlier could no longer be counted on. A large portion were no longer willing to endure combat, and whole regiments were marching away from the front.

⁵⁶²Horsetzky, "Die vier letzten Kriegswochen", pp. 17 ff.

Under these conditions, any planning was useless. All that was certain was that the entire Army was in an extremely dangerous crisis and that it would be possible to preserve a substantial number of units only if they could be removed immediately from the battle.

As FM Boroevic continued to receive new bad tidings, he lost any remaining faith that it would be possible to continue resistance with his forces. Now that the front had been broken at several points the best he could do would be to keep the armies intact and carry out the now inevitable retreat to the pre-war borders in safety. Army Group HQ anticipated this withdrawal with the greatest apprehension, since their forces suffered from shortages of all kinds and were falling to pieces; under enemy pressure, the retreat could lead to a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. In this desperate situation, at noon on the 29th FM Boroevic suggested to the high command that they should let their Italian counterparts know that we were willing to evacuate Venetia; however, the Italians should also understand that this territory would be preserved from destruction only if the Aus-Hung. Army didn't have to fight its way home. In this way the enemy might be induced to immediately stop hostilities.

Consistent with FM Boroevic's suggestion, on the same day (around 5:00 PM) the AOK issued instructions to GdI Weber, the head of the armistice commission who'd been waiting at Trent for negotiations to be initiated. At 7:00 PM the naval command were ordered to send a telegram to the Italian high command from the Pola radio station; it stated that the AOK's intention to evacuate Venetia without unnecessary damage and in orderly fashion could be carried out only if hostilities ceased immediately. A half hour later an order from Baden arrived at Udine - "To show the enemy our inclination toward peace, Field Marshal von Boroevic's Army Group are to leave Venetia systematically and offer resistance to pursuing foes only if necessary."

At 8:00 PM FM Boroevic passed this order on to his three Army commanders, adding at the same time instructions to do all they could to contain the "spreading anarchy." At this time all of 6th Army were already withdrawing from the enemy. But there was considerable doubt whether this Army could successfully retreat over the foot of the mountains north of Vittorio and to Sacile. In the afternoon long-range enemy artillery fired rounds into the withdrawing columns of II Corps at points far beyond Campea. In the evening troops from XXVII Italian Corps (8th Army) reached Combai, Miane and Campea, while a pursuing column from 57 ID of

XXII Italian Corps had already advanced to Follina to secure the entry into the mountains near Mareno. On the other hand, 60 ID of XXII Corps hadn't marched past Refrontolo. The 58 ID of VIII Corps were driving energetically toward Vittorio, and reached the Cervano Brook in the evening.

Despite a strenuous march, the k.u.k. 31 and 25 ID were able to accomplish their assigned movement relatively easily. On the other hand, Luxardo's group (34 ID plus remnants of 11 Hon CD and of 12 Reit Sch Div) were in desperate straits since they no longer had any food or ammunition. The enemy forces which had broken over the Monticano were closer to Stevena than was Luxardo's group.

In the evening troops from 33 ID (XVIII Italian Corps), after a fight with the last decimated rear guards of 51 Hon ID, entered the evacuated town of Conegliano. The XXIV k.u.k. Corps were able in the darkness of night to avoid encirclement by the enemy and fell back with Nöhring's group (now under their command) toward Sacile. Behind the withdrawing XXIV Corps a pursuit detachment of 8th Italian Army were thrusting toward their principal objective, Vittorio; in this area parts of the k.u.k. 34 ID were still marching back from Mondragon to Tarzo.

In Podhajsky's group of the k.u.k. XVI Corps the orders issued in the evening merely legitimized the retreat already under way past the line Campanelle-Codognè. There were still detachments of 29 ID, of 26 Sch Div and especially of 201 Lst Inf Bde who maintained good order during this demoralizing night-time withdrawal. And there were still rear guards ready to fight the enemy if they pursued too closely. Nonetheless, the English and Italians would hardly have found many opponents capable of resistance if they'd sent their horsemen forward to the Livenza that night. The English XIV Corps, apparently exhausted from three days of combat, didn't pursue the quickly-retreating Austro-Hungarians past the Codognè-Campanelle road.

As FML Podhajsky's group streamed back to the Livenza, farther south 24 ID were still near Lutrano on the Monticano, and trying with all their available forces (plus the last remnants of 7 ID) to set up a makeshift defense of the exposed flank of the k.u.k. IV Corps along the line Albina alta - Vallont - Campomolino. IV Corps were still stationed south of Lutarno and west of the Oderzo - Ponte di Piave railroad line with 8 CD, 64 and 70 Hon ID. The total combat strength of the regiments of 64 Hon ID was just 800 men; this Division also had a small number of serviceable guns with very little ammunition. 70 Hon ID had also

been greatly reduced in strength, although they'd received IR 20 from 12 ID (with just six companies) as a "reinforcement." Nevertheless IV Corps wanted to hold onto the Oderzo - Ponte di Piave rail line on 30 October so they could keep the enemy in the breakthrough area from enveloping the units of the Isonzo Army's left wing which were still in position on the embankment of the lower Piave.

Anticipating the withdrawal of the entire front behind the Livenza, in the evening of the 29th the HQ of the Isonzo Army had ordered that the advancing enemy were to be halted and the disintegration of the units to be prevented. They couldn't hope for more than an orderly retreat with an intact force. In the night of 29-30 October the Isonzo Army's southern wing (XXIII Corps and the malaria-infected XXII Corps) were preparing to withdraw so they could leave the swamps of the lowermost course of the Piave in time. There were already reports that the enemy were getting ready to cross the river near S Dona, in the sector of 46 Sch Div.

The enemy reaction

Proud confidence in victory was growing throughout the 29th within the Italian high command. This was due to the proposal for an immediate armistice which a mediator from GdI Weber had passed through the Italian lines at Rovereto in the morning, and to the reports of the continuing breakthrough which arrived thereafter. Although 4th Army had still been unable to make progress in the Grappa Mountains, 12th Army were beginning to open the route to Feltre. 8th Army were already pushing their opponents back from the Piave toward the mountains north of Vittorio and were approaching that city. Since the battle started the armies had taken more than 32,000 prisoners and over 150 guns.⁵⁶³

G.Lt Diaz saw that his offensive was now reaping enormous successes. The appeal for an armistice which the k.u.k. high command broadcast through the Pola radio station could only strengthen Diaz's determination to continue the assault without interruption until he won the great victory which Italy was seeking, and which would enhance its standing within the allied coalition. Hours and days of easy triumph lay ahead. For there could no longer be any doubt in the Italian high command that Austria-Hungary was at the end of its strength and that the secession of its nations had caused a fearful crisis within the k.u.k. armed forces. Thus it seemed high time for the still

⁵⁶³Dupont, p. 211

stationary 3rd Army on the lower Piave, which hitherto had sought only to damage their opponents with artillery fire, to join the offensive. On the 29th the Commando Supremo ordered the commander of 3rd Army, the Duke of Aosta, to cross the Piave. Also the masses of cavalry stationed near Treviso (2, 3 and 4 CD) were told to saddle up. They were to first thrust to the Livenza through the wide gap torn open by the English, then reach the Tagliamento. The horsemen, along with those of 1 CD (assigned to 8th Army), were supposed to overtake their retreating opponents and keep them from destroying the bridges. In this fashion G.Lt Diaz hoped to turn the breakthrough into an encirclement operation which would pin and cut off substantial parts of the Austro-Hungarian forces, inflicting a major defeat.

e. The peace request of 27 October

During this period the wires from the Southwestern front were reporting heroic deeds of self-sacrifice, along with tragic and unsettling signs of a great catastrophe, to a homeland that hardly was interested any more. Meanwhile the ruler on the Habsburg throne made a final attempt to save his imperilled inheritance from the rapidly swelling flood of revolution and destruction. Before his journey to Hungary on 23 October, the Emperor had replaced Hussarek's worn-out cabinet with a new Austrian government headed by Professor Doctor Lammasch, a distinguished teacher of international law and well-known pacifist. On 24 October, when Foreign Minister Burian came to Budapest to discuss the response to Wilson's note, he found that Wekerle's government had also fallen and that there were plans to establish a separate Hungarian diplomatic service. He drew the necessary conclusions, and requested to be relieved of office. But this was in accordance with the wishes of the Emperor, who on the 25th named Count Julius Andrassy as Burian's successor.⁵⁶⁴ This name was well-known in the palace on the Ballhausplatz; Andrassy's father and Bismarck had forged the alliance of the two empires on 7 October 1879 (it had become the Triple Alliance in 1882 with the adherence of Italy).

Andrassy had just returned from Switzerland, where at his sovereign's request he'd been exploring possible avenues to peace. He came home convinced that the Habsburg state could now be saved only if it quickly concluded a separate peace, clearly separating itself from the German Empire, upon which the Entente were determined to inflict the harshest fate - including the

⁵⁶⁴Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 353 ff.

deposition of the Hohenzollerns. This idea was fully in tune with the well-meaning advice which had been received at Vienna through Swiss channels prior to the Imperial manifesto and which continued thereafter.⁵⁶⁵ Only France and England could still save the Danube Monarchy through their influence on Wilson! The considerations which Andrassy laid before the Emperor to justify a separate peace were in agreement with the latter's feelings. When the Count stated, "We are negotiating under irresistible pressure", the Monarch clarified in a soft voice "We're negotiating from very bitter necessity."⁵⁶⁶

On 26 October the Aus-Hung. representative in Bern was already being instructed to notify the diplomats of the enemy coalition, through his agents, of the intentions of the Ballhausplatz. On the same day Emperor Charles explained in a letter to the German Emperor that the peoples of the Danube Monarchy were no longer willing to continue the war. As their sovereign he didn't have the right to oppose their will since he himself no longer believed a favorable outcome to the fighting was possible. His conscience wouldn't permit unnecessary bloodshed. Domestic order and the monarchical principle would be in very grave danger if the war wasn't immediately brought to an end. The Emperor informed his ally that "Even the most sincere brotherly and comradely feelings must take second place to my responsibility to preserve the state which destiny has entrusted to me with God's blessing. Therefore I am informing you of my unalterable decision to seek a separate peace and an immediate armistice in the next 24 hours." In a response by wire, William II implored Charles to desist from this plan. A separate Aus-Hung. peace would entail great perils for both Empires since the enemy would impose even harsher conditions once they knew that the alliance was breaking up. William stated "I expect that your government will immediately be committed to work only in full cooperation with mine to continue the negotiations which have been initiated with the United States."

Preparation of the new peace initiative, which would respond to Wilson's note of 18-20 October, caused considerable difficulty for the diplomats on the Ballhausplatz. Wilson had issued separate notes to address the original single inquiry by the two Central Powers, and thus there was a justification for Austria-Hungary to continue negotiating with him on its own. However, the German part of Austria's population might regard the

565Opocensky, pp. 287 ff. and 315 ff.

566Andrassy, "Diplomatie und Weltkrieg" (Vienna, 1920), pp. 294 ff. Werkmann, "Glücklose Kaiser - Kaiser Karls Kampf um den inneren Frieden" (manuscript)

abandonment of the Dual Alliance, which had endured for a generation, as treason to Germany; this would provide more fuel to the agitation against the house of Habsburg and monarchical institutions. Since Lamasch had been nominated as the next Prime Minister he had considerable influence in preparing the text. GO Arz, on the other hand, didn't learn of its contents until it had already been published to the world; he was pained by this separate initiative.⁵⁶⁷

On 27 October the Aus-Hung. ambassador to Stockholm, Graf Hadik, was instructed by wire to have the Swedish government deliver the following note directly to Wilson:

"In response to the note sent to the Aus-Hung. government on the 18th of this month by President Mr. Wilson, and consistent with the decision of the President to speak separately with Austria-Hungary regarding the issues of an armistice and peace, the Aus-Hung. government has the honor to declare that it concurs with the President's views regarding the rights of the peoples of Austria-Hungary as expressed in his earlier pronouncements and also in his last note; this is true in particular of the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs.

Since Austria-Hungary has thus accepted the requirements which the President had laid down as a condition for negotiations leading to an armistice and peace, in the opinion of the Aus-Hung. government there is no longer any obstacle to the start of these negotiations.

The Aus-Hung. government declares its readiness to begin discussions about peace between Austria-Hungary and the opposing states and about an immediate armistice on all fronts, regardless of the outcome of other initiatives. They are asking President Mr. Wilson to enter into negotiations with them."

The ambassadors to Bern and Stockholm were advised to work through their counterparts from London, Paris, Rome and Tokyo to ensure that Vienna's initiative met a favorable reception in Washington. Emperor Charles furthermore requested the intervention of the Pope, while Andrassy asked the American Secretary of State (Lansing) to influence the President to act as quickly as possible.⁵⁶⁸

The enemy coalition made no response to this last appeal for help

567Arz, "Zur Geschichte des grossen Krieges", pp. 341 ff.
Cramon, pp. 193 ff.

568Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 111

from a sinking ship of state. Andrassy, whose fate it was to dismantle the work of his father, didn't get any answer from the Entente. He had advocated a separate peace to prevent revolution within the Monarchy, and especially within Hungary.⁵⁶⁹ But this final diplomatic initiative couldn't prevent the national revolutions. In fact it reinforced the conviction of the nationalities that the old state was powerless and thus added strength to the forces of destruction. And so the last effort of the Ballhausplatz on behalf of the united realm failed under tragic circumstances. Count Andrassy, the last k.u.k. Foreign Minister, resigned his post on 2 November.

Further deterioration of the situation in Germany

Meanwhile the negotiations between Berlin and Washington were no less dramatic. On 21 October Prince Max had answered Wilson's second note with assurances that the German constitution was about to be changed in a democratic direction and that submarine warfare was ending.⁵⁷⁰ A third note from the President arrived on the 24th; it reported that America's allies had been kept abreast of the exchange of correspondence to date; the only acceptable armistice would be one which would make it impossible for the German Army to resume hostilities. The closing sentence bluntly demanded that the Emperor and the German princes should be deposed; otherwise there could be no peace negotiations, but only an unconditional surrender.

The German OHL were opposed to complete submission, and on the same day issued a general order urging the soldiers "to continue to resist with all their strength." This position was in conflict with the policy of the Imperial government and led to a trial of strength between the military and political leaders. To enable the government to more easily continue negotiations with Wilson, Ludendorff was obliged to request his dismissal. William II granted this request on 26 October and named Württemberg G.Lt Groener as Ludendorff's successor.

The fronts of the two Empires in France, Italy and the Balkans were being maintained only with great difficulty. Now the Germans learned from Vienna that their ally's decision to seek a separate peace was irrevocable. Thus the Imperial cabinet were obliged to send a fourth note to Washington on 27 October. It asserted that sweeping constitutional changes had produced a government accountable to the people and that decisive measures,

569Andrassy, p. 298. See also Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 404

570Schwertfegger, pp. 165 ff.

including regulation of the military authorities, were being undertaken. The German government were now ready "for an armistice which will initiate the just peace which the President had advocated in his statements."

f. Secession of the nations

Actions by individual nationalities

With the Emperor's approval, Dr. Lammasch had originally planned to resolve the cabinet crisis in Austria in such a manner that his government would be merely an "executive committee of the national governments." Thus it would act as an overseer to safeguard a peaceful evolution of the central administration of old Austria into the new state governments, an immediate armistice, and preparations for the peace conference.⁵⁷¹ But the plan foundered on the refusal of the Slavic representatives to deal with an overall Austrian ministry in any form. Thus it was no longer possible for a government appointed by the Crown to be even passively tolerated by the political parties. On 27 October the Monarch, who'd returned from Budapest to Vienna, approved Lammasch's list of ministers; on the next day the cabinet was officially sworn in with the usual ceremonies. But its members never had an opportunity to perform their departmental functions; instead they were soon serving the Emperor directly as advisers in his struggle against the overwhelming flow of events and in discussions with the new national councils.

As in foreign affairs, 28 October was a decisive date for the inner political situation. Count Andrássy's note, and the news that troops at the front were refusing in droves to obey orders due to the nationalist movements, emboldened the leaders of the nationalities to take the final steps to separate from the Empire. The Czechs and South Slavs interpreted the latest appeal for peace as a complete recognition of their freedom. On 28 October the national committee in Prague assumed governmental authority and declared in their first law that "the independent Czecho-Slovak state has come to life."⁵⁷² Leading political figures, who traveled to Switzerland with the Emperor's

571M. Lammasch and H. Sperl, "Heinrich Lammasch. Seine Aufzeichnungen, sein Wirken und seine Politik." (Vienna, 1922), pp. 166 ff.

572For details, see Glaise-Horstenau's "Die Katastrophe" (pp. 368 ff.) and Opocensky (pp. 400 ff.) and the additional literature cited by both works.

permission, established contact with the circle around Masaryk. The military authorities in Prague offered no resistance, but unintentionally ensured by accommodations with the Czech leaders that the transition to the new order took place without bloodshed. It was a peculiarity of the internal revolution everywhere that there was no attempt from the military side to maintain the old state's authority by force. Because of the manifesto and other official pronouncements, there was no clear border between new forms of government that were sanctioned from above as permissible and legal, and developments that were outspokenly revolutionary. This was also due to instructions from the War Ministry that local military offices were to work with the leaders of the national corporate groups to ensure that supplies could still be procured and that peace and order were maintained as much as possible.

The leaders of Hungary's Slovaks recognized in a declaration prepared on 30 and 31 October the unity of the "Czecho-Slovakian nation" and the program advanced by their fellow-Slovaks abroad.

In Zagreb the Landtag met in an official session on the 29th, attended by both the highest civilian and military figures. They adopted a law that severed Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia - along with Fiume - from any legal connection with Austria or Hungary, and declared these three lands to constitute an independent national state based on the unity of the Croatian, Slovenian and Serbian peoples. The territories occupied by these three groups now formed one unit regardless of any prior administrative or international borders. The local military establishment was placed under the national government.⁵⁷³ The Slovenian national council in Ljubljana [Laibach] assumed leadership of Carniola's provincial government.

Conditions which a situation report of 29 October described as a "silent mutiny" had put the Navy in a completely untenable position.⁵⁷⁴ The majority of the rank-and-file sailors were obeying a South Slavic naval committee. The Navy command had asked the national committees to calm the situation by sending representatives, but their request went unheeded. The South Slavic council at Zagreb, which regarded the entire coastal area as falling within their area of authority, pointed out that all the ground forces had already been placed under their orders and demanded that the same should be done for the fleet. A meeting was held between Admiral Ritter von Keil (the Navy's

⁵⁷³Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 109

⁵⁷⁴Kriegs-archiv (Marine-archiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", pp. 725 ff.

representative at the AOK), GO Arz, GM Freih. von Zeidler-Daublebsky (the chief of the Imperial Military Chancellery) and Dr Seidler (the cabinet director). To avoid an armed conflict and to protect the fleet from being seized by the Italians, they advised the Emperor to hand all naval installations over to the South Slavic national council. After consulting with Foreign Minister Andrassy, on 30 October the Monarch approved this suggestion. The Danube Flotilla was placed under the Hungarian government. On the next day (the 31st), at Pola Counter-Admiral Horthy signed a protocol which transferred the Navy to representatives of the South Slavs; it included a statement that this act didn't prejudice the property rights of any of the other national states which were rising on the Monarchy's soil. The red-white-red war standard disappeared from the Adriatic.

In the Imperial lands of Bosnia and Herzegovina the national leaders on 30 October demanded that the "Landeschef"⁵⁷⁵ GO Sarkotic should resign. But the General refused to leave the post with which his Monarch had entrusted him. However, the troops from outside the territory would be leaving for their own homelands within a few days and Sarkotic learned of the Emperor's order which was transferring the Navy to the Zagreb government. The loyal soldier recognized that no power existed which could reverse the new order; on 1 November he resigned as Landeschef.

In Cracow the radical politicians created a "liquidation commission" on 28 October; it sought to take over the administration of all of Galicia and the Polish-speaking parts of Silesia so they could join the reborn state of Great Poland. But the Poles immediately collided with the Ukrainian (Ruthenian) national committee, which claimed wide territories for their own nationality and which at the start of November took over east Galicia (with Lemberg) from the k.k. Statthalter GO Graf Huyn. Meanwhile in Warsaw, after a lengthy government crisis provoked by the changing political situation, a new Polish cabinet emerged on 23 October. GdI Liposack, the k.u.k. General Governor of the occupied territory of Lublin handed over power to a plenipotentiary representative of this cabinet on 3 November.⁵⁷⁶

Also in Bukovina there was strife from the start between the Ruthenes and Romanians; the latter group, supported by the

575 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Due to the peculiar constitutional position of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the head of government in the area was appointed by the Emperor to serve under the k.u.k. Financial Minister. The "Landeschef" was also commander of the local garrisons.

576 Hausner, pp. 292 ff.

neighboring Kingdom of Romania, kept the upper hand. On 27 October a Romanian national committee in Czernowitz seized power over the government; committees in Transylvania and the Banat were working to have all the members of this nationality join together. In November troops from the Royal Romanian Army would enter Bukovina at the request of the Czernowitz [Cernauti] national committee.⁵⁷⁷

The reaction of the Army

While one group after another separated themselves from the Monarchy, there were attempts to stem the tide by those who were still monarchists loyal to the dynasty. On 29 October, at the initiative of the Emperor's General Adjutant (GM Zeidler-Daublebsky) and without the knowledge of GO Arz, the following decree was sent to the field armies:

"The national committees are propagating the republican form of government with the institutions they are creating. But they haven't consulted the armies in the field, which contain men between the ages of 18 and 50 who are the true representatives of their peoples. We want the troops and units of all nationalities to send telegraphic messages, without interference from their officers, in support of the Monarchy and the dynasty. They should be sent immediately to the high command, which will forward them to the governments. This is particularly important for soldiers of the German nationality since an important meeting of their national committee is scheduled for noon on the 30th."

The higher levels of the command structure were painfully surprised by this badly-timed initiative. FM Boroevic demanded to first be assured that the order was genuine. The HQ of the Tyrol Army Group asked Baden by wire whether they should really proceed with this idea, since in view of the critical attitude of the troops it would only further inflame the situation. GO Sarkotic reported that the request for opinions was having negative consequences⁵⁷⁸, and added that such assertions shouldn't be encouraged since they spread destructive ideas in the Army. At the fronts and in the occupied territories it was hardly possible to grasp what was now transpiring back home. In many cases the latest instructions were misinterpreted as a strict order to determine whether the troops wanted a monarchical or republican government. Because the communications network was already breaking down, the instructions weren't received

577Kiritzesco, pp. 440 ff.

578For examples cited by Sarkotic, see Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 378

everywhere. Many HQ that did get them believed that they could only cause damage, and didn't pass them on. The few responses that arrived in Baden failed to have the desired effect. Often both officers and men spoke up for a republic since they felt it meant peace.⁵⁷⁹ But most of the men from the lower ranks didn't understand the issue and didn't respond.

The "important meeting" to which the Military Chancellery referred was a provisional national assembly of representatives of German-speaking Austrians; on 30 October they came together for the second time in the provincial legislature building in Vienna. A constitution was drafted by the Socialist Dr Renner in conjunction with the legal scholar Dr Kelsen; although it didn't mention the word "republic", there was hardly any role within it for a monarch. The constitution was approved and thus the independent state of "German-Austria" was established. It was supposed to include the Alpine lands (Lower and Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg) plus "German Bohemia" and a "Sudeten-land" to be created from parts of western Silesia and northern Moravia. The Znaim District and the German-speaking islands of Brünn, Iglau and Olmütz were also to join the new state. The national assembly created an executive council of 22 members, which on 31 October became the first government of German Austria. All parties were represented in the cabinet, but the Social Democrats soon assumed leadership. Thus the heart of the old Empire - the Danube and Alpine lands which the Habsburgs had used as a base to build a Great Power - also went beyond the limits which the manifesto had envisioned when it spoke of creating a new state structure.

Since the manifesto had created the national councils, it was only natural that the civil servants and on 31 October also the officers and soldiers in the interior were obliged to place themselves under the authority of these councils.⁵⁸⁰ Thus the military oath which they'd sworn to the Emperor also became an issue. The Emperor's decision was published on 1 November; it stated that the oath was not being revoked, but that service personnel should also obey their national governments. The rationale of the Imperial instructions, reflecting what its authors wanted to believe, was that the sovereign was still the over-all head of a newly-created confederation of states.

The separation of Hungary

In Hungary, after the latest days of agitation a radical national

579Glaise-Horstenau, p. 395

580Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 122. Werkmann, pp. 327 ff.

council was created by the followers of Karolyi; with help from the streets they were gradually winning power from Wekerle's Ministry, which was still in place. Archduke Joseph, who was on his way to the Hungarian capital, stopped on 27 October at Vienna where the Monarch designated him as "homo regius" with full authority; the Archduke set to work to reorganize the government. On 30 October the King named a Prime Minister, Graf Johann Hadik, whose program was the complete independence of Hungary. The division of the armed forces, including the high command, was supposed to begin on 1 November.⁵⁸¹ But Hadik never actually started to form a cabinet.

On the streets of the great city of Budapest most of the soldiers were already fraternizing with the people. In the night of 30-31 October many of the garrison went over to the side of the national council in open rebellion. In the first hours of the morning the city commandant FML Lukachich phoned the palace at Schönbrunn, requesting the King's permission to use force against the rebels. But the bearer of St Stephen's Crown turned down this idea.⁵⁸² Archduke Joseph believed that the only way to avoid bloody revolution was to appoint Graf Karolyi as Prime Minister, and this was done. Ministers were selected from the leadership of the national council. An artillery colonel, Bela Lindner, replaced GdI Szurmay as the Honved Minister. But the agitated, violent crowds were still seeking a particular victim; in the evening of the 31st, while Karolyi's Ministry gathered in Buda's castle to take the oath of office, they learned that Graf Tisza had just been murdered at his villa.

On All Saints' Day the national council decided that the new government should also address the issue of constitutional change. Karolyi hastened to see the Archduke, informing him that everyone was turning away from the King because the latter was permitting the Croats to secede. The King must release the ministers from the oath they'd just sworn to him, and abdicate. Otherwise he'd be deposed. The Monarch wasn't willing to

581Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 348 ff.
Werkmann, pp. 330 ff.

582TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The sentences regarding FML Lukachich are based on his subsequent assertions. Empress-Queen Zita, who was with her husband during the phone conversation, denied that the King had instructed Lukachich not to use force. She also stated that the Budapest commandant was at fault for not ensuring that he had reliable troops from outside the city who could be counted on to suppress local insurgents. See Brook-Shepherd, "Kaiser Karl I" (in German translation; Vienna, 1976), pp. 227-228.

abdicate, but he did inform the newly-installed head of the government that he was releasing the cabinet from their oath of obedience. Archduke Joseph's mission had failed completely, and he never did take command of the Balkan front. In Hungary as in Austria the revolution proceeded with gigantic steps.

Thus as All Souls' Day dawned the Monarchy lay in ruins. The Army had been left isolated by the revolution. The high command were seeking an armistice so they could put an end to fighting which had lost all meaning for the disintegrating Habsburg armed forces, although not for their enemies who were avid to win a conspicuous victory.

**C. Retreat and disintegration of the Aus-Hung.
Southwestern armies, 30 October to 2 November**

1. The 6th and Isonzo Armies retreat behind the Livenza, 30 and 31 October

Because of the chaos in the interior of the Monarchy and the ongoing disintegration of the Army and Navy, on 29 October the k.u.k. high command were convinced that it would be impossible to continue the battle. As noted above, in the evening an order was sent from Baden to FM Boroevic, instructing him to evacuate Venetia and to avoid action with the pursuing enemy as much as possible. When this order arrived at Udine the k.u.k. 6th Army and the northern wing of the Isonzo Army were already in full retreat to relieve the already badly shaken troops from enemy pressure. After three days of heavy combat these forces pulled back in the night of 29-30 October toward the edge of the mountains north of Vittorio, to Sacile, and behind the Livenza as far as a point south of Brugnera.

30 October - 6th Army

Parts of II Corps had to be re-assigned to the k.u.k. XV Corps of the Belluno Armeegruppe - the remnants of 31 ID (withdrawing on the Tovena road) and the regiments of 25 ID which were engaged on the heights north of Serravalle. Their mission was to protect the open eastern flank of the Aus-Hung. forces still holding fast in the Grappa area by blocking the most important crossing points from the Venetian plain into the Belluno basin (the S Ubald Pass and the strip of land next to Lake S Croce).⁵⁸³ The units which stayed under II Corps - 11 Hon CD, 12 Reit Sch Div and 34 ID - withdrew northeast in long, exhausting marches along the foot of the mountains so they could reach the upper course of the Livenza near Polcenigo. The troops who retreated that night through Vittorio had a difficult time because of numerous supply columns moving through the town. As the divisions moved to the rear they suffered from lack of food. Hungry men broke into and plundered abandoned depots. But the enemy didn't interfere with the retreat.

Also the k.u.k. XXIV Corps (41 and 51 Hon ID, remnants of 10 ID, and FML Nöhring's group) were able in the darkness of night to

583 Hoen, Waldstätten-Zipperer and Seifert, "Die Deutschmeister" (Vienna, 1928), pp. 826 ff. Michel and Wohl, pp. 251 ff.

successfully dis-engage from the enemy on the heights by Conegliano and on the Monticano, avoiding the danger of envelopment; they withdrew northeast toward Sacile and Brugnera. The battered units of FML Podhajsky's group (part of the Isonzo Army) hadn't been pursued and were already assembling that night behind the Livenza. The only troops which the enemy overtook were a group from 34 ID which had remained near Tarzo to cover the withdrawal of the k.u.k. II Corps.

In the evening of the 29th the commander of 8th Italian Army, G.Lt Caviglia, had concentrated a considerable force on the hills around Conegliano - VIII and XVIII Corps (including the 1 and 2 Assault Divisions). Their objective on the 30th was to thrust north past Vittorio, to ruthlessly pursue their withdrawing opponents, and to separate the parts of the Aus-Hung. armies on the mountain front from those in the Venetian plains. Detachments made up of reconnaissance squadrons and Bersaglieri on bicycles were sent ahead first; early in the morning of the 30th, without meeting resistance, they already entered Vittorio. Around this time the widely separated columns of the k.u.k. 25 ID were climbing into the mountains north and northeast of Serravalle, while Col. Bertsch's group from 34 ID were still marching back from Tarzo to Caneva. Therefore this group had to endure heavy and costly rear-guard fighting with the advanced elements of Caviglia's Army near Vittorio; parts of the hastily advancing 58 Italian ID joined the action.

When news of the rapid occupation of the city of Vittorio reached G.Lt Caviglia, he immediately had 1 CD, which had just come over the Piave to the Monticano, to continue to ride north; they were supposed to cross the Livenza near its source, by Polcenigo.⁵⁸⁴ Caviglia hoped that he thus could still outflank the opposing force which had eluded envelopment near Conegliano.

In the afternoon of 30 October the remnants of 11 Hon CD and of 12 Reit Sch Div assembled behind the Livenza at Polcenigo. Some troops from 34 ID, as a rear guard of II Corps, had taken up a position on the slopes north of Sarmede [Sermede] and Caneva. The adjacent XXIV Corps stood west of the Livenza at Sacile and behind the river as far as Brugnera. This Corps had escaped with only minimal casualties. The connection with the right wing of the Isonzo Army was maintained by FML Nöhring's group south of Brugnera. Pursuing Italian detachments tried in the afternoon to advance through Cordignano and to cut off the retreating supply train columns. The Italians encountered the rear guard positions of 34 ID covering Sermede and Caneva, but declined to attack

⁵⁸⁴Rocca, p. 265

them. Meanwhile reconnaissance squadrons of the XIV English Corps (in Cavan's Army), supported by Italian scouting detachments, appeared on the western bank of the Livenza in front of Sacile and Francenigo. Many enemy planes were active, cruising over the new defensive lines of the k.u.k. 6th Army and bombing the resting troops and columns of vehicles. A surprise air attack on the Fontana fredda railroad station caused considerable panic among the troops and supply units of XXIV Corps.

30 October - Isonzo Army

On the northern wing of the Isonzo Army, the eastern bank of the Livenza next to Nöhring's group was held by the rear guards of 29 ID, 26 Sch Div and 201 Lst Inf Bde.⁵⁸⁵ Here also only some enemy cavalry and bicycle patrols appeared on the western bank during the afternoon. The bridges were blown up.

In the morning of the 30th a thin screen of rear guards was still stationed west of the Livenza on the line Portobuffole - Lutrano - Oderzo - Ponte di Piave; they covered the withdrawal over the Monticano by FML Urbarz's group (24 ID with remnants of 7 ID) and IV Corps (8 CD, 64 and 70 Hon ID). The Italian XI Corps had given up 23 ID to 3rd Army but received 31 ID from the same Army in return; they advanced very cautiously over the Monticano on both sides of Fontanelle. The already very thin lines of Urbarz's group gave way to the enemy pressure and during the day moved back to the Livenza on both sides of Portobuffole. IV Corps, whose southern wing (70 Hon ID) was hit strongly by the enemy, also broke off the action. They evacuated Oderzo and Ponte di Piave; covered by their rear guards (8 CD plus parts of 64 Hon ID) they retreated from the rail line north over the Monticano and gradually reached the Livenza near Fossabiuba.⁵⁸⁶

Heavy fighting broke out along the lower Piave. Here the Duke of Aosta's 3rd Italian Army - after two hours of preparatory artillery fire - sought to cross the river at six points. XXVIII Corps (53 and 25 ID) struck at Salgareda and Romanziol, XXVI Corps (45 and 54 ID) at S Dona di Piave, Passarella and

585 "Infanterie Regiment 94 im Weltkriege" (Reichenberg, 1929), pp. 766 ff. Linke, "Regimentsgeschichte des Infanterie Regiments Nr. 42, 1674-1918" (Leitmeritz, 1933), pp. 988 ff. [for IR # 137]. Wisshaupt, "Die 52. Landwehr Infanterie Brigade", pp. 458 ff. "Der Helden-weg des Zweier-Landsturms 1914-1918" (Linz, 1937), pp. 84 ff.

586 Foerster-Seyffertitz, "Geschichte des k.u.k. Dragoner Regiments Fürst zu Windischgraetz Nr. 14, 1914-1918" (Vienna, 1922), pp. 312 ff.

Grisolera, and finally the San Marco Marine Regiment at Revedoli near the river's mouth. GdI Schariczer's k.u.k. VII Corps were still stationed along the embankment; however, during the night FML Iwanski's 33 ID had given up two battalions to 70 Hon ID (their neighbors on the right) and pulled three more back to the area around Cavalier (southwest of Motta di Livenza) to create a back-up position. Also some of the artillery were preparing to withdraw. Nevertheless, despite the Italians' numerical superiority they couldn't overcome their opponents. After great efforts, under cover of the morning fog the 53 Italian ID were finally able to land assault troops on the opposite bank; these men penetrated the thin lines of 33 ID and dug in along the embankment. But the enemy couldn't thrust ahead any farther; they were checked by the gallant Hungarian Infantry Regiments 12 and 83 in hours of combat involving hand grenades.

The enemy's attempts to cross the Piave also failed in the defensive sector of GdI Waitzendorfer's 12 ID. But meanwhile the 45 Italian ID near S Dona di Piave were able to build a bridge of pontons. Here and farther downstream GdI Csicseric's XXIII Corps had already pulled back before dawn to the Grassaga Canal with 46 Sch Div (GM Fischer Edler von Poturzyn) and 58 ID (GM Wolf von Monte San Michele). Only some weak rear guards remained in the positions on the Piave embankment. Around 10:00 AM four companies of 46 Sch Div surrendered at S Dona di Piave. Now the Italians here were finally able to get over the river and establish a bridgehead on the opposite bank; they posed a serious threat to the k.u.k. 12 ID which were still holding their original lines.

Of the components of GdI Kletter's XXII Corps, only two weak and malaria-infected brigades (28 Inf Bde of 14 ID and 3 Inf Bde of 2 ID) were still stationed on the embankment in the morning of the 30th. 4 Inf Bde were in the Corps' reserve, holding a back-up position south of Torre di Mosto; 27 Inf Bde were already far behind the Livenza, having moved back to the area southeast of Portogruaro. The troops of XXII Corps still in garrison on the Piave (near Grisolieri and Passarella) were subjected to heavy bombardment in the early hours of the morning. Enemy flyers could see over all the open terrain around the river's mouth and describe even the best-concealed targets for their artillery. When enemy assault troops came over the river, IR 72 of 14 ID opposed them bravely in heavy hand to hand combat. However, the Italian marine regiment encountered only minimal resistance near Revedoli, where the garrison troops of 2 ID and of the coastal defenses were in retreat.

In the early afternoon the Italian forces which had crossed to the northern bank near Salgareda and Ponte di Piave were also able to gain more ground after long and costly fighting. 23 ID (from XI Italian Corps) had now been placed under the Duke of Aosta; their advance southeast from Ormelle and Roncadelle forced 70 Hon ID to retreat. This thrust threatened to roll up the right flank and the rear of the stationary VII Corps and the entire Piave position. Around 1:00 PM the Italians pushed into Ponte di Piave. Now the situation of 33 and 12 ID was untenable. During the afternoon the last rear guards of VII, XXIII and XXII Corps withdrew from the lower Piave to an intermediate position on the Grassaga and Lanzalunga Canals, which they left in the evening and night. The retreat through the muddy and flooded area of the lagoons was very difficult. Long-range Italian guns had shot to pieces the pumping station at Citta Nuova. Wide stretches of the terrain were covered by water that had seeped up from the ground. Traffic held up the marching columns of the three corps for hours as they moved through the patches of dry ground and along the roads built on embankments over otherwise impassable ground. But our retreating troops weren't disturbed at all by the enemy. The Duke of Aosta's Army brought in 3000 prisoners on 30 October, but they had suffered heavy casualties themselves while crossing the river. They moved only very cautiously from the Piave toward the Livenza.

Untroubled by the enemy, 65 Inf Bde of 33 ID and 24 Inf Bde of 12 ID took up a position on the Livenza near Motta di Livenza, next to IV Corps.⁵⁸⁷ South of S Stino di Livenza the 46 Sch Div occupied the crossing points, as did 4 Inf Bde south of Torre di Mosto. A large part of VII Corps' troops (66 Inf Bde of 33 ID and 23 Inf Bde of 12 ID) continued to march past the Livenza to the Annone area. The men of 58 ID (XXIII Corps) assembled near Belfiore while the main body of XXII Corps (3 Inf Bde of 2 ID and all of 14 ID) were already stationed in the area around Lison (southwest of Portogruaro).

30 October - command decisions

While the columns of the 6th and Isonzo Armies streamed east between the Piave and Livenza, on 30 October GdK Schönburg and GO Wurm hastened to Udine to confer with FM Boroevic about the hopeless situation and to seek "political orientation" so they could coordinate their efforts.⁵⁸⁸ The revolutionary events in the interior which we described in the previous chapter caused very wild rumors to circulate at the front. Men heard that

587Lehar, "Regiment 106" (Vienna, 1931), pp. 60 ff.

588Anton Pitreich, "Piavefront"

revolution had broken out, with disturbances in Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Zagreb, Fiume and other cities. There were also accounts of bloody clashes between Slovenes and Italians in Trieste and reports that the city's old administration had given way to the new forces, which were hoisting the Italian tricolor on city hall and other public buildings. How far disintegration had actually progressed was revealed by the telegram that the armies received from Baden on 30 October; as already noted, it stated that declarations of support for the Monarchy should be solicited from troops of every nationality. But now there was hardly any time or opportunity to seek clarification.

Shocking news meanwhile arrived from Pola, where mutiny had broken out in the Navy.⁵⁸⁹ In the afternoon of the 30th a mutilated telegram was received at the HQ in Udine, stating - "The fleet and fortifications no longer can play any military role. Representatives of the South Slavic national council already doubt whether they have enough influence on the personnel to restore order. Bad elements are gaining the upper hand. There is no prospect of suppressing them forcefully...." At this point the telegraphic report broke off. Finally it was learned from Baden that the Emperor had ordered the k.u.k. fleets and all naval stations to be handed over to the Zagreb national committee, and the Danube flotilla to the Hungarian state.

The consultations which were held under such dismal circumstances between FM Borojevic and his two army commanders on 30 October lasted for just a few minutes. They would seek to disengage the armies from the enemy in as quick and orderly fashion as possible so that at least part of the field forces could be preserved for use against the revolution in the Monarchy's interior. The generals at the front still entertained these ideas because "no one could form a clear picture about the course of events in the hinterland, or about the objectives and intentions of the Imperial government, which seemed to be in very great danger."⁵⁹⁰

Communication by telegram or telephone between the AOK and the higher HQ in Venetia was already very difficult and soon would be interrupted altogether. The turmoil in the Monarchy's South Slavic territories threatened to sever the Isonzo Army from Görz, Gradisca and Trieste. Therefore 57 ID, already marching back from Portogruaro to Latisana, were ordered to go to Trieste as quickly as they could. GdI Kletter's XXII Corps HQ would take command over all troops in that city and restore order, which

⁵⁸⁹Kriegsarchiv (Marinearchiv), "Österreich-Ungarns Seekrieg 1914-1918", pp. 728 ff.

⁵⁹⁰Anton Pitreich, "Piavefront"

apparently was for the moment greatly disrupted. Above all, they would prevent the Italians from landing to the rear of the Isonzo Army. Finally Boroevic's Army Group HQ decided to move from Udine to Velden on 31 October.

31 October

On this day the right wing of the Italian forces - the armies of the Duke of Aosta and Cavan - advanced only very slowly toward the Livenza. Caviglia's Army pivoted from Vittorio to the north, advancing through the mountain passes toward Belluno. Now (on the morning of 31 October) the forward units of the XVIII and VIII Italian Corps near Sarmede climbed the foothills of the Bosco del Caniglio; the rear guards of 34 ID still stationed west of the Livenza could no longer hold their ground, and fell back from Caneva to Sarone. Their neighbors on the left, 41 Hon ID, felt threatened because their flank was thus exposed, and during the morning withdrew behind the Livenza north of Sacile. Toward noon the Italian 1 Cav Div and other pursuing detachments of Caviglia's Army passed through the abandoned rear-guard positions of the k.u.k. II Corps and headed north. The last outposts of 34 ID retreated to Polcenigo without offering serious resistance. Mounted Italian detachments reached Fiaschetti, where they were able to cross the undamaged wooden bridge to the eastern bank of the Livenza.⁵⁹¹ II Corps HQ ordered 34 ID to hold the Polcenigo sector at least until evening. Also a battalion from 41 Hon ID were sent toward Fiaschetti so they could temporarily plug the dangerous gap in the front. But bombing raids by enemy planes had now also shattered the cohesion of XXIV Corps; the latest skirmish with the Italian pursuit detachments at Caneva and Fiaschetti showed that the troops of 34 ID had become very negligent in defending ground. The men of 11 Hon CD who'd assembled in Polcenigo issued an ultimatum with a two hour limit, demanding to be sent home. They got their way. II Corps ordered the HQ of 11 Hon CD, at the head of their troops, to withdraw to Gemona since "they'd already caused enough trouble throughout the Corps." Also a large part of Nöhring's group had left the front without orders and were marching east, plundering along the lines of communication. The Slovenian Mtn SchR 2 of 44 Sch Div had already withdrawn to Palmanova and later would continue their march to Görz. The Carinthian Mtn SchR 1 of the same Division and IR 16 (from 36 ID) were retreating through Codroipo.

Because of the continuing disintegration of the units, it seemed completely impossible to continue to fight on the Livenza for even a very short time. 34 ID had practically no ammunition left

⁵⁹¹Rocca, pp. 303 ff.

and no food for the troops. Under these miserable circumstances the HQ of 6th Army were forced to decide to continue the retreat beyond the Tagliamento, without pausing. GdK Schönburg was already issuing the necessary orders at 3:45 PM. That night (31 October-1 November) the II and XXIV Corps would first withdraw to the line Giais - S Martino - Sedrano - S Quirino; farther south Nöhring's group were to reach Cordenons and cross the Meduna east of Pordenone. It was planned that the next intermediate position of the northern wing of 6th Army would be the Cellina, with rear guards posted near Sedrano and Sclavons. Nöhring's group would maintain the link with the Isonzo Army at Casarsa d. Delizia. In the night of 2-3 November the II Corps would then march back behind the upper course of the Meduna, and finally the entire 6th Army would deploy behind the Tagliamento in the night of 3-4 November. To combat the ever-mounting problem of soldiers shirking their duty, men from the March formations who were still reliable would form small mixed detachments armed with machine guns; they'd guard all the important crossing points along the Tagliamento, providing a fall-back position for the main body of the units which would arrive after three to four days of marching. Furthermore the Carinthian Mtn SchR 1 of 44 Sch Div would move from Codroipo to Gemona to cover the crossing points over the Carnic Alps. It was planned that II Corps would eventually march through Tolmezzo and the Plöcken Pass, while XXIV Corps and Nöhring's group would reach Carinthia through Pontebba and Tarvis. But the latest orders never reached Mtn SchR 1; the Regiment were already heading from Codroipo to Cividale, so as to reach their home town of Klagenfurt through the Predil Pass.

When darkness fell on 31 October the II Corps were retreating from Polcenigo to Aviano. Meanwhile the 3 Italian CD, which had hurried forward to Fiaschetti, followed the forward detachments of Caviglia's Army onto the eastern bank of the Livenza. That evening some detachments of Italian cavalry and bicyclists pushed behind their retreating opponents into the town of Polcenigo and reached the area north of Fontana fredda. English cavalry of Cavan's Army, who'd sought in vain to cross the Livenza near Sacile, pushed through that town during the night in street fighting with the last rear guards of the k.u.k. XXIV Corps; here they captured large quantities of military equipment which had been abandoned by the defenders. During the day the 4 Italian CD had also come up to the Livenza near Sacile and farther downstream at Francenigo and Brugnera, but weren't able to cross the river. Pursuit was hampered by the destruction of the bridges, the lack of crossing gear, and fire from the rear guards of Nöhring's group stationed on the eastern bank. Enemy planes

continued to cross the skies over our foremost troops and to bomb the villages; the HQ of 43 Sch Div and of SchR 20 in particular suffered heavy damage. In the evening Nöhring's group began to march away from the Livenza, leaving rear guards behind.

The English XIV Corps of Cavan's Army were hindered by complications which arose when the mounted troops of the Count of Turin's Italian Cavalry Corps had to be inserted between the columns of marching infantry; consequently on 31 October the Army didn't progress past the Bibano-Gajarine area. The Italian XI Corps were hampered in their advance to the Livenza east of Mansuè by the destruction of the bridges over the Monticano. Therefore during 31 October only enemy advanced guards appeared on the western bank of the Livenza opposite the right wing of the Isonzo Army (between Portobuffole and Motta di Livenza). The advance of XXVIII and XXVI Corps of 3rd Italian Army was very difficult because of the numerous streams and the flooded terrain of the lagoon area. Only 23 Italian ID reached the Livenza in the evening, upstream from Motta. Meanwhile parts of the 2 Italian CD had entered this town. The XXVIII Italian Corps finally finished crossing the Piave on the 31st and didn't get past Cavalier and Cessalto, while the leading troops of XXVI Corps were able in the evening to reach the western bank of the Livenza at S Stino di Livenza and Torre di Mosto. The rear guards of the Isonzo Army deployed as follows - at Portobuffole in front of Urbarz's group, at Fossabiuba in front of IV Corps, at Motta di Livenza in front of VII Corps and at S Stino and Torre di Mosto in front of XXIII Corps. These detachments stayed on the southern bank, but as the enemy approached during the day they withdrew gradually to the other side of the Livenza; all the bridges were blown up.

Large parts of the Isonzo Army meanwhile pulled back in one bound past the Livenza toward the Tagliamento. On the 31st the 8 CD rested at Passian; one brigade each of 33 and 12 ID were at Annone, and all of 58 ID at Belfiore. The half of 2 ID and all of 14 ID were already marching back past Portogruaro to Latisana; they were placed under XXIII Corps. On the northern wing of the Isonzo Army, the k.u.k. XVI Corps were once more led by GdI Kralicek; their two groups (29 ID, 26 Sch Div and 201 Lst Inf Bde under FML Berndt and 24 ID with remnants of 7 ID under FML Urbarz) continued to retreat in the night of 31 October-1 November in step with their northern neighbors, Nöhring's group. The k.u.k. IV Corps also soon joined this movement. As the last echelon of the Isonzo Army rearguards from both these corps (one brigade each of 33 and 12 ID plus parts of 46 Sch Div) stayed behind on the eastern bank of the Livenza; they'd cover the main

body as they retreated to the Tagliamento.

2. Events on the mountain front, 30 and 31 October

a. Final actions of the Belluno Armeegruppe

While the lines of the 6th Army and of the Isonzo Army's right wing were being broken, the Belluno Armeegruppe still held onto the Col Caprile and to Mounts Asolone, Pertica and Spinuccia. They resisted the oncoming enemy with as much stubbornness as if their gallant stand could still undo the defeat in the Venetian plains. Though weakened, the garrison troops of Horsetzky's and Kosak's Corps could undoubtedly have repulsed further Italian attacks. However, the situation of the Belluno Armeegruppe had already become untenable on 29 October when 6th Army streamed back over the hilly country of Vittorio and Conegliano to the Livenza. Now a wide gap existed between XV Corps and 6th Army; for the time being only parts of 20 Hon ID and the remnants of 31 ID were on hand to plug the hole. Thus the forces resolutely defending the Grappa area were in danger of being enveloped and cut off from their lines of retreat, which led through the Feltre and Belluno basins.

An attempt to delay the retreat

This critical situation caused FZM Goglia to decide soon after noon on 29 October to send his corps the orders to retreat, which had already been prepared. The movement would start as soon as the night of 29-30 October. But GdI Horsetzky, commanding the k.u.k. XXVI Corps, begged the Armeegruppe HQ to delay the withdrawal for at least one day. The Corps commander later wrote in his narrative of the campaign, "We couldn't simply abandon a position which thousands of our brave men had defended for the last six days at the cost of their lives. A sudden retreat would undoubtedly lead to unacceptable material loss and damage to morale."⁵⁹² The HQ of 11th Army also asked the Belluno Armeegruppe to hold out. Therefore FZM Goglia decided to postpone the start of the retreat until the night of 30-31 October. But then the troops who'd recently been gathered under 60 ID refused to obey their orders to take up a position on the crest of the heights between Mt Cesen and the Col Vernada.⁵⁹³ This created a very

592 Horsetzky, "Avolone", p. 273

593 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: As mentioned earlier, units which were still considered reliable had formed an *ad hoc* group under HQ

critical problem, since the enemy could now climb through the broad gap in the Piave valley to Cesana and Mel, cutting off large parts of the Armeegruppe from retreating through the Belluno basin. Every one of the reserve units behind the front had now mutinied; only the front stood fast. During this tense night FZM Goglia wired Baden, "There is only one way left to save such brave troops from the shame of capitulation - an immediate armistice."

Nevertheless, at first there was no change in the situation between the Col Caprile and Mt Spinuccia on 30 October. After the frontal assaults of 4th Italian Army had collapsed with heavy losses, their commander G.Lt Giardino had given his troops a brief pause to rest. He sought merely to threaten his opponents with local operations by detachments of assault troops. After heavy artillery fire, in the afternoon groups from IX Italian Corps advanced against the positions of the k.u.k. XXVI Corps in the Asalone area. There was heavier local fighting in the sector of the k.u.k. I Corps, where assault parties of the VI Italian Corps from Mt Pertica tried to penetrate the trenches of 48 ID.⁵⁹⁴ A thrust by the storm troops of XXX Italian Corps was defeated by the k.u.k. 17 ID. Despite numerous enemy attacks the Belluno Armeegruppe thus remained unshaken on the Grappa battlefield. However, G.Lt Giardino was justified in hoping that his gallant opponents would soon evacuate the area, since the entire wing of the Aus-Hung. forces in the Venetian plains had already been defeated and separated from the mountain front. Italian aerial observers flying over Feltre, Belluno and the Asiago plateau had already spotted supply trains in motion and depots on fire, sure signs of an impending retreat.

On the heights on both sides of the Piave Graziani's Army attacked more energetically on 30 October, seeking to block the road to Feltre in the rear of the brave defenders of Mounts Asalone and Pertica. Early in the morning some Alpini from 52 Italian ID east of the Piave had already occupied Mounts Barberie and Balcon, the outlying heights of the higher Mt Cesen. 20 Hon ID, very exhausted, began to fall back; gradually they withdrew in the Piave valley to Vas and S Maria. The Alpini didn't climb Mt Cesen until the afternoon. Meanwhile the thrust up the valley

of 60 ID - IR 114 and the Sturm Battalion of the Edelweiss Division; the Sturm Battalions 21 and 60; Feld Jaeger Battalions 12, 19 and BH 4 (of 60 ID); one battalion of Hon IR 4 (20 Hon ID); three mountain batteries. Now it was evident that the trust in these units had been misplaced.

⁵⁹⁴Wagner, "Geschichte des ehemaligen Schützen Regiments Nr. 6" (Karlsbad, 1932), pp. 362 ff. Vogelsang, pp. 766 ff.

by 23 French ID through Segusino was outflanking the parts of 20 Hon ID fighting on the right bank of the Piave by Quero, making their position also untenable.

On the right wing of the k.u.k. XV Corps the 50 ID were still able to hold onto the Calcino Brook. Here the Italian 70 ID sought for a long time but in vain to secure the heights north of Alano di Piave and the Quero basin, suffering severe casualties. They finally had to be relieved by 34 Italian ID. Near Quero IR 133 of 50 ID and the greatly-weakened Hon IR 17 of 20 Hon ID fought desperately against overwhelming enemy forces until late afternoon. Then they were struck by fire from the French east of the Piave. This compelled 50 ID to bend their left wing back entirely to the north, reaching to Mt Santo. In the evening the remnants of the Division were still holding out at Schievenin; also near Quero the brave Honved were offering their final resistance. But no forces were stationed any longer farther east (on the slopes of Mounts Zogo, Garda, Cesen and Crep), since 60 ID - Armeegruppe Belluno's last reserve unit - had stayed below in the Piave valley. GM von Pacor, commanding this Division, was only able to get his war-weary troops to deploy in back-up positions on Mt Miesna and along the southern bank of the Piave at Cesana, Mel and Trichiana.

While Graziani's Army sought on 30 October to drive a wedge to Feltre over the heights running east of the Piave, troops from six different divisions of Caviglia's Army were simultaneously climbing the mountain ridge south of Belluno between S Pietro di Barbozza and Caneva. 51 ID of XXVII Corps occupied the high ground between Mounts Cesen and Crep, reaching out to 52 ID of Graziani's Army. Many detachments from XXII, VIII and XVIII Corps of Caviglia's Army turned toward the mountain passes at S Ubaldo and S Croce where the remnants of the k.u.k. 31 and 25 ID were stationed, seeking to maneuver these troops out of their blocking positions. Far to the east pursuing columns of the Italian 33 and 56 ID moved through the broken and barren area of the Bosco del Cansiglio, forcing other troops of 25 ID - who suffered badly from lack of supplies - to engage in exhausting rear guard actions.

Thus on 30 October Caviglia's Army began to fight the isolated groups of the k.u.k. 31 and 25 ID in a series of fights along the mountain wall south of Belluno. But it wasn't this envelopment maneuver, but rather the increased danger to the Belluno Armeegruppe caused by Graziani's penetration into the Piave valley near Quero which caused FZM Goglia to realize that it was now high time to break off the battle. The completely-exhausted

20 Hon ID and 50 ID were no longer able to man a switch position on the flank southeast of Feltre, so the commander of the Belluno Armeegruppe had no choice but to order a retreat. The necessary orders were issued around 1:30 PM.

The course of the retreat

The left wing of 11th Army and the Belluno Armeegruppe were supposed to pull back to the permanent position which had been held prior to the spring offensive of 1916. It crossed the Sugana valley in the vicinity of Borgo and then ran north over Mt Salubio, the Val piana and the crest of the Fassana Alps to link up with the former Dolomite front. XXVI Corps gave up 40 Hon ID to 11th Army, but this Corps received 48 ID. 50 ID were re-assigned to I Corps. Finally the 60 ID and GM Pacor's group (the latter formed from the remnants of 31 and 25 ID) joined 20 Hon ID under XV Corps. During the withdrawal XXVI Corps would take the road Fonzaso - Fiera die Primiero - Rolle Pass - Predazzo - Corvara - Bruneck. Farther east I Corps would pull back through the Cordevole valley (past Agordo), the Falzarego Pass and Cortina d'Ampezzo. Still farther east XV Corps would withdraw along the Piave through Belluno, Longarone, Pieve di Cadore and Kreuzberg Pass into the Puster valley. During their long journey through the Fassana and Venetian Alps the troops would have to traverse a series of mountain passes at an average elevation of 2000 meters. The worst problem was that no arrangements had been made to feed the men on the way. What would the troops do when they had no more to eat? It was reported that the food stored in the magazines at Busche in the Piave valley had already been plundered. Hunger would cause the suffering troops to lose their discipline, which was already falling apart. Furthermore, the army wasn't accustomed to long marches after long months of positional warfare. A force of 70,000 poorly-clothed men would be retreating in November, a time when any new storm might clog the passes with up to a meter of snow and make movement by men and horses impossible.⁵⁹⁵ All the high-ranking commanders anticipated this withdrawal with trepidation.

Around midnight (30-31 October) the defenders of the Col Caprile and of Mounts Asolone, Pertica and Spinuccia abandoned the blood-soaked battlefields. To their lasting glory, they'd fended off the enemy until the last moment under the most difficult conditions - even after the area behind them fell into anarchy and chaos and they were left in the lurch by the reserve divisions. True to themselves, they'd fought and won the last defensive victory of the dying k.u.k. Army.

595 Horsetzky, "Die vier letzten Kriegswochen", pp. 26 ff.

The enemy didn't notice that our infantry were withdrawing. But the majority of the batteries (about 1000 guns) had to be left behind, since there was not enough equipment or time to move them. The crews stayed with the guns until the last rounds had been fired, then blew them up. The main body of XXVI Corps withdrew in the darkness of night to Castel Tesino and to the area north of Feltre while the divisions of I Corps retreated into the area northeast of Feltre. The march of XXVI Corps was very difficult. As they streamed north the columns were pressed together in the narrow part of the valley near Cismon. Wrecked wagons, abandoned guns and hundreds of dead horses hampered movement. Advanced troops from 40 Hon ID, 48 ID, 13 Sch Div and 17 ID had meanwhile occupied a naturally strong rear guard position which ran over the Col di Manga and Col Avena and then over the Pedevena Heights. This line was supposed to be held until the evening of 2 November. Furthermore, to hinder the enemy pursuit rear guards would stay in a prepared intermediate position for 24 hours; it stretched straight over the Col Bonato, the broad Prassolan Ridge, and the rocky crest of the Fassana secca. After the last rear guards withdrew, the bridges at Fonzaso, Cesana, Belluno and Ponte nell' Alpi would be blown up.

Italian aerial reconnaissance had already noted that the motorized heavy and very heavy guns were being pulled back, that endless lines of supply trains were moving to the rear over the Brocon Pass and through the Cismon, Piave and Cordevole valleys, and that the reserves of the Belluno Army Group were streaming toward their homes. Nevertheless, the disappearance of our garrisons from Mounts Asalone and Pertica took the Italians by surprise.⁵⁹⁶ The commander of their 4th Army, G.Lt Giardino, had ordered that new artillery bombardments and storm troop operations were to take place in the Mt Pertica area in the morning of 31 October; the XXX Italian Corps were supposed to assist the neighboring I Corps of Graziani's Army, which had encountered such stout resistance near Quero. The Italian high command, on the other hand, anticipated that their opponents would retreat from the Grappa Mountains at any moment and in the night of 30-31 October were urging the Armies of Graziani and Caviglia to advance immediately. On the 31st Graziani was to push through Feltre to Fonzaso so he could envelop the Austro-Hungarians in the Grappa sector, while Caviglia reached Belluno so he could then send advanced guards into the Cordevole valley as quickly as possible.

In the morning of the 31st the guns of the Belluno Armeegruppe

596 Rocca, pp. 284 ff.

were silent; Italian patrols found that the Col Caprile and Mounts Asolone and Pertica had been evacuated. The foremost troops of Giardino's Army immediately took off in pursuit of their retreating foes. Detachments from IX Italian Corps, to which a brigade was attached from XX Corps of 6th Army, thrust up the Brenta valley through the already-evacuated positions of 40 Hon ID; around noon they reached the town of Cismon, from which they moved ahead to Tezze. On the Col Bonato the pursuing Italians came to a halt in front of the intermediate positions of 4 and 48 ID. But adjacent to these rear guards of XXVI Corps toward the east the covering troops of I Corps started to evacuate their intermediate positions during the morning. Thus detachments of VI and XXX Italian Corps found the way open over the Col dei Pria, Mounts Prassolan and Roncone, and the deep valley of the Stizzone; they were able to reach the low ground by Seren, Rasai and Arten between 2:00 and 3:00 PM. Thus the remnants of Infantry Regiments 49, 99 and 8 (from Lower Austria and Moravia), which were still holding out on the Col Bonato, were forced to break off their action at 4:00 PM and retreat into the Sugana valley. But these gallant soldiers found that the pass near Cismon was already occupied by the enemy and so had to lay down their arms.⁵⁹⁷

On the right wing of Giardino's Army, storm troops of the XXX Italian Corps occupied Mounts Solarolo, Spinuccia and Madal and drove into the valley by Schievenin where they cut off rear guards from 50 ID. This Division and the last fragments of 20 Hon ID which had pulled back from Quero sought to cover the retreat of I Corps on the heights south of Feltre and on Mt Miesna. However, during the afternoon they pulled back to Villabruna under pressure from XXX Italian Corps, which advanced over Mounts Santo and Tomatico toward Feltre. The battered remnants of 20 Hon ID by Segusino assembled on both banks of the Piave, parts near Busche and parts near Cesana. Troops from 60 ID here covered the crossing point and were still stationed south of the river by Lentiai and Mel.

On the left wing of Graziani's Army the 24 Italian ID destroyed the last rear guards of 20 Hon ID near Quero early on the 31st, but then didn't move any further after this bloody action. Meanwhile the French 23 ID thrust upstream along the eastern bank of the Piave; in the afternoon they crossed the river near Cavrera and occupied Mt Miesna in the rear of the retreating remnants of the k.u.k. 50 ID; thus they covered the advance of the French 21st *Chasseur a Cheval* Regiment toward Feltre. When the French squadrons entered Feltre in the evening, they found

597Gallian, pp. 183 ff.

that Alpini battalions from XX Italian Corps had already reached the panic-stricken town. Meanwhile on the right wing of Graziani's Army the 52 Italian ID advanced from Mt Cesen over Mounts Garda and Artent and then thrust forward to Lentiai in the Piave valley. Pursuing detachments from the XXVII and XXII Corps of Caviglia's Army overcame great difficulties to cross the Col Moi and S Ubaldo Pass; they forced the last remnants of 31 ID to retreat, and toward evening descended the mountains near Trichiana to also reach the southern bank of the Piave.

The danger was now great that the units of the k.u.k. I Corps, streaming back in confusion toward the entry-point into the mountains at Peron, would disintegrate and that every man would seek salvation by fleeing on his own. All the roads leading up the Piave from Feltre into the Cordevole valley and to Belluno were clogged with groups of retreating troops who either had no directions or were thrown into chaos by contradictory orders as to the lines they should occupy. The Schützen Regiments 1 and 24, along with Infantry Regiment 139, took up a position on the heights north of Feltre; here they wanted to hold on until the columns of I Corps could withdraw in safety over the Cavorame Brook. The commander of 60 ID, GM Pacor, tried to guard the northern bank of the Piave between Busche and S Giustina with IR 114 and several Sturm battalions.⁵⁹⁸ Troops from the k.u.k. 17 ID took up a position between the Cordevole and the Piave near Sedico. Linked with them farther east were the remnants of 20 Hon ID as they fell back along both banks of the river, facing southwest. The remnants of 31 ID were assembled behind the Limana sector and on Mt Crese, covering Belluno. Toward evening the pursuing troops of 52 Italian ID, along with leading elements of 51 and 57 ID of Graziani's Army, reached the southern bank of the Piave between Cesana and Trichiana. However, they found that the bridge at Cesana was already destroyed, and so were no longer able to cut I Corps off from retreat into the mountains by Peron. As already noted, the French units of Graziani's Army crossed the Piave near Cavrera but were also unable to trap their opponents; as they pivoted left through Feltre and Fonzaso they became involved in the actions of Giardino's Army.

Thus the majority of the Belluno Armeegruppe were able in the evening of 31 October to avoid the threat of encirclement at the last moment. Nevertheless, during the day the enemy had managed to capture a large bag of prisoners by overtaking isolated groups of men who'd halted from exhaustion, and rear guards who'd been cut off. They also seized guns which had been blown up and abandoned, vehicles stuck on the roads, weapons which had been

⁵⁹⁸"Ehrenbuch der Hesser", Vol. III, pp. 310 ff.

thrown away, and half-plundered supply depots. There was also no doubt that the troops of the k.u.k. XXVI Corps were no longer strong enough to hold their new line between Tezze and Pedevena. Moreover, the danger of envelopment for the troops of the Aus-Hung. XV Corps still stationed south of Belluno increased during the evening of the 31st because of the advance of the right wing of Caviglia's Army on a broad front.

The Vienna 25 ID had sought by halting periodically to check the enemy's advance through S Croce and the Bosco del Cansiglio. The rear guard (Feld Jaeger Battalions 5, 6 and 10 under Lt Col. Freih. von dem Busche) offered strong resistance.⁵⁹⁹ This made such an impression on the Italians that they brought up 48 ID from Vittorio to join the pursuing detachments from 2 Assault Division and from 56 and 33 ID; the mission of all these troops was to envelop the narrow valley of Lake S Croce by moving in the west over the Col Vicentin and Mt Faverghera and in the east over Mt Costa. In exhausting rear guard actions the isolated groups of 25 ID, deployed over a wide area, gradually fell back to the area north of the Lake.

In the evening the news of 25 ID's withdrawal reached the new HQ of FZM Goglia's Armeegruppe at Cortina d'Ampezzo. It was believed that the retreat of the group's corps was endangered more by the Italian advance on Belluno than by the penetration into the low ground by Feltre and Fonzaso. This was because by thrusting through the upper Piave valley and through Pieve di Cadore the enemy might reach the Falzarego Pass sooner than the I Corps could through the Cordevole valley. Thus the Corps would have to accelerate their withdrawal on 1 November, sooner than originally planned.

b. The dangerous crisis of FM Krobatin's Army Group

While the principal Italian forces were already advancing in Venetia to the Livenza and to Belluno, the three armies stationed on Tyrol's western and southern border and by the Sieben Gemeinde still restricted their activity to attempts to pin down their opponents with local actions.

Situation of the k.u.k. 10th Army

Thus until the last day of October the k.u.k. 10th Army could

599Rost, "Das k.u.k. Feldjäger Bataillon Kopal Nr. 10, 1914-1918"
(in production)

still enjoy a period of relative quiet. Italian patrols probed forward cautiously along most of front, but almost without exception they were held in check by our garrison troops. In the morning of the 31st a storm troop assault on the Stilfserjoch by an Alpini detachment ended in bloody defeat at the hands of the Carinthian Volunteer Rifles of 164 Inf Bde.⁶⁰⁰ The commander of the Brigade, Col. Lempruch, was still reporting in the final days of the war that his troops were in good spirits. Reports from the interior of political developments and disintegration arrived much later among the units on the mountain heights of western Tyrol than they did among those in the plains of Friauli or the valleys of the Venetian Alps. It's true that the men of 10th Army were no less war-weary than those of the other armies. These gallant troops were hungry and lacked supplies and psychological support; some of them had been stationed for many months at the highest elevations, surrounded by snow and ice and almost overwhelmed by too much labor. Nevertheless they continued to follow orders without faith or hope, knowing that their only duty was to hold out until the bitter end.

The backbone of the defense was provided by Kaiser Jaeger and Kaiser Schützen, by the volunteer riflemen of Graz and Marburg and of the Alpine provinces, by the high mountain and mountain guide companies, and by Standschützen from Enneberg, the Vintschgau, and the Puster and Eisack valleys.⁶⁰¹ The troops retained their discipline in the high mountain sectors still unaffected by the great events - the Ortler and Adamello areas, the Tonale Pass, the Judicarien, the Zugna Torta, the Borcola Pass and Mt Pasubio. Signs of disintegration in 10th Army were restricted to some individual units of 49 and 19 ID, without affecting the main body. But many of the Army's formations were weakened by influenza, and the front on Tyrol's western and southern borders was becoming very brittle. Only minimal forces guarded the potential invasion routes over the Tonale Pass, through the Val di Sole and Val di Genova, and through the valleys of the Sarca, Adige and Vallarsa to Trent and to Bozen. The k.u.k. XIV, XXI and XX Corps had been forced to give up all their available reserves to 11th Army. But when these hitherto reliable troops were ordered to march to the Sieben Gemeinde

⁶⁰⁰Rainer-Harbach, "Geschichte der Kärntner Freiwilligen Schützen im Weltkriege" (Klagenfurt, 1930), pp. 224 ff.

⁶⁰¹Strohschneider, "Das Schützen Regiment Graz Nr. 3 und der steirische Landsturm im Weltkriege 1914-1918" (Graz), Vol. II, pp. 193 ff. Also "Die Steirische freiwilligen Schützen im Felde 1915-1918" (Graz, 1935), pp. 84 ff. and "Die k.k. Freiwilligen Schützen Salzburgs im Weltkriege" (Salzburg, 1933), pp. 50 ff.

plateau they refused to do so; they'd been contaminated by the example of the homeward-bound Hungarian units.

The Army Group demands an immediate armistice

In these dark hours, as mutinies continued to spread on the plateau, Army Group HQ at Bozen learned through an order which arrived from the AOK in the night of 28-29 October that when the Armeegruppe Belluno retreated the eastern wing of 11th Army would have to fall back to the positions that had been held prior to the offensive of fall 1917. None of the commanders believed that once these troops started moving to the rear it would be possible to halt them along this or any line. Nevertheless, HQ of 11th Army still clung to the hope that at any moment the armistice negotiations that were already starting would come to an impatiently-awaited end and spare them from initiating a destructive retreat. Army HQ therefore were deeply disturbed when soon after noon on the 29th the Belluno Armeegruppe command announced that they would have to start retreating in the following night. Responding to this news⁶⁰², 11th Army HQ reported to Bozen that "If this plan of the Belluno Group HQ and the re-creation of the 1917 front are in fact implemented, the immobility of our Army and the psychological condition of our troops will lead to complete destruction. Therefore the Belluno Group should stand fast for one or two days until negotiations are finished; conclusion of an immediate armistice at all important points along the front is needed to avoid a catastrophe that will devastate Tyrol." Furthermore, in a phone conversation with the Tyrol Army Group Chief of Staff (FML Willerding), the Chief of Staff of 11th Army GM Sündermann asserted that if an armistice wasn't concluded soon both he and the Chief of Staff of the Belluno Armeegruppe (Col. Kundmann) felt it would be preferable to have the troops surrender rather than to let them flee for their homes under enemy pressure.

Army Group HQ were convinced that not even the cessation of hostilities at the front would be enough to avoid chaos. In the evening they learned of the radio broadcast through Pola in which the AOK asked their Italian counterparts to suspend operations so that Venetia could be evacuated in a systematic and orderly fashion. FML Willerding immediately reported to Baden that this offer was no longer realistic because of the state of the troops. Based on his conversation with 11th Army HQ, he stated that "an unconditional armistice maintaining only our military honor" was the only way to avert catastrophe and anarchy in the interior of the Danube Monarchy, and therefore should be sought

602Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 160

energetically.

Army Group HQ were living through some bitter days. During 30 and 31 October more and more troops stationed on the plateau were ignoring orders. IR 111 now refused to enter the trenches, as did four Landsturm battalions (166, 170, 173 and I Tyrol) composed of Czechs, Poles and Germans. The HQ of VI Corps reported on the 30th that some of their units were already affected by the mutinies in the neighboring XIII Corps. Army Group HQ reported on the 31st that men of several units had refused orders or left the front on their own initiative - IR 26 of 52 ID, Storm Battalions 5 and 56, Hon IR 24 of 38 Hon ID, Hvy FAR 5 and one battery each from 38 Hon and 52 FA Bdes. Infantry Regiments 34 and 67 of 27 ID, which had already left the plateau, plundered camps and burnt down the funicular railway station at Portule. Under 5 ID in the Sugana valley the personnel of IR 1 were very bitter because they feared they'd have to go to the trenches to replace IR 103. The list of disobedient units also included the II Battalion of KJR 4 and II Battalion of K-SchR III. Because of these tragic developments, almost all of the units which had been sent to the plateau to take the place of the 27th and 38th Divisions near Asiago had to be sent away again. Thus some of the troops of the two divisions in question could no longer be replaced, leaving the garrisons of the new lines at Asiago very weak.

While the front of the k.u.k. 11th Army in the Sieben Gemeinde sector became ever more brittle, the Italian 6th Army were ready to strike, planning to overcome their already shaken opponents and drive them from the plateau back into the Sugana valley. Early on 30 October enemy patrols entered the evacuated advanced positions of III and XIII Corps near Asiago. Assault troops probed further toward the new lines at Camporovere and on the Katze Heights. Then an Italian patrol made up of Czechoslovakians entered the trenches of the newly-deployed Tyrol k.k. Lst Bn II near Bosco; not a shot was fired against them, and they were able to return to Asiago without any hindrance.

11th Army begins to retreat

As the retreat of the Belluno Armeegruppe began, the HQ of 11th Army were forced to issue the orders for their own withdrawal which had already been prepared. The units would move back in stages to the positions of 1917, a line from Mt Zebio through Mt Zingarella, Cima Maora, Borgo, Carzano and the area east of the Salubio to Val piana, and then running along the crest of the Fassana Alps. Initially (in the night of 30-31 October) the XIII

and VI Corps would withdraw to the second prepared position (Katze Heights - Mt Longara - Mt Meletta - Mt Lombara - Mt Lisser). Rear guards would stay in the old lines until the night of 31 October-1 November. Then the retreat would continue to the positions of 1917 starting in the evening of the 1st. During these movements the 53 and 18 ID would be re-assigned to XIII Corps. The VI Corps were to withdraw 39 Hon ID (with two battalions attached from IR 14) over the Via Barricata into the vicinity of Borgo; this Division, along with 5 ID (the latter reinforced by IR 59), would hold positions on the edge of the Brenta valley, by Borgo, by Carzano and in the area farther north. Starting on 3 November VI Corps would also include 40 Hon ID from the Belluno Armeegruppe, which was to withdraw from Castel Tesno over the Cadinjoch. To maintain a link between the Belluno group and 11th Army, several mountain guide and high mountain companies from the k.u.k. 10th Army would deploy on the Val piana and on the crest of the Fassana Alps as far as the Sforc. di Sadole. 11th Army HQ stressed that it was very important for 5 ID to take up a position near Borgo quickly so they could block the Sugana valley and provide a reliable back-up for the troops of the Belluno Armeegruppe withdrawing in that direction. Finally it was ordered that all guns which couldn't be moved from their positions on the heights were to be destroyed. Also the streets and roads at all the most important points on the plateau and in the Sugana valley were to be wrecked.

Amid sudden bursts of enemy artillery, in the night of 30-31 October the XIII and VI Corps retreated as ordered into the second position. G.Lt Diaz had received reports for days already about movements to the rear behind the Austro-Hungarian front, and on 30 October he'd ordered the 6th Italian Army in the Sieben Gemeinde sector to prepare to attack on the plateau. Their assignment was to reach Levico and Caldonazzo and cut off the retreat of their opponents through the Sugana valley toward Trent. G.Lt Montuori, commanding the 6th Italian Army, decided to start the attack on 1 November. His XII Corps would thrust toward Mt Moschicce, then pivot to the left, cross the Assa Ravine, and attack the line of heights between Mounts Erio and Verena. XIII Corps would thrust past Gallio to Mt Longara. 7 ID of XX Corps would secure Mt Badelecche. But at first the units would merely increase their pressure so they could determine for sure whether the Austrians were still holding the positions near Asiago and south of Gallio.⁶⁰³

At dawn on 31 October patrols of the Italian XII and XIII Corps advanced against the lines of the k.u.k. 11th Army between the

603 Rocca, pp. 285 ff.

Assa Ravine and the Col del Rosso. They found the edges of the Ravine by Canove and Camporovere to be unoccupied, but encountered resistance on the northern slopes of Mounts Sisemol and di Val Bella. At several points they were able to penetrate the positions of XIII and VI Corps, now defended only by rear guards, but were hurled out in counterattacks.

During the day there were more signs that the defenders were retreating. Far behind the lines the Italians could hear explosions as bridges and supply depots on the plateau were blown up. Now it was time for Montuori's Army to attack. That evening assault troops from XIII Italian Corps advanced against the rear guards of 38 Hon ID and 53 ID on the northern slopes of Mounts Sisemol and di Val Bella, and reached the Frenzella Ravine after traversing the deeply-furrowed eastern slopes of the Col del Rosso.

Meanwhile the Army Group HQ at Bozen were disturbed by the ever-spreading mutinies among the troops of 11th Army and the growing chaos along the lines of communication. They issued guidelines for a general retreat. It might be necessary to also evacuate the positions which 11th Army had held in fall 1917; in this case the troops would fall back again to the fortified line on the plateaus of Folgaria and Lavarone. The eastern wing of 10th Army and the 11th Army would then hold a line running from Finocchio through the plateau fortifications to Panarotta. In the worst-case scenario the XX, XXI and IV Corps of 10th Army and the units of 11th Army would offer resistance on a final line to be established from the middle course of the Sarca over the Cronicello heights, past the fortifications at Matarello and then straight through the Sugana valley to the Panarotta. This final position would cover the area around Trent and the retreat of 11th Army plus the main body of 10th Army through the Adige valley to Bozen. XXI Corps of 10th Army, the first to dis-engage from the enemy and to reach Bozen, would then march on the road past Meran through the Vintschgau and over the Reschenseideck to Landeck. They would be followed along the same route by XX Corps. The XIV Corps would either move from Meran through the Jaufen Pass and Sterzing to follow the troops of 11th Army as they withdrew through Brenner Pass, or would also move into the Vintschgau. V Corps on Tyrol's western border were to be reinforced by 159 Inf Bde from Trent. This Corps' role would be to stay in their posts on the heights by the Tonale Pass and in the Ortler area so as to cover the main body of 10th Army as they marched back through the Vintschgau.

3. The Italian plan of pursuit and the condition of the Aus-Hung. Southwestern armies

On 31 October there could no longer be any doubt at the Italian HQ that their opponents were in a complete and disorderly retreat along the entire front between the Brenta and the sea. From reports arriving that day the Commando Supremo became convinced that the Austro-Hungarians were now also pulling back in the Sieben Gemeinde sector. Their front was continuing to collapse and would soon fall as far as the Stilfserjoch. Now above all the Italian high command wanted to carry out a concentric attack on all three sides of southern Tyrol - from the west, south and east. "The victory seems decisive and has to be exploited. All Italian armies should advance so that as soon as possible they can destroy their opponents by cutting them off from their principal lines of retreat."⁶⁰⁴ The hope by the Commando Supremo that they could trap the parts of the Aus-Hung. forces on the southern Tyrol front was justified because the majority of these troops could only withdraw slowly along one road through the Adige valley.

In that night (31 October-1 November) G.Lt Diaz issued orders for the pursuit. 7th Army on the Tyrolean western front should advance over the Nonsberg toward Bozen and down the valley to Mezzolombardo; the 1st and 6th Armies should aim for Trent from the south and east. 4th Army would secure the Neumarkt-Bozen area from the Cismone and Cordevole valleys; 8th Army would advance to the Bozen-Bruneck area while a group on the side took Toblach. The 1 Cav Div were to ride as quickly as possible up the Piave and over the Mauria Pass (near Lorenzago) into the upper Tagliamento valley so they could cut off their opponents' retreat through the Fella valley toward Carinthia. In particular the Italian armies were given a cautionary order that they shouldn't engage in costly frontal assault but should "quickly and effectively reach the transportation centers of their opponents" with envelopment movements. 12th Army, whose front was now being pinched off by their neighbors, were instructed to assemble in the Feltre basin. In Venetia the 10th and 3rd Armies on the Tagliamento and the Cavalry Corps of the Count of Turin (2, 3 and 4 CD) would push to the Isonzo so they could overtake their retreating foes.

These wide-ranging goals were justified by the condition of the Aus-Hung. Army, which had ceased to be a reliable instrument of

⁶⁰⁴Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 197 ff. Rocca, pp. 313 ff.

war. It's true that there were still many detachments of various nationalities which bravely opposed their pursuing enemies whenever they came close.⁶⁰⁵ But despite the heroic self-sacrifice of these detachments, the k.u.k. southwestern armies as a whole were no longer offering serious resistance. After it became known that armistice negotiations had started and that the end of hostilities was near, the great majority of the troops no longer wanted to keep fighting. Furthermore, the non-German regiments were aware of the uprisings in Prague, Budapest, Lemberg and Zagreb and couldn't be kept at the front. A general "mass flight to the homelands" started. On 30 October the separation of troops by nationality had also begun within the field armies. As tokens of their new allegiance the non-German troops everywhere were wearing cockades or armbands with their national colors. Especially radical detachments began to expel officers of other nationalities. In the 3 Cav Div, except for the Lower Austrian DR # 3, the men were already creating soldiers' councils.⁶⁰⁶ Although there were never any incidents of physical violence against officers in the field, the troops were completely free from the latter's authority. And during the retreat it became evident that even some of the higher-level HQ no longer felt obliged to follow orders, particularly in 11th Army. Commanders lost the ability to learn which positions were still held by their own troops and which had been seized by the enemy.

Communications between HQ also broke down as the general flight home affected the HQ troops. Staffs at the operational offices disappeared, telephone equipment was abandoned, and truck drivers headed to the rear - with or without their vehicles. The officer corps was already affected by the same unrest as the rank-and-file. Even high-ranking officers abandoned their posts since they wanted to take part in the establishment of the new order in their homelands; they climbed onto the nearest trains that would take them away from the front. Finally the AOK at Baden were drawn into the political turmoil that affected Vienna at the end of October. They continued to carry out their functions, but only with great difficulty.⁶⁰⁷

There was no adequate way to get ammunition or food to the armies. The personnel of the supply columns abandoned their wagons and horses; the men in the labor and bearer detachments

⁶⁰⁵Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 408 ff.

⁶⁰⁶Sacken, "Geschichte des k.u.k. Dragoner Regiments Friedrich August König von Sachsen Nr. 3", Vol. II, p. 514

⁶⁰⁷Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 379

refused to obey orders, as did those in the funicular railway stations and the motorized columns.

In this hopeless situation the AOK had ordered the armies to avoid action with the enemy as much as possible during the retreat. Many divisions were withdrawing through Venetia and southern Tyrol in tolerable order, but naturally there were instances of robbery and destruction. While some brave regiments kept their discipline and made up most of the rear guard, crowds of fully-armed men were heading for home along lines of communication which had broken down into anarchy. These hungry soldiers had no reason to spare strangers, so food was being stolen everywhere. In front of the withdrawing armies moved the Etappen troops, the March formations and the numerous regiments which had mutinied and left the front on their own initiative; these groups plundered and destroyed as they marched. Often they forced their way forward with machine gun fire. Here and there mutineers commandeered trucks for the trip home. Attempts were made to disarm the marauders, but detachments that were supposed to carry out these assignments refused to obey. Confusion behind the lines and in the path of the retreating armies increased daily. Heavily-loaded wagons and trucks streamed toward home on all the roads in endless lines. Disorder became greater as the men moved farther from the front. The railroad stations were especially tempting targets; they were swarming with masses of men angrily demanding to be transported home. But rail traffic was extremely erratic because of the lack of locomotives and coal, and because trains were being stopped at the borders of the new Czecho-Slovakian and South Slavic states. Evacuation of supplies had halted along the lines of communication, and train traffic was stalling everywhere.

Responding to a suggestion from the Isonzo Army HQ, FM Boroevic sought to sort out by nationality the masses of men streaming back to their homes. After this processing at Görz, Divacca, Haidenschaft and Nabresina, the men were to be sent home as quickly as possible to clear the area for the arrival of the Isonzo Army as it withdrew toward the Southern Railroad. This would at least restore a measure of order to the chaos along the rail lines. But the national committee at Ljubljana had also taken an interest in the issue; they demanded that only South Slavic soldiers should be sent through the territory of their new state, while all other troops would have to be routed to their homes through Villach and Klagenfurt. FM Boroevic stated to the Ljubljana committee that he could take orders only from the AOK. On 1 November he sent wires to them and to the committee at Zabreb, requesting both bodies to do all they could to avoid "the

transformation of the Army into hordes which will destroy all the new government administrations." Furthermore the Field Marshal demanded that interference with rail traffic should cease immediately, but his appeal went unanswered.

Two days earlier (on 30 October) FM Boroevic had already pointedly asked the AOK whether he should meet at Velden with representatives of the nationalities so he could explain to them the dangers that threatened their new states because of the collapse of the Army. The HQ at Baden responded that they were already in touch with the national councils. Several representatives of the councils would come to the front, and the AOK would ensure that other representatives were sent to Velden. On the 30th the AOK had also informed the Prime Ministers of Austria and Hungary plus the two Defense Ministers that the Army was in an uproar and on the verge of becoming Bolshevik. It could be saved at the last minute only if the national councils calmed the troops through their representatives and through the press. The AOK requested that no means should be neglected in the attempt to get the national councils to join the fight against the anarchy that was spreading through the Army; otherwise the consequences would be equally harmful to all nationalities.

In the same sense the Chief of the General Staff, GO Arz, sent a wire in the evening of 30 October to Dr Sylvester, the president of the representatives assembled in Vienna; he described the disturbing breakdown in discipline at the front which had affected IR 14 and 59. The officers of the German regiments were trying in vain to convince the men that they should at least defend their own home provinces. Therefore GO Arz requested that in the interest of the fatherland representatives from Upper Austria, Salzburg and Tyrol should be sent to Trent where they could calm down the troops. It would be enormously helpful if the soldiers persevered through the last days of the war and returned to the homeland in discipline and order. If this didn't happen, Bolshevism would threaten everyone.

On the next day (31 October) the AOK turned directly to the national councils, asking whether they were ready to send representatives to Baden where they could explain their objectives to the k.u.k. high command and discuss measures to halt the demoralization of the troops. On 1 November the AOK again demanded that the new states should stop halting trains on the borders, since this was hampering traffic within the interior of the Monarchy and the return home of five million soldiers who were angrily demanding passage.

Meanwhile on 31 October the German-Austrian state council had issued an appeal to the troops from the Alpine lands. The front-line soldiers were admonished to maintain order and discipline, to refrain from looting and other acts of violence, and to obey regulations. Now the South Slavic and finally also the Czechoslovakian councils issued similar appeals.

Meanwhile reports of the hopeless conditions at the front and of the chaos along the lines of communication continued to multiply. The AOK were doing all they could to protect the Monarchy's soil from robbery and other excesses by masses of soldiers on the way home; the German-speaking Hereditary Lands were in the greatest danger. In the evening of 31 October the AOK from Baden ordered both Army Group commanders (FM Boroevic and Krobatin) to try wherever possible to place German troops from the Alpine lands in the first transports so they could ensure the security of their home areas as the other units came through by road or by rail.

4. The Italians break through by the Sieben Gemeinde on 1 and 2 November

1 November

On All Saint's Day the 6th Italian Army struck in the Sieben Gemeinde sector. Their thrust fell upon the k.u.k. 11th Army which was already disintegrating and whose eastern wing (XIII and VI Corps) was already falling back to the second position (Katze - Mt Miela - Mt Badelecche) and, farther east, to the edge of the precipice west of Collicelo. Only GO Martiny's III k.u.k. Corps still held their old position behind the Assa Ravine and near Camporovere. One more time the artillery thundered on the Sieben Gemeinde plateau, and one more time there was fighting near Asiago and on the Meletta massif. The 6th Italian Army were attacking weakened k.u.k. divisions that were falling apart; nevertheless even in this last great battle some brave Aus-Hung. troops still fended off all enemy thrusts.

Starting at 5:00 AM the battle lines of GM Schilhawsky's 6 ID and GM Schamschula's 52 ID were pounded heavily by the overwhelming enemy artillery. The XII Italian Corps (20th Italian and 48th English Divisions) were supposed to attack over Mounts Rasta and Moschicce and over the deep ravines of the Assa valley; then they'd advance over the massif formed by Mounts Erio and Verena to Vezzena. The English 48 ID attacked Mt Rasta in the morning

but were repulsed with heavy losses by the k.u.k. 52 ID.⁶⁰⁸ West of the Englishmen the Italian 20 ID came under defensive fire from the k.u.k. 6 ID and weren't able to cross the Assa Ravine.⁶⁰⁹ But while the Graz III Corps stood fast the lines of the neighboring k.u.k. XIII Corps collapsed completely.

Early in the morning the 24 French ID (of XIII Italian Corps) thrust down from the northern slopes of Mt Sisemol to Gallio; their objective was Mt Longara. The war-weary regiments of 38 Hon ID offered only slight resistance to the oncoming enemy. Mt Longara fell to the French. Hon IR 24, stationed as a divisional reserve in the second line of 38 Hon ID, refused to intervene and then marched away without orders. The other reserves attached to 38 Hon ID - Sturm Battalion 5 and Battalion II/IR 14 - fought back for just a short time. The troops of 38 Hon ID who weren't captured or dispersed conducted a hurried and disorderly retreat to Portule. Only the commander of 75 Hon Inf Bde, Col. Freih. von Thann, still held out north of Mt Longara with about 100 fighters, the remnants of Hon IR 23 and of Sturm Battalion 5.

The breakthrough on the left wing of 38 Hon ID immediately caused the entire brittle front of XIII Corps to waver. Giving way to enemy pressure, the troops of 27 ID that had still been fighting pulled their front back toward Mt Zebio, as did the Landsturm battalions that were attached from 10th Army and deployed on the Katze Heights, and weak detachments of III Corps.

The quick retreat of the k.u.k. XIII Corps also immediately created very serious danger for the troops of VI Corps (53 and 18 ID plus 78 Hon Inf Bde from 39 Hon ID), who in the morning were still stationed in the Campo Mulo valley and north of Mt Miela. To reach the positions of fall 1917 (on the line of heights from Mt Meata through Mt Zingarella to the Cima Maora) they would have to traverse the entire chaotic area on the eastern part of the plateau in a wide arc while avoiding the enemy who were thrusting north.

In the morning reports of the collapse of the Sieben Gemeinde front reached Pantè (east of Trent), the new HQ of 11th Army; here GO Scheuchenstuel had already instructed the corps under his command that if they couldn't hold the 1917 position they should fall back to the fortified line on the Lavarone plateau and then to the final position south of Trent (Matarello-Panarotta). Army Group HQ recognized that it was impossible to restore the

608 Linke, pp. 558 ff.

609 Fröhlich, "Geschichte des steirischen k.u.k. Infanterie Regimentes Nr. 27" (Graz, 1937), Vol. II, pp. 374 ff.

situation by the Sieben Gemeinde with reserves who refused to fight, and during the morning sent new orders to the k.u.k. 10th Army. As 11th Army retreated, the eastern wing of the 10th would first withdraw to the Folgaria plateau and then, in coordination with III Corps, to Trent. As soon as possible - and no later than 6:00 PM on 2 November - GO Scheuchenstuel was to assume control of all troops of 10th Army stationed east of the Adige. Furthermore FM Krobatin told 11th Army that their left wing was under all circumstances to hold out until the evening of the 2nd in the 1917 positions north and south of Borgo.

But conditions in the Sieben Gemeinde area had meanwhile become completely hopeless. The XIII Italian Corps had taken full advantage of the situation; without encountering serious resistance they had driven the badly battered front of the k.u.k. XIII Corps still farther north. During the afternoon assault troops of the 24 French ID were already north of Mt Baldo. Farther east assault troops of the 14 Italian ID advanced over Mt Meletta di Gallio, then pivoted left in an attempt to push west past Mt Fiara. Other detachments of 14 Italian ID and troops from 29 ID of XX Corps (which had already reached Foza in the morning) followed our retreating VI Corps; hindered more by difficult terrain than by resistance from their opponents' exhausted rear guards, in the afternoon they reached the Meletta massif. Finally they took Mounts Badelecche and Tondarecar in the evening. On the right wing of XX Corps the 7 Italian ID climbed out of the Brenta valley; they occupied the Sasso Rosso and Col Tonder (which had been evacuated) and moved forward to Mt Lisser.

The last remnants of 27 ID and of 38 Hon ID meanwhile had saved themselves by fleeing over the summits of Mounts Zingarella and Cucco to Portule. At night the weakened 53rd and 18th Divisions of VI Corps, moving in dispersed groups, finally reached the plateau north of Mt Zingarella between the Dosso del Fine and the Spitzkegerle.

On the extreme left wing of the k.u.k. 11th Army, on 1 November the 5 ID had deployed IR # 1 and 59 in positions north of the Sugana valley, near Carzano and farther north on the Salubio and Val piana.⁶¹⁰ IR # 54 of 5 ID, which was no longer under control, had already moved through the Sugana valley; IR # 103 had also renounced the war and was heading for home over the Cadin Ridge. In the evening three regiments of 39 Hon ID and two battalions of IR 14 were blocking the Sugana valley near Borgo; their lines linked up with those of 5 ID near Telve. Hon IR 9 of 39 Hon ID

⁶¹⁰Hoen, "IR 59 im Weltkrieg", p. 732

were still descending from the plateau.

Meanwhile the western wing of 6th Italian Army were the recipients of another fortunate turn of events. Fighting on the right wing of XII Italian Corps, the 48 English ID pivoted left from the Katze Heights; in the afternoon they were already on Mt Interrotto, and in the evening on Mt Moschicce. Thus the left wing of the k.u.k. 52 ID on Mt Rasta was enveloped. Now it was high time for the troops of the Graz III Corps, which despite powerful Italian artillery fire had been standing firm on Mt Rasta and the southern slopes of Mt Erior, to break off the action. GO Martiny finally did so around 5:30 PM. His men were able to break away from the enemy and to withdraw to the Lavarone plateau under cover of night. Rear guards covered this movement on both sides of the upper Assa valley, and on Mounts Verena and Meata.

The retreat of 11th Army had an impact on the eastern wing of 10th Army. In the night of 1-2 November GdI Verdross' Edelweiss [XIV] Corps had to evacuate their positions and retreat to the line on the Folgaria plateau which had been held before the offensive of May 1916. The Kaiser Jaeger Division withdrew in praiseworthy order from the battlefields of the Pasubio, from Mt Majo and from the Laghi position.⁶¹¹ The neighboring XXI Corps on the right couldn't join the retreat for the time being since they needed time to get their supply columns started.

2 November

Early on All-Souls' Day (2 November) the marching columns of the k.u.k. XIV and III Corps climbed from the Terragnolo valley, the Laghi basin and the Assa valley onto the plateaus of Folgaria and Lavarone. The Kaiser Jaeger Division occupied the edge of the heights west and east of Serrada between the Finocchio and the Dosso del Sommo. They had to extend their left wing to the Plaut Heights, because the Pilsen IR 35 of the adjacent 19 ID (holding the line to the upper course of the Astico) refused to take up a position. This Regiment had to be sent back to Valsorda, along with the mutinous Sturm Battalion 19.

Under III Corps the Czech personnel of DR 11 (6 CD) had demanded in the evening of the 1st to be immediately sent back to their homes in Moravia; without permission, they marched back to Caldonazzo. In the morning of the 2nd the Sturm Half Regiment of

⁶¹¹Wiss Haupt, "Die Tiroler Kaiserjäger im Weltkriege 1914-1918" (Vienna, 1936), Vol. II, p. 326

6 CD also moved to the rear.⁶¹² The two reserve regiments of 6 ID, IR 17 and 127, were instructed to go forward to Luserna, where they'd occupy positions and intercept other fleeing detachments. But even the Ljubljana IR 17 were no longer willing to enter the front lines. IR 81 of 6 ID and IR 26 of 52 ID had already mutinied several days earlier. Now parts of 52 ID's IR 42 and 74 wouldn't fight any more, although after several exhortations they did promise to stay where they were stationed. Thus, except for the gallant gunners of the 28 FA Bde, there were just a few regiments that III Corps could depend on. In the morning of the 2nd these remaining units, including the Graz IR 27 and the new IR 127, took up positions on the Lavarone plateau, the Gschwent heights, and near Luserna and Vezzena.

Under the disintegrating k.u.k. XIII Corps, in the morning of the 2nd the remnants of 27 ID and of 38 Hon ID were already descending the plateau into the Adige valley so they could march back to Trent.⁶¹³ 18 and 53 ID continued to retreat west from the area Mt Fiara - Cn. di Campo biaco - Portule, seeking to link up with III Corps. GM Ritter von Romer's 18 ID assembled in the morning behind 52 ID, whose battle lines on the Cima di Vezzena were supposed to be reinforced by GM Korzer's 53 ID.⁶¹⁴

Thus the XIV, III and XIII Corps had completed their retreat by the morning of 2 November to the fortified lines that had been held prior to the spring 1916 offensive on the plateaus of Folgaria and Lavarone. At this time on the left wing of 11th Army the VI Corps (39 Hon ID and 5 ID) were still in the positions of 1917 at and north of Borgo. But Hon IR 16 of 39 Hon ID was already starting to fall apart and couldn't be kept at the

612 Schramm-Schiessl, "Die Geschichte des k.u.k. Mährischen Dragoner Regiments Friedrich Franz IV., Gross Herzog von Mecklenburg-Schwerin Nr. 6, 1906 bis 1918" (Vienna, 1933), pp. 1071 ff.

613 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: There appears to be an error here. In the night of 1-2 November the remnants of 38 Hon and 27 ID were just northwest of Mt Zingarella, and to get to Trent they would have to move through the Val Sugana, not the Adige valley (which lies far to the west). The situation maps (Beilage 34) show that men from 27 ID did eventually escape north from Trent through the Adige valley on 3-4 November. The text does not detail the movements of either division after this point.

614 Haubenberger, "Bataillon IV/84 im Weltkrieg" (Vienna, 1937), pp. 115 ff., and Hoen-Waldstätten-Zipperer and Seifert, pp. 812 ff. (Both works contain material about IR 104).

front. In the morning 11th Army HQ at Trent, which meanwhile had taken command over XIV and XXI Corps from 10th Army, instructed VI Corps to also retreat to the positions of 1916, which in the Sugana valley were east of Levico. Rear guards would stay near Borgo to cover this movement.

Army Group HQ at Bozen meanwhile became ever more convinced that because of the condition of the troops they couldn't let serious fighting with the enemy develop along the fortified lines on the Folgaria and Lavarone plateaus, or by Levico. 11th Army had already lost many thousands of men as prisoners; a large part of the artillery (about 250 guns) had been destroyed because of transportation shortages. FM Krobatin therefore ordered that if the enemy pushed forward the retreat should continue to the next (and last) position south of Trent, which ran along the middle course of the Sarca and over the heights of Cronicello and Panarotta. This course was necessary to save those brave troops who were still fighting from being cut off and taken prisoner, an outcome that was now a serious danger.

2 November - intervention by the Hungarian War Minister

A little after 5:00 AM on 2 November there arrived at the HQ in Bozen, through the k.u.k. AOK, a message from the new Hungarian Minister of War, Colonel Linder. It stated, "Hungary's internal situation makes it impossible for the country to continue to wage war. Based on the decision of the Hungarian government I, as the responsible Royal Hungarian Minister of War, command that the men should stop fighting." The AOK had forwarded the message based on a phone conversation with Col. Linder, but didn't endorse it. This shocking order, issued to all Hungarian troops, would cause gaps to develop in the front that couldn't possibly be filled. Above all, if 39 Hon ID in the Sugana valley laid down their arms the road to Trent would lie open to the enemy. The Tyrol Army Group HQ, fully aware of the dire consequences the order would have, immediately and urgently asked the AOK whether the latter knew where Linder's initiative would lead. In their consternation over the order, 11th Army HQ even asserted, "If we can't get any help from higher up, our Army will help itself," meaning that the entire force would capitulate.

As the morning passed and no reply was received from Baden, FM Krobatin became convinced that the Emperor had agreed with Col. Linder's order. Therefore he sent an even more urgent wire to the Chief of the General Staff: "The one-sided cease-fire on the part of the Hungarian troops, endorsed by the All Highest order, will turn the chaos that now prevails into anarchy. Hundreds of

thousands of soldiers, along with the land and people of Tyrol who've proven to be so loyal to the Emperor, will be abandoned to deadly hunger and devastation. Both God and mankind will condemn anyone who doesn't do all he can to prevent this. Army Group HQ believes that the only possible salvation is an unconditional armistice or - if this cannot be achieved - perhaps the capitulation of the entire army."⁶¹⁵ FM Krobatin added to the telegram a request that his report should be conveyed immediately to the Emperor. Until a new decision was received the Army Group HQ wouldn't convey the order of the Hungarian War Minister to the troops.

But meanwhile the subject of the phone conversation between Baden and the Hungarian War Minister became known everywhere. It was also known already that the Emperor had placed the troops in the interior under the control of the national councils. There were rumors that the officers and men were being released from their oath of allegiance. There were doubts whether the Emperor was still in command of the field armies. FM Krobatin wired an urgent appeal to GO Arz to clarify these issues without delay.

2 November - the enemy advance continues

Meanwhile the Italians continued to advance in the Sugana valley through Grigno toward Ospedaletto and south of the valley on the plateaus toward Vezzena and Luserna. In front of them, on the left wing of the k.u.k. 11th Army, 39 Hon ID blocked the route through the Sugana valley at Levico. Two battalions of IR 14 were climbing onto the Panarotta. 5 ID had already pulled back over the Cadin Ridge. They were followed by the supply trains and troops of 40 Hon ID, which came out of the narrow valley of Castel Tesino. The latter Division was ordered to leave a brigade as rear guards on the icy ridge, while detachments of 5 ID occupied the Schrum and Kreuz summits and the Cauriol.

On the Lavarone plateau, long-range Italian artillery were already firing on Vezzena in the afternoon. The remnants of the k.u.k. 53 ID - 700 men - managed to link up there with III Corps in the evening. Pursuing detachments of the 6th Italian Army's XII Corps, ordered to secure the Lavarone plateau, were already approaching Vezzena at that time. The columns of XIII Italian Corps were advancing from Mt Zebio to Portule and onto Mt Zingarella, engaged in light fighting with rear guards of the k.u.k. 11th Army. XX Italian Corps had sent detachments forward through Marcesina onto the Costa alta and from Mt Lisser to the slopes leading down into the Sugana valley, and to Enego.

615Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 138

1st Italian Army were stationed between Lake Garda and the Astico valley. On their right wing, in the morning the 6 ID joined the advance of the neighboring XII Corps. The Italians pushed through Pedescala into the Astico valley, climbed onto the Tonezza plateau, cut off the rear guards of the k.u.k. 19 ID that had stayed on Mt Cimone, and reached Scalzeri in the evening.

In the morning of the 2nd, a powerful Italian artillery bombardment indicated that the battle was spreading also to the Adige valley. The 32 ID stationed here were holding in readiness a strong attack group consisting of Alpini detachments, assault troops, mountain artillery and a cavalry regiment. Their mission was to advance to Trent as quickly as possible. This would cut off the retreat of the Austro-Hungarians still fighting west and east of the Adige. To the right of the main attacking group the 55 Italian ID would advance on both sides of the Vallarsa to pin down their opponents; to the left the 26 ID would carry out the same assignment from the area of Mt Altissimo.

55 Italian ID moved forward in the morning of the 2nd after brief artillery preparation. On Mt Testo they encountered stubborn resistance from the rear guards of the Kaiser Jaeger Division and were unable to break through either here or in the Vallarsa near Valmoria.

The Italian assault group in the Adige valley started their operation around 3:00 PM. Storm troops thrust through Serravalle and along the western slopes of the Zugna Torta toward Marco. After hard fighting the garrison troops of the 56 Sch Div were overwhelmed. At 11:00 PM Alpini detachments pushed into the town of Rovereto, where they captured parts of the "Kolomea" SchR 36. Ranging widely, that night the Alpini continued their thrust past Volano to Calliano, while other troops of the Italian assault group followed their route to Rovereto.

Because the Italians had penetrated deep into the Adige valley, the k.u.k. XX, XXI and XIV Corps were in danger of being cut off from Trent. Therefore all three corps were ordered to retreat. The k.u.k. 3 CD, which had been attacked by the enemy near Manzano, began to withdraw during the night to the Cima bassa heights and to Villa Lagarina.⁶¹⁶ The troops of the Riva Detachment stationed west of Lake Garda wouldn't join the withdrawal until dawn on the 3rd, so as to avoid a dangerous descent from their mountain ridge positions in the darkness of night.

⁶¹⁶Sacken, Vol. II, pp. 514 ff.

Thus the situation of the k.u.k. 11th Army became ever more desperate. Troops of the XIV and III Corps still held their positions by Luserna and Vezzena, but behind them masses of men were heading to the rear, burning all the supply depots and barracks as they marched. Troops in complete disorder choked all the roads leading from the Lavarone and Folgaria plateaus into the Sugana and Adige valleys; some of the war-weary soldiers had discarded their rifles, and many of them were overladen with stolen food. Among the hurrying troops supply trains rolled back in endless columns.

The greatest disorder reigned in the Adige valley. Several supply depots near Lavis had already been plundered on 2 November. No one knew how the troops would be able to feed themselves as they marched back to Trent. Drivers had abandoned many of the trucks of the supply services, and the operators of the funicular railway station at Caldronazzo had disappeared. Operation of the Sarch-Saone cable rail line in the Sarca valley, the sole supply route of the XX Corps, was also interrupted. Railroad traffic from Trent now continued only on the line leading north. There were great disturbances in the station. Endangered railroad employees refused to serve on over-loaded trains that were filled with masses of men heading home. There were far too few troops guarding the tracks, and they too were unreliable.

During 2 November the HQ of 11th Army repeatedly reported about these hopeless conditions and the deadly seriousness of the situation; they remained convinced that only an immediate armistice might still halt the Army's complete disintegration. At 8:50 PM the Army Group HQ, which still didn't know whether Linder's instructions had been forwarded to the troops, sent a yet more urgent wire to Baden: "It is high time to come to a final decision." Around 10:00 PM the AOK announced that the order of the Hungarian War Minister should be implemented, and thus that the soldiers of his country should lay down their arms. The Hungarian government and nation would have to assume the responsibility.

At 2:00 AM on 3 November a new order from Baden arrived at Bozen: "The Entente's conditions for the armistice have been accepted. All hostilities are to cease immediately on the ground and in the air." After hours full of frightful tension, at Army Group HQ this phone message seemed to be a deliverance. But it wouldn't save the Southwestern armies from the threatening catastrophe as was hoped; instead it had extremely disastrous consequences.

5. Armeegruppe Belluno retreats to the Fassana Alps, 1 and 2 November1 November

After the last actions in the Grappa mountains, on 1 November the Belluno Armeegruppe continued their retreat. On this day the 40 Hon ID reached Castel Tesino. The remnants of 4 ID (IR 9, Sturm Battalion 4, parts of IR 8) marched from the Ramon area and through the 1600 meter high Brocon Pass to Canale S Bovo. 28 and 48 ID assembled by Servo and Aune. Eight regiments which had mutinied - BH IR 7 from 28 ID, IR 119 from 48 ID, BH IR 4 of 55 ID, IR 105 and 108 plus BH IR 5 of 60 ID, and Honved IR 25 and 26 from 42 Hon ID - were already marching under the leadership of the HQ of 42 Hon ID over the Rolle Pass and through the Fassa valley to Arabba and Corvara. 84 Hon Inf Bde (Hon IR 27 and 28) of 42 Hon ID had reached Fiera di Primiero. Thirteen incomplete batteries were the entire artillery still left to the k.u.k. XXVI Corps.

Under 4th Italian Army, on 1 November a pursuing column from IX Corps advanced in the Sugana valley through Tezze and Primolano to Grigno; another detachment from this Corps occupied the Colle del Gallo and reached Arsie. The VI Italian Corps entered Fonzaso at 11:00 AM; they took the Col di Lan and the southern slopes of Mt Avena. However, the Italians weren't able to thrust after the retreating k.u.k. XXVI Corps through the Cismon valley. Rear guards detached from three divisions (40 Hon ID, 28 and 48 ID) plus Sturm Battalion 55, fighting with unbroken courage, blocked the Cismon valley by holding fast in positions on the cliffs near Sorriwa; they also retained Mt Avena and the heights by Pedevena.

Although exhausted, the troops of the k.u.k. I Corps had continued their retreat in the night of 31 October-1 November so they could reach the entry point into the mountains at Peron. The reduced regiments of 13 Sch Div were the first to pass north through the Agordo valley. They were followed by 17 ID, which assembled early on the 1st near Sedico. Troops that had become separated from XV Corps joined 17 ID. The 50 ID, with parts of 60 ID, reached Sospirolo in the afternoon and the entrance to the Cordevole valley between Mounts Sperone and Tissi (southeast of Peron) was guarded by 110 Inf Bde (55 ID), 41 Sch Bde (21 Sch Div), and Sturm Battalions 13 and 50.

Under Graziani's Army, the advanced troops of I Corps and the 23 French ID didn't move past Feltre on the 1st. The 52 Italian ID crossed the Piave near Cesana and sent their advanced guard northeast along the slopes on the northern bank to the area of S Giustina; however, they could no longer keep up with their retreating opponents.

The k.u.k. XV Corps had continued their retreat through Belluno to Polpet in the morning of the 1st. Around noon GM Pacor's group (parts of 60 ID and of 20 Hon ID) had already reached the Trt. Ardo northwest of Belluno. At this time the remaining troops of 20 Hon ID were in Belluno. South of the Piave 31 ID fell back from the Limana - Mt Crese sector and reached the area east of Belluno around noon; here they linked up with 25 ID, which was supposed to halt north of the Lago [Lake] di San Croce.

Meanwhile two divisions of 8th Italian Army - 51 and 57 ID - had come up to the Piave in the Lentiai-Trichiana sector. 60 Italian ID reached Lentiai. 48 ID and detachments from the 2 Assault Division had taken a detour around the narrow road from Fadalto (south of Lake San Croce) toward Polpet. A regiment of 60 Italian ID, advancing right behind the retreating troops of 20 Hon ID and 31 ID, thrust to Belluno and entered the city in fighting with rear guards. Now the divisions of the k.u.k. XV Corps accelerated their retreat to Polpet, but meanwhile the leading battalion of the Italian 2nd Assault Division had advanced to the bridge by that town ("Ponte nell'Alpi"). The bridge hadn't been blown up in time. On the right bank of the Piave troops from the 25, 31 and 60 ID and from 20 Hon ID were coming together in front of the entry into the mountains at Polpet. The Italian assault battalion forced their way through the surprised and confused Austro-Hungarian units. Groups were cut off and taken prisoner before they realized what was happening. The men who were able to escape hastened toward Longarone.

2 November

On 2 November there was still heavy fighting on the heights north of Fonzaso. Here detachments of IX and VI Italian Corps, supported by troops from Graziani's Army, tried in vain to drive back the rear guards of the k.u.k. XXVI Corps so they could advance along the Val Cismon. But meanwhile a pursuing column from IX Italian Corps, concealed by fog in the valley, pushed into Grigno. Thus the positions of the k.u.k. XXVI Corps on the heights east of the Brenta had been enveloped. Toward evening

the last rear guards of Horsetzky's Corps evacuated the heights east of Grigno, near Lamon and north of Fonzaso, which they had defended so stubbornly. In the meantime 40 Hon ID had withdrawn from Castel Tesino to Telve so they could march over the Cadin Ridge to Cavalese in the Fleims valley. The troops of 4, 28 and 48 ID marched up the Cismon valley into the area around Fiera di Primiero. IR 73, a battalion of IR 119 and Sturm Battalion 55 were hurriedly pulled back to S Martino di Castrozza so they could guard the crossing points over the Fassana crest. The movements to the rear were covered by a rear guard from 4 ID at the Brocon Pass and by IR 11 (from 28 ID) near Imer in the Cismon valley.

While the main body of 4th Italian Army remained stationary in the Fonzaso area on 2 November, only sending advanced guards into the Cismon valley behind the retreating Austrians, the troops of Graziani's Army concentrated in the Feltre basin. On the left wing of 8th Italian Army the 51 ID and a cavalry regiment thrust north of the many branches of the Piave to Sospirolo and Sedico in an attempt to reach the entry to the mountains at Peron. An Italian squadron tried to attack rear guards of the k.u.k. I Corps near Sedico but was driven off by defending fire. The k.u.k. 55 ID kept the route into the mountains south of Peron blocked until the afternoon, then dis-engaged from the oncoming enemy and retreated to Agordo. Meanwhile the units marching up the Cordevole valley had already reached the Alleghe area (13 Sch Div), Cencenighe (17 ID) and Taibon and Agordo (50 ID).

The troops of the k.u.k. XV Corps, streaming back in confusion up the Piave from Polpet, were able to outrun the enemy in the night of 1-2 November. During the 2nd the remnants of 20 Hon ID and parts of 60 ID reached Ospitale, while 25 ID and - in the final echelon - 31 ID reached Longarone. The first pursuing troops (from 60 Italian ID) approached Longarone toward evening, but the k.u.k. XV Corps continued their retreat during the night, intending to come to Pieve di Cadore.

In the evening of the 2nd the main body of 8th Italian Army were still in the Belluno basin. Two divisions, 33 and 56 ID, had branched off to Polcenigo. The former were instructed to advance along the foot of the mountains through Aviano and Rovereto in piano to Spilimbergo; thus they'd envelop the northern wing of the Aus-Hung. forces retreading in the Venetian plains.

By this time the Belluno Armeegruppe had managed to outrun their pursuers in a timely retreat from the Feltre and Belluno basins. But the commanders were greatly concerned that the troops

wouldn't be able to eat during the march back through the Fassana Alps. Until now the divisions had received provisions that had been trucked from the Fleims valley, but the drivers were claiming that "they could no longer tolerate continuous work by day and night." Only by constant urging were they compelled to continue at least some deliveries. The cable railway between the uppermost parts of the Grödner and Fleims valleys had been abandoned by its personnel. The supply depots in the Fleims and Puster valleys, upon which the troops would have to rely in the next stage of their march, were all being plundered by deserters. Not even the local farms were spared. Countless groups of men drifting homeward filled the Puster valley, surrounding the railroad stations where they violently demanded transportation.

Faced with these problems, in the evening of 1 November FZM Goglia requested by wire that the AOK should assign the volunteer rifle formations on the Tyrolean front, especially those from the Puster valley and Enneberg, to his Armeegruppe, while all the unreliable troops should be shipped away by train. In any case it would be better to defend the borders with just a few battalions rather than to expose the Alpine provinces to robbery and hunger. More urgently, in the afternoon of 2 November FZM Goglia sent another telegram to the AOK, complaining that he had just four trains available each day to ship the mutinous troops, especially the Czechs and South Slavs, from the Puster valley back to their homelands. He advised using the greatest speed since "if the troops remain in the Puster valley for a long time the result will be complete chaos, robbery, and assaults on trains which will bring rail traffic to a halt along with the shipment of supplies. Representatives of the nationalities should be sent here immediately to pacify the troops."⁶¹⁷ At the same time the HQ of the Belluno Armeegruppe, under the impact of the ever more-hopeless conditions, asked the AOK whether they should even try to defend the borders; perhaps the Army should cease all combat activity after pulling back to Austrian soil.

6. The 6th and Isonzo Armies withdraw behind the Tagliamento River, 1 and 2 November

1 November

After their night-time withdrawal from the Livenza, in the morning of 1 November the tired troops of the k.u.k. 6th Army's II and XXIV Corps reached the area north of Aviano and near S

617Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 142

Martino, then the western bank of the Cellina at the town of Sedrano.⁶¹⁸ Nöhring's group, who were still on the march at daybreak, were pursued by enemy planes; they reached Cordenons during the morning. Troops from 44 Sch Div withdrew behind the Meduna near Pordenone; they blew up the railroad bridge, burnt the wooden highway bridge, and sought to link up with the northern wing of the Isonzo Army.

The mounted force of the Count of Turin (1, 2, 3 and 4 Italian CD) set out from the Livenza in the morning to pursue their retreating opponents; in the morning they neared the new rear guard positions of the k.u.k. 6th Army. Armored cars, constantly firing machine guns as they moved along the road, caused temporary confusion on the northern wing of 41 Hon ID near S Quirino. The wide plains covered by meadows, broken by only a few streams and small woods, were ideal terrain for a cavalry attack. The leading regiment of 3 Italian CD were checked and forced to fall back in front of Sedrano by our artillery. However, an enemy squadron broke through the thin lines of the k.k. 12 Reit Sch Div, whose personnel were so exhausted that they hadn't been able to entrench. Here for the first time the Italians made a successful mounted charge. They threw the shaken 12 Reit Sch Div into confusion and around noon forced them to fall back further. Around the same time, on the northern wing of the k.u.k. II Corps the 34 ID fell back toward Montreale when the 1 Italian CD advanced through Aviano with armored cars. Thus once more, as on the preceding day at Fiaschetti, a wide gap in the front developed between II and XXIV Corps. The immediate result of the buckling of 6th Army's northern wing was that in the afternoon the XXIV Corps and then also Nöhring's group had to join the retreat of II Corps.

Because of these developments, HQ of 6th Army decided already in the morning that they'd continue the retreat behind the Tagliamento more quickly and in one bound; since the troops were no longer capable of resisting the enemy they should be withdrawn completely. The Honved Bicycle Battalion, placed directly under 6th Army HQ and initially assigned to guard the railroad stations at Villach and Tarvis, now were ordered to establish an intermediate position for the retreating troops of II Corps at Pinzano on the western bank of the Tagliamento. SchR "Linz" # 2 of 44 Sch Div would hasten to Gemona, where they'd entrain for Vienna to serve as Assistenz troops. A bicycle company and the Carinthian Mtn SchR 1 (which had already reached Gemona) would

⁶¹⁸Szepessy-Bugsch, "The Royal Hungarian Honved Infantry Regiment 'Gross-Kanisza' Number 20, 'Baron Szurmay', in the World War" (in Magyar; Sopron, 1931), Vol. II, pp. 240 ff.

guard the railroad junction at Tarvis, since it was known that Yugoslav National Guards had occupied Assling.

The events of the past day and the condition of the troops convinced 6th Army HQ that lengthy resistance on the Tagliamento would be impossible. The Italians were advancing along the foot of the mountains with the clear intention of enveloping the northern wing of the k.u.k. 6th Army and cutting them off from the entrances to the Venetian Alps; therefore the Army's HQ decided to abandon their original plan of drawing parts of II Corps back over the Plöcken Pass. Late in the evening of the 1st they issued orders for a retreat to Carinthia. The lines of march would be:

- . II Corps: Gemona - Pontafel - Tarvis
- . XXIV Corps (with Nöhring's group attached): Cividale - Karfreit - Flitsch.

If the enemy didn't cross the border, the troops would rest in the following areas - II Corps by Feistritz a.d. Gail, Bleiberg, Villach and St Veit; XXIV Corps (with Nöhring's group) by Tarvis, Villach, Klagenfurt and Ferlach.

The Isonzo Army were also trying to distance themselves from the enemy so that their withdrawal could be completed with as little interference as possible. The rear guards were instructed to pull back by the night of 31 October-1 November to the Meduna and the lower Livenza; by the night of 2-3 November they'd be on the Tagliamento and the line S Vito al Tagliamento - Cordovado - Lemene Canal. Early on the 4th the entire Army were to halt on the eastern bank of the Tagliamento to cover the withdrawal of the supply trains.

But the movements of the Isonzo Army were more rapid than originally envisioned. In the night of 31 October-1 November the XVI Corps marched south of the railroad line Sacile-Codroipo to the eastern bank of the Meduna; this Corps commanded Berndt's group (29 ID, 26 Sch Div, 201 Lst Inf Bde) and Urbarz's group (24 ID and remnants of 7 ID). In the morning the troops reached the area Fiume - S Vito - Azzano Decimo; the last unit, 26 Sch Div, came to the eastern bank of the Meduna between Visinale di Sopra and Cimpello. As long as night still covered the plains of Friuli the march continued without interference. But when day dawned enemy planes appeared to harass their retreating opponents. These merciless pursuers caught up with 52 Sch Bde, serving as rear guards to XVI Corps. The planes cruised over the columns at a low elevation, firing machine guns on the rows of wagons and the artillery; they also bombed the crossing points over the Meduna. An inextricable tangle of wagons and carts,

along with frightened horses, blocked the roads; the men, some of them wounded, sought cover. But once they were east of the Meduna the troops still hadn't escaped danger from repeated assaults by enemy air units. Morale was very low. The rear guards who'd stayed on the Meduna demanded to be withdrawn when the leading elements of the pursuing XIV English Corps (of Cavan's Army) appeared on the western bank of the river.

On the Italian side, on 1 November the main body of 10th Army were able to cross the Livenza between Sacile and a point downstream from Portobuffole. On the left wing of 3rd Italian Army the 23 ID of XXVIII Corps advanced in the night of 31 October-1 November into Motta di Livenza, which meanwhile had been evacuated by the rear guards of the k.u.k. VII Corps. In the morning of the 1st, troops from 23 ID crossed the river downstream from this town. But the rear guards of k.u.k. VII Corps (65 Inf Bde of the Hungarian 33 ID and 24 Inf Bde of the Galician 24 ID) checked the enemy pursuit and gallantly defended the eastern bank of the Livenza. In the afternoon these brave k.u.k. troops even counterattacked and made it impossible for 23 Italian ID to gain any further ground.⁶¹⁹ The fighting by Motta di Livenza continued until evening. The rear guards of VII Corps finally broke away from the enemy after darkness fell.

On the right wing of 3rd Italian Army the regiments of XXVI Corps came up to the Livenza near its mouth during 1 November. The 46 Sch Div and 4 Inf Bde of 2 ID were still stationed on the embankment north of the river and the nearby lagoons. But in the night of 1-2 November a brigade from 45 Italian ID reached the eastern bank as their opponents withdrew.

Continuing chaos in the rear areas

While the Isonzo Army retreated from Venetia toward the old international border, conditions in the Army's rear became ever more confused. The coastal sector command HQ at Trieste, which had no means of defense, gave way to the new authorities. The vessels of the fleet stationed in the port were handed over to the Yugoslav committee. The gunners abandoned the coastal artillery without orders. Personnel of Trieste's local defense units plundered public buildings; the Etappen troops refused to obey orders and went over to the mutineers. Armored cars sent to help the coastal sector command fell into the hands of the Yugoslavs. k.k. Lst Inf Bn 40, which were supposed to guard the flank of the Isonzo Army until the arrival of 57 ID, renounced their allegiance. A bicycle battalion placed under the coastal

⁶¹⁹Lehar, pp. 64 ff.

sector command also proved to be unreliable.⁶²⁰ 57 ID were supposed to arrive at Opcina on 3 November, but could they be counted on? In their ranks were 1000 mutineers from the Galician IR # 57, and the Division's other personnel were mostly southern Slavs. The Italians might land troops in Trieste at any time.

The south Slavic council declared their neutrality and announced that military personnel not under their authority could stay on their soil only if disarmed. Local representatives of the council took over the railroads, prevented traffic from passing through, interrupted communication by telephone or telegraph, seized radio stations and supply depots, and disarmed the military sentries in Capodistria and Muggia.

In Venetia the Isonzo Army had just enough rations for two days. The nearest depots at Haidenschaft and Divacca were five days' march distant, and anyway had already been occupied by the Yugoslavs. What should the Isonzo Army do in this situation? Should they fight their way forward? Thus in the evening of 1 November FM Boroevic asked Baden whether the mission of his armies was still to fight Italy, or whether it wasn't more urgent to bring the troops home where they could restore order. Based on appeals for help from the Puster valley, and on the increasing confusion in the area the Isonzo Army would have to traverse, in the evening of the 2nd the Field Marshal informed the AOK that "The current instructions [to the armies] - to offer resistance on our own borders after evacuating Italian territory - seem unrealistic because of our losses, because of the order that units should be sent back to their newly-formed states, because of the mutiny of entire formations, and finally because of the disorganization on the railroads. I urgently request that the AOK tell us what to do next." Now he finally received instructions from Baden, though they offered little comfort: "Your primary task is to bring the units back home as intact as possible and then to hand them over to the individual states."

Meanwhile, early on 2 November the Army Group HQ at Velden had also learned of the Hungarian War Minister Col. Linder's phone call to the AOK regarding instructions to be issued to his country's troops. FM Boroevic angrily protested to the AOK. Col. Linder had no authority to issue orders to armies in the field and therefore it was outrageous for the AOK to forward his

620 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The identity of this bicycle battalion is uncertain. In the 15 October order of battle there were two bicycle battalions attached to the Trieste sector - # 1 and 2. It's also unclear whether the other battalion had moved or already disintegrated.

instructions. The Field Marshal wouldn't assume any responsibility for this type of procedure, which threatened not only the existence but also the honor of the armed forces. In the evening the AOK told Army Group HQ that Linder's instructions should be carried out, but nonetheless FM Boroevic refused to transmit the orders to the Hungarian units.

2 November

Meanwhile the troops, who fortunately weren't seriously disturbed by the enemy, continued to head back to their homelands. In the night of 1-2 November the k.u.k. 6th Army continued their retreat over the Cellina and Meduna to the Tagliamento, where the weakened and hungry troops arrived during the morning. 34 ID took up positions on the western bank near Pinzano and later behind the Arzono Brook at Anduins and Flagogna. Their neighbors to the south, 12 Reit Sch Div, occupied an excellent position on the eastern bank of the Tagliamento; parts of it were even reinforced with concrete. The divisions of XXIV Corps reached the sector east of Spilimbergo. Their commander GdI Hadfy had returned from a long period of sick leave, but was no longer at the head of his Corps because he'd taken over 6th Army in place of GO Schönburg who'd been recalled to Vienna.

Nöhring's group fell back from the Meduna through Valvasone to Dignano; they crossed the Tagliamento near Bonzicco to occupy a sector on the eastern bank at and north of S Odorico.

By quickly retreating behind the Tagliamento the 6th Army had distanced themselves so far from the enemy that there were no actions between the two sides until the pursuers finally came up in the afternoon of the 2nd. Rear guards of the k.u.k. II Corps had burnt the bridge over the Cellina at Montereale. This hampered the pursuit by the 1 Italian CD, which were unable to reach their objective for the day (Pinzano) on the 2nd. The 3 Italian CD overcame the resistance of the outposts of Nöhring's group at Provesano, but weren't able to cross the Tagliamento at Bonzicco because 44 Sch Div stood fast on the eastern bank. Another part of 3 Italian CD were checked by artillery fire near Tauriano; after heavy fighting they were finally able to capture Spilimbergo, which had been defended by rear guards from the k.u.k. XXIV Corps with artillery and machine guns. A third detachment from 3 Italian CD advanced north toward Pinzano. They were attacked near Lestans by a mixed detachment from 12 Reit Sch Div whose withdrawal had been cut off by the Italian horsemen. But this group of Reitende Schützen weren't able to break through to the Tagliamento and had to surrender to the larger enemy.

force.

Under the Isonzo Army, early on the 2nd the troops of XVI Corps crossed the Tagliamento near C. Pte. d. Delizia after exhausting forced marches, and in the morning reached their goals in the area south and north of Codroipo. In the afternoon the divisions of XVI Corps resumed their march and came to the area southwest of Udine. The 29 ID and 201 Lst Inf Bde covered these movements and held the pursuing detachments of 4 Italian CD in check from a prepared bridgehead on the western bank of the Tagliamento near Codroipo.

The rear guards of IV, VII and XXIII Corps didn't leave the eastern bank of the lower Livenza until the morning of the 2nd; they weren't troubled by the enemy. They blew up supply depots and destroyed road crossings. During the day they took up the following new positions west of the Tagliamento -

- . Uhlan Regiments 11 and 12 of 8 CD, reinforced by infantry from 70 Hon ID, by Morsano;
- . parts of 12 and 33 ID on the railroad west of Teglio Veneto; and
- . 46 Sch Div plus 4 Inf Bde (from 2 ID) by Portogruaro and on the Lemene Canal.

Protected by these strong detachments, the main bodies of IV and XXIII Corps were already moving back toward the Isonzo. 64 Hon ID took the road through Mortegliano and Bicinicco. 14 ID were already at Cervignano, followed by the other half of 2 ID and by 58 ID through Muzzana del Torgnano and S Giorgio. Some troops from 8 CD, 12 ID and 46 Sch Div took up a position on the eastern bank of the lower Tagliamento in the evening.

On 2 November the 10th and 3rd Italian Armies continued their advance to the Tagliamento, but the majority of their units didn't get past Pordenone, Azzano Decimo and Pramaggiore. In the evening the vanguard reached the railroad line S Vito al Tagliamento - Portogruaro. Therefore the rear guards of the k.u.k. VII and XXIII Corps stationed in this sector pulled back during the night over the bridges (which were already wired for explosives) to the eastern bank of the Tagliamento, leaving just some patrols in contact with the enemy. The defenders intended to continue some resistance along the river with the rear guards to make it easier for the main body to withdraw to Villach and Görz. HQ of 6th Army moved on the 2nd from Gemona to Villach while the HQ of the Isonzo Army transferred from Cervignano to Görz.

This was the situation of the two armies in the plains of Friauli

at 2:00 AM on 3 November, when Army Group HQ at Velden received by wire a new order from the AOK. All hostilities were to cease immediately, since the Entente's conditions for the armistice had been accepted.

D. The armistice**1. The vain attempt to win an immediate armistice**

In the morning of 28 October, a few hours after Andrassy's offer of a separate peace was sent to President Wilson, GO Arz again asked the Emperor to initiate negotiations with the Italian high command to achieve an immediate armistice.⁶²¹ Emperor Charles agreed, and around 3:45 PM GdI Weber was sent a telegraphic order "to start negotiations with the entire commission." The situation required that the armistice be concluded immediately. Several of the men who'd been summoned to Trent three weeks earlier, including GdI Weber himself, had returned to their original duty stations when the Italians started to attack. Now they assembled again at Trent. GdI Weber was supposed to declare to the Italian high command that the Aus-Hung. government had met all the conditions set by President Wilson and that the k.u.k. AOK were ready to conclude an armistice without delay "to put an end to the completely pointless bloodshed at the front." He was instructed to accept all conditions that wouldn't infringe on the honor of the k.u.k. Army and which wouldn't amount to complete capitulation. Then at 5:10 PM GO Arz told GdI Weber by wire that if the Entente demanded use of the railroads through Austria-Hungary this condition should be rejected.

GO Arz had been compelled to take these fateful steps because the convulsions in the Monarchy's interior and the disintegration of the Army and Navy made it impossible to continue fighting. Romania could re-enter the war, and the allied Army of the Orient could invade Bosnia, Croatia, Slavonia or south Hungary in a short time. The strongest bulwark of the Central Powers, the German Western armies, were already wavering. All these factors made it the duty of the k.u.k. AOK to seek an armistice with all the means at their disposal.

The report which GO Arz sent on 28 October to GFM Hindenburg contained an unvarnished and striking picture of the catastrophe that was overwhelming the k.u.k. Army and the Monarchy: "Under these circumstances we must save whatever we still can. Now the hour has come to act quickly. Wilson's path is too long. A commission is seeking to contact the Italian high command to negotiate an armistice. I'm sending you this news with a heavy

⁶²¹Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 345

heart.^{622"}

On the next day Arz informed the German OHL that if Italy didn't reject the armistice request he'd take the same step in the Balkan theater of operations. The OHL could send their own representatives to the pertinent k.u.k. commissions at Trent and at Neusatz (the HQ of Kövess' Army Group).

Activities of GdI Weber's commission

At 8:30 PM on 28 October GdI Weber suggested to the AOK that they should first inform the Italian HQ in a radio broadcast that the Aus-Hung. government was ready, in the spirit of the American President's decision, to speak separately [from Germany] on the issues of the armistice and of peace. The broadcast should go on to say that a commission would appear in the afternoon of 29 October before the Italian outposts on the road in the Adige valley south of Marco. Ala was suggested as a meeting place for the negotiators. GdI Weber justified his suggestion - to announce the coming of the Aus-Hung. commission by radio - on the grounds that all the world would thus know of the step and blame the Italians if they refused.

But at 9:00 PM the AOK responded that any radio message could be overheard by our own troops, and again ordered the General to immediately carry out his assignment with the entire commission. Therefore in the night of 28-29 October GdI Weber sent General Staff Capt. Ruggera with a flag of truce toward the enemy lines, so he could open the way for the commission. Next morning he moved with the other negotiators from Trent to Rovereto.

Here at 9:00 AM on 29 October GdI Weber was informed from Baden that during the preceding night the k.u.k. Foreign Minister had again asked Washington for an immediate armistice. The commission were instructed to strive to end hostilities right away for humanitarian reasons. Details could be ironed out later. The decisive factor wasn't the loss of the occupied territories. Rather, the telegram concluded, "It is a shame to lose the life of even one more man, since such loss now is completely unnecessary." Soon after 4:00 PM GdI Weber was further instructed by Baden to notify the Italians that "any more sacrifice is shameful" because the evacuation of Venetia had already been initiated. However, the province and its inhabitants could be preserved from damage only if the retreat of the k.u.k. Army was carried out systematically and without pressure from their pursuing enemy. In the evening of the 29th

622Kuhl, Vol. II, pp. 485 ff.

the AOK also, as we described above, sent a radio message en clar to the Italian high command regarding the cessation of hostilities. On the same day the government at Vienna instructed Graf Palffy, the Aus-Hung. representative to the Holy See who'd been visiting Switzerland, to have the Pope exert his influence so that fighting could stop along all of Austria-Hungary's fronts.

From hour to hour the HQ at Baden now waited for relieving news - an armistice! But all the desperate efforts to put an end to the senseless fighting seemed to be in vain. When 30 October arrived the Italians still hadn't responded to the armistice request. The Vatican was also silent. Baden knew nothing about the difficulties which General Staff Capt. Ruggera was encountering, and began to grow impatient as the situation on the Tyrolean front was becoming ever more dangerous. FZM Goglia and FM Krobatin demanded the immediate conclusion of an armistice ever more vigorously. Beset on all sides, and not finding any other solution, in the morning of the 30th the AOK entertained the desperate idea of announcing the suspension of hostilities so that each sector of the front could negotiate individually with the Italians (as had been done in 1917 with the Bolsheviks). But FM Boroevic responded that this initiative would only lead to a catastrophe and general capitulation. "We still have a little more time." The HQ of the Tyrol Army Group also didn't believe that such a course would be advantageous; it could succeed only if there was unrest within the ranks of the Italian units, which certainly wasn't the case. Therefore, FM Krobatin asserted, the only way to avoid the menace of anarchy would be an immediate and general armistice concluded by the respective high commands.

Then finally, after two painful days of waiting, news arrived from the armistice commission at 3:00 PM on 30 October.⁶²³ But it was a depressing report that brutally destroyed the last hopes.

The Italians stall for time

General Staff Capt. Ruggera, preceded by a white flag of truce, had crossed the foremost lines early on 29 October near Serravalle in the Adige valley.⁶²⁴ Around 9:30 AM he handed over to the Italians a letter from GdI Weber, seeking an immediate armistice by land and sea in order to put an end to further useless bloodshed. The Aus-Hung. intermediary was led to the HQ of 26 Italian ID in Avio; GdI Weber's letter was sent by car to

⁶²³Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 117 ff.

⁶²⁴Ruggera, "Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti" (a manuscript)

Abano (near Padua), the HQ of the Italian high command, which was 150 km distant. The Commando Supremo "had an interest in gaining time."⁶²⁵ They "didn't want to conclude any armistice as long as their opponents still occupied a single hand's breadth of Italian territory."⁶²⁶ They replied to GdI Weber that they "couldn't begin negotiations [with him] because the document he'd sent didn't provide him personal and extraordinary plenipotentiary authority from the k.u.k. AOK." They didn't intend to deal with "any commission, whether for an armistice or a suspension of hostilities, which was trying to interrupt the operations now in progress. The Italian high command will gladly receive representatives who've been given full authority in an orderly fashion, and will state to them the demands of the Italian high command, which will have the approval of our own government and the full agreement of our allies."

This note from G.Lt Diaz arrived at Avio at 9:00 PM on the 29th, and was delivered to the waiting Aus-Hung. intermediary an hour later.⁶²⁷ General Staff Capt. Ruggera declared that all members of the commission did in fact have the full authority which the Italians demanded, and he asked whether the Commando Supremo would now receive the commission. The day, hour and place of the meeting should be scheduled. But at 9:15 AM the next day (30 October), G.Lt Diaz let Ruggera know that he couldn't answer his question. Diaz expected to hear from GdI Weber himself, and also insisted that Weber should prove that he had been delegated full power by the k.u.k. AOK. General Staff Capt. Ruggera thus had to again cross the Italian and Aus-Hung. battle lines near Serravalle to deliver the important declarations of the Italian Chief of the general Staff. He arrived in Rovereto around noon.

At 3:00 PM GdI Weber's full report about these developments arrived in Baden, where the staff were very perturbed by G.Lt Diaz's statements. They could already see how the armistice discussions would turn out. The Italian Chief of the General Staff would inflexibly demand the right to dictate terms as a conqueror; for now he was prepared only to state the terms without interrupting hostilities. Thus the AOK saw the ruin of

⁶²⁵Valori, p. 499

⁶²⁶Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie", p. 192. See also Raitzenhofer, "Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti und die Gefangennahme Hunderttausender" (in 'Mil. wiss. Mitt.', Vienna; 1931 edition, pp. 817 ff). And the same author discusses the subject in Supplement # 2 to our work "Österreich-Ungarns Letzer Krieg 1914-1918"

⁶²⁷Rocca, p. 359

all their efforts to save the troops who were still fighting from the approaching catastrophe at the last moment, and to keep the enormous amounts of military equipment which had been accumulated through the years of warfare from falling into the enemy's hands. G.Lt Diaz's reply made it painfully clear that nothing they could do, not even "unconditional surrender", would interrupt the course of operations. The Italian high command, having received their opponents' request for an armistice, had it in their power to break off the fighting at any time. This would have spared the population of eastern Venetia from suffering and their own soldiers from death. But the war was being continued for a grim purpose - so that the Italian Army could appear as conquerors in Trieste and Trent. Therefore the dying k.u.k. Army, whose disintegration continued every day, had to keep fighting.

Under the impact of this disturbing realization, in the afternoon of 30 October the AOK brought the note from the Italian high command to the attention of both the Army Group commanders, and added, "It is the duty of the high-ranking leaders to withdraw the troops to lines where they can offer the necessary resistance, and to delay the enemy's advance by destroying much of the transportation network." At the same time, the staff at Baden hastened at 4:00 PM to telegraph to GdI Weber the Emperor's order "to immediately and in person, along with the other commission members, cross the enemy lines to receive the demands of the Italian high command." The battle on the Piave was going badly, so an armistice would have to be accepted. A report sent to GdI Weber earlier in the day concerning the spread of the mutinies gave him a distressing picture of the shocking condition of the Army.

GdI Weber prepared a note to the Italian high command, stating that the members of the commission had full authority. At the same time he sought to learn more about the conditions for the armistice and where the discussion for its implementation would take place. So as to lose no time, around 5:30 PM GdI Weber left Rovereto; accompanied by General Staff Col. Schneller and General Staff Lt Col. Freiherr von Seiller, he went to the Italian lines near Serravalle.⁶²⁸ The Aus-Hung. negotiators waited for an hour and fifteen minutes before the way to Avio was opened. At 7:00 AM on the next day (31 October) an order arrived by telephone from the Italian high command; the entire commission were to assemble in Avio whence they'd be taken to the HQ near Padua. Around noon the other Aus-Hung. commission members arrived from Rovereto. But the plenipotentiary-representative of the German OHL, Col. Freih. von Schäffer, was forbidden by the Italian high

⁶²⁸Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 119

command from crossing the lines at Serravalle; the Italians wouldn't deal with him at all. The Aus-Hung. commission left Avio around 3:30 PM in cars whose lights were turned out to conceal their presence from Italian troops. They traveled through Vicenza, and at 8:00 PM finally arrived at the villa of Senator Giusti del Giardino, half way between Padua and Abano. GdI Weber was informed that the Italian plenipotentiaries would appear at 10:00 AM on 1 November for the first meeting. Thus three days elapsed between the first contact of the two sides and the time when the Aus-Hung. commission from Serravalle finally met the Italian team.

2. The demands of the enemy coalition

When the Italian high command realized that the war was nearing its end, they also had formed an armistice commission. It was headed by the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, G.Lt Badoglio. On 30 October Italian Prime Minister Orlando had brought the first draft of the terms intended for Austria-Hungary to a meeting of the heads of the allied governments at Paris. When the k.u.k. AOK, through its negotiators, did request an armistice it seemed to G.Lt Diaz that the time had come to recommend supplements to the terms. One of the proposed additions, which he submitted on 30 October, was that all Aus-Hung. troops still stationed west of the Tagliamento and south of the Tonale Pass at the time of implementation were to be declared prisoners of war. Furthermore the allied troops should have the right to use the rail lines and roads of the Monarchy to deploy against Germany.⁶²⁹ In the night of 31 October-1 November (between 1:10 and 6:15 AM) Orlando sent G.Lt Diaz a telegram from Paris; it contained the Italian text of the armistice terms which the Allied Supreme Military Council had prepared at Versailles over the last two days.⁶³⁰ At the same time, Orlando stated that changes could only be made with the consent of all the allies. But G.Lt Diaz was empowered by the Supreme Military Council to himself determine the details of how the armistice would be implemented after he met with the Aus-Hung. intermediaries.

At 10:00 AM on All Saints' Day (November 1), G.Lt Badoglio met with GdI Weber in the Villa Giusti. He indicated that he still couldn't present the official text of the terms prepared by the

629 Caviglia, "Le tre battaglie", pp. 190 ff. Rocca, p. 359.
Valori, pp. 499 ff.

630 Alberti, "L'Italia e la fine della guerra mondiale" (Rome, 1923), pp. 45 ff.

Supreme War Council at Versailles; a French officer was on his way from Versailles with the French version, which was the authentic text ("riscontro"). However, to save time Badoglio made available the Italian draft ("bozzo") which had come by wire. Although not completely binding, this version was very close to the original; at most it differed in some specific words, but not in the meaning.⁶³¹

The terms which GdI Weber read were very harsh -

- . Immediate cessation of hostilities.
- . Complete disarmament of Austria-Hungary with the exception of 20 divisions to be maintained at the peacetime establishment.
- . Handing over half of the divisional and corps artillery along with its supporting equipment.
- . Evacuation of all enemy territory occupied since the start of the war.
- . Evacuation of Austria's own territory as far as a line which included all of southern Tyrol (to the Brenner Pass), the Puster valley as far as Toblach, the Tarvis basin, the Isonzo area, Görz, Istria (with Trieste), western Carniola and northern Dalmatia; these areas would be occupied by Italy.
- . Free passage for allied troops on all roads, rail lines and rivers throughout the entire Monarchy.
- . The right for the allies to occupy any areas necessary for their strategic or political interests.
- . Departure of German troops [from the Monarchy].
- . Release of all prisoners of war held by Austria-Hungary, without compensation.

The terms for the naval armistice were no less severe. In essence they demanded that the majority of the fleet should be handed over. However, two days earlier the vessels had already been given to the national council at Zagreb. The allied blockade of the Monarchy would remain in force.

GdI Weber was in a difficult spot. There could be no question of negotiations. He could only accept the demands which the conquerors were presenting. The General didn't feel he could go along with the excessive conditions, since they amounted to complete surrender and weren't compatible with the Army's honor. Therefore around 3:00 PM he sent Col. Schneller with Capt. Ruggera by car to Trent, from where he could report the text of the draft armistice to Baden by teletype.

Thus there arose for the first time a difficulty which would bedevil the Aus-hung. commission during its entire existence, and

⁶³¹Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 128

finally have an impact on the outcome - the intermediaries in the Villa Giusti and the decision-makers in Baden could only exchange ideas through a slow, cumbersome and unreliable process of communication.

Late in the evening Weber's voluminous initial report began to arrive by wire from Trent to Baden. In the General's notes that accompanied the text of the treaty, he indicated that the Entente undoubtedly intended to use against Germany any arms and military equipment that was handed over; "it is for the AOK to decide whether the terms are so severe that they will oblige us to continue our resistance." Perhaps the demands might stiffen the will to resist of the Monarchy's peoples - the South Slavs in particular and perhaps even its Serbs. Or maybe they could be used as a basis for a new approach to President Wilson.

Meanwhile in the afternoon GdI Weber had sought clarification from G.Lt Badoglio regarding some specific points of the draft; these included the timing of the armistice, a subject about which the Italian high command had said nothing. The Italians responded that "the hour when hostilities will end is under consideration", along with the establishment of a demarcation line plus a neutral zone, and measures to feed the troops and civilian population.⁶³²

GdI Weber tried in vain to persuade the Italian HQ to implement a truce as soon as possible without waiting for a decision from Baden regarding the final terms. He stated that the k.u.k. armies had already been ordered to evacuate Venetia and that the continuing fighting was therefore pointless. G.Lt Badoglio acknowledged the validity and morality of this argument, but indicated that the necessities of war wouldn't permit the Italian high command to change their course, and that "cessation of hostilities can't take place before acceptance of the stated conditions." As the agent of the inter-allied Military Council at Versailles he could only carry out their will, and wasn't permitted to initiate any negotiations.

Early on the next day (2 November) GdI Weber sent another commission member, Freg.-Kpt. Prince Liechtenstein, by car to Trent so he could forward to the AOK a further report about the information gleaned from G.Lt Badoglio on the 1st. The important remarks of the Italian General were transmitted verbally. It was obvious, Weber stated, that the enemy would refuse any negotiations. He therefore advised that their terms shouldn't be

⁶³²Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 140 ff. Ratzenhofer, "Supplement # 2", p. 38.

accepted, but that we should formulate a counter-proposal which would at least ameliorate the items which weren't consistent with the honor of the Army. Both versions of the armistice could then be publicized along with suitable comments. This report arrived in Baden at noon.

On the Italian side, G.Lt Diaz sent a report about the meeting with the Aus-Hung. mission to Prime Minister Orlando (who was still in Paris) and asked whether the conditions could be altered to reflect the favorable progress of their Army's operations. Orlando responded that the allies had decided to give Austria-Hungary until the end of 3 November to accept the conditions. Any appeal by the k.u.k. high command to alleviate or otherwise change any terms was to be denied.⁶³³

In the afternoon the Aus-Hung. mission received three very important pieces of information from the Italians. The first came at 4:50 PM in the form of a note from G.Lt Diaz, stating that the Italian government in agreement with their allies had established midnight, 3-4 November, as the deadline for acceptance of the terms. Soon thereafter, around 5:00, GdI Weber was handed the definitive French text of the treaty ("conditions d'un armistice avec l'Austriche-Hongrie"), which meanwhile had arrived from Paris. Weber determined that it agreed almost completely with the version that he'd already forwarded to the AOK. Only a few details had to be corrected, due mainly to mistakes in transmitting the Italian version of the text. The first condition was unchanged - "Cessation immediate des hostilities sur terre, sur mer et dans l'air."⁶³⁴ Negotiators wouldn't be sent to the Balkan or Romanian fronts; the armistice concluded at Padua would be effective on all fronts.

The third piece of intelligence was extremely important for the work of the Aus-Hung. commission. At 6:00 PM the Italian high command notified the k.u.k. general that heavy fighting was in progress in the Adige valley; thus it was impossible for the commission members who'd gone to Trent to return, and communication by courier was cut off. The Italians would now make the radio station at Padua available, which still wouldn't save much time.⁶³⁵ Direct broadcasts to the Laaerberg station in Vienna couldn't get through, so messages had to be broadcast through Pola to Budapest and thence by wire to Vienna. And some

633 Valori, pp. 499 ff.

634 "Immediate cessation of hostilities on land, at sea and in the air."

635 Nowak, "Chaos" (Munich, 1923), pp. 153 ff.

reports never did get through. Around 5:00 PM Weber received a coded message from the AOK⁶³⁶, but was unable to decipher it. He had to reply by radio that codes should no longer be used. And his reply, which was picked up in Pola at 8:30 PM (2 November), didn't reach Baden until 12:04 AM on 3 November.

The head of the Aus-Hung. mission used the radio connection to forward the three important news items to Baden, each in a separate broadcast. When he reported that the deadline would be the end of 3 November he requested that any reply should be sent in the clear. The general had to hope that his messages would reach their destination that night.⁶³⁷

3. Conclusion of the armistice

a. The decisive meetings at Vienna

Col. Schneller had relayed the Italian version of the armistice conditions from Trent to Baden in the night of 1-2 November. The Chief of the Operations Detachment of the General Staff, GdI Waldstätten, describes the impact of these unprecedented terms on the leading personalities of the k.u.k. high command: "From the moment when General Weber drove to Villa Giusti, we were waiting every moment for news of how the armistice would be implemented. When finally at 12:30 AM on 2 November we read the words on the Hughes apparatus 'Immediate cessation of hostilities' a weight was lifted from our hearts....For a moment the phrase 'immediate cessation of hostilities' obscured the others, since it brought everything we desired. The members of the high command soon recognized that all the other terms - immediate de-mobilization, evacuation of the territory Austria-Hungary had occupied by force, the crushing demarcation line along the crest of the central Alps - would have to be accepted in order to achieve the most important one, an end to the hopeless fighting."⁶³⁸

In the morning of the 2nd the Chief of the General Staff, who was

636The message, which originated in Baden at 8:30 PM of 1 November, asked "How are the negotiations proceeding? The quickest possible conclusion is desirable."

637The three radio messages were relayed from Pola on 2 November at 8:44, 10:52 and 11:12 PM, respectively.

638Ratzenhofer, "Der Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti", pp. 826 and 840. See also the "Bericht der Kommission zur Erhebung militärischer Pflichtverletzungen" (Vienna, 1920).

staying at the Emperor's Schönbrunn palace, learned of the enemy's armistice conditions. At first they seemed to him unacceptable.⁶³⁹ The un-paralleled terms, amounting to a demand for total capitulation, presented GO Arz the question, 'Should we fight on?' But this option was precluded for Austria-Hungary by the convulsions at home, the disintegration of the Army and the impossible conditions at the front. Karolyi's new government, which wanted to portray Hungary as a pro-Entente neutral state, had already decided on 1 November to stop fighting; as described earlier, their War Minister Col. Linder prepared an order in the night of 1-2 November that the Hungarian troops should lay down their arms. Based on their telephone conversation with Linder, the k.u.k. AOK had passed this information on to both Army Group HQ without indicating whether orders from the Hungarian War Ministry were to be obeyed. In an appeal which Col. Linder prepared at the same time he proclaimed the fulfillment of the most beautiful dream of "mankind's yearning", universal peace. Soldiers' councils and a people's militia would ensure "that eternal peace finally can spread its beneficent dominion over us."

GO Arz met with the Emperor between 8:00 and 9:00 AM to relay the enemy's answer to the request for an armistice. The Chief of the General Staff advised his Monarch to accept the harsh terms. But the Emperor couldn't immediately decide to do so. Especially hard to accept, besides the Italian occupation of German-speaking south Tyrol, was the demand of the allies for free passage so they could attack Germany. Andrassy's note to Wilson of 27 October had already created a backlash against the ruling dynasty among Austria's German population. Would acceptance of the enemy's terms lead to the overthrow of the Habsburgs?

The problem of Germany

Emperor Charles was confronted by a very painful dilemma. On 29 October Major Fleck, the deputy to the German plenipotentiary general attached to the AOK (whose chief was visiting Berlin) had met with the Emperor in an audience. Fleck expressed concern that the Entente would demand free passage through Tyrol into the rear of Germany and asked the Monarch how Austria would act in that situation.⁶⁴⁰ As a result, Emperor Charles had sent a telegram to his ally Emperor Wilhelm, "Early today, because the military situation is hopeless, I was forced to seek an armistice from the Italians. But if the Italians insist that we open the railroads through Tyrol and Carinthia (the Tauern, Brenner and

639Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 362

640Kuhl, Vol. II, p. 486. Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", p. 195

Southern lines) so their troops can pass through to attack your lands, I will place myself at the head of my German-Austrians to prevent their passage with force. You can count on this with confidence. In this case I can't rely on troops of the other nationalities."

His Imperial ally replied in the afternoon of the 30th: "I was moved when I read your telegram containing the news that you were approaching Italy for an armistice. I'm convinced that your German-Austrians, with their Imperial lord at their head, will all oppose any shameful terms, and I thank you for guaranteeing this personally."

But right after this grateful wire arrived from Potsdam the k.u.k. AOK had to inform the German OHL that the combat value of the German-Austrian regiments was also quickly diminishing.⁶⁴¹ On 30 October the new First Quartermaster General, G.Lt Groener, had asked GO Arz whether the k.u.k. AOK intended to defend the German-Austrian provinces against attacks by the Slavic nationalities. In his response (which was never actually sent) GO Arz indicated that the German Austrian troops could be used only to maintain order within the new German-Austrian state, not for military operations. Furthermore there was no fear of invasion by the Slavs for the time being. Meanwhile, even before Ludendorff's resignation the OHL had anticipated that an Austro-Hungarian armistice would permit the enemy to appear on the southern and southeastern borders of the Hohenzollern Empire. Therefore on 28 October the HQ of GdA Krafft's II Bavarian Corps were made responsible for guarding the easily accessible Bavarian borders against an advance by the Entente. The Germans planned to carry out this mission by moving forward to the passes of the Tyrolean and Salzburg central Alps.

In the morning of 2 November, after receiving the Entente's armistice conditions through GO Arz, Emperor Charles held a meeting to address the critical situation. Besides Arz, in attendance were GM Zeidler-Sterneck (Chief of the Military Chancellery), Admiral Keil (the Navy's representative at the AOK), two of the common ministers (Andrassy and Dr Spitzmüller) and the Austrian Prime Minister Dr Lammasch.⁶⁴² With these leading advisers, the Emperor reviewed the fateful question of whether the enemy demands should be accepted. From a military standpoint, as Arz subsequently noted, there was no doubt by this time (noon) that the terms would have to be accepted without any

641Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 414

642Werkmann, pp. 338 ff.

qualifications.⁶⁴³ But this could easily make German Austria the theater of a final battle. Therefore the representatives of the new national state which would be the most affected by the decision should also be heard. The Emperor invited them to come to Schönbrunn at 2:00 PM.

The problem of Hungary

While the discussion about the armistice conditions continued in the Imperial palace, GM Waldstätten at Baden phoned Col. Linder to discuss implementation of the withdrawal of the Hungarian troops from the war.⁶⁴⁴ Col. Linder demanded that the Hungarians should be allowed to lay down their arms wherever they were stationed and abandon the artillery so that the Italians could come through their lines. Meanwhile the other troops could withdraw fighting to the international border. But as the phone conversation continued, GM Waldstätten pointed out to Col. Linder that the Hungarian divisions would thus become prisoners of war, which caused the War Minister to have second thoughts. He suggested that perhaps the Hungarian soldiers should also withdraw to the border before laying down their weapons. Around 1:00 PM the frustrated Waldstätten sent a wire to Budapest, complaining that the new position of the Hungarian government contradicted their earlier demand which the AOK had finally been willing to honor.

And meanwhile the army group commanders' angry objections against Linder's initiative arrived in Baden. FM Boroevic's HQ at Velden felt that the staff in Baden had lost their nerves under the fearful pressure of events. FM Krobatin's HQ at Bozen believed that the Emperor had approved the order that the Hungarians should lay down their arms. When GM Waldstätten contacted GO Arz (who was still at Schönbrunn), the Chief of the General Staff addressed the objections from the Army Group HQ. He told the Chief of Operations that no one but the AOK could release orders to the front-line troops and therefore the instructions of the Hungarian War Minister should not be forwarded. Col. Linder should be informed that armistice negotiations were in progress and that he must await their outcome. The cease-fire would soon be concluded, and the treaty was already being reviewed. Although the conditions were harsh, they would have to be accepted due to the military situation. The order to implement the armistice should be expected by the end of the day.⁶⁴⁵

643Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 362

644Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 134 ff.

645Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 363

Now (around 2:00 PM) GM Waldstätten in turn issued an explanation by wire to both Army Group commanders; Linder's instructions had been forwarded only to "orient" them regarding the difficulties which the AOK confronted in dealing with the various successors to the old state. Further orders were forthcoming from the k.u.k. high command and for the time being nothing should be implemented.⁶⁴⁶ But it was already too late to keep Linder's instructions from being distributed. Waldstätten's latest telegram in fact wasn't even sent until 4 November, since the communications and quartermaster sections of the k.u.k. high command were being hampered by the quiet sabotage and unauthorized activity of some of their Hungarian personnel. On the other hand, a message was quickly delivered to the Hungarian War Ministry, stating that his instructions wouldn't be implemented for the time being because the general armistice still hadn't been concluded. Col. Linder angrily objected. He argued with GO Arz over the telephone; he also threatened dire consequences for the dynasty, demanding a new decision from the Monarch "within five minutes" and asking to speak with the Queen.

Discussions with representatives of German-Austria

In the meantime, new discussions were going on at the Schönbrunn Palace. Around 3:00 PM the plenipotentiary representative of the German OHL, G.Lt Cramon (who'd returned from Berlin), visited Emperor Charles and was briefed about the armistice terms. At 4:00 PM the representatives of the German-Austrian national council also arrived. The Emperor informed them that the front had completely collapsed. Hungarian troops were pulling back without orders; since they'd been stationed at many points, gaps were appearing everywhere along the line. The front had become like a sieve, allowing the enemy to penetrate it at will and then surround the units that were still holding out. Under these conditions, acceptance of an immediate armistice was the only option. Then the Emperor outlined the enemy's demands. He himself couldn't go along with Point # 4 of these terms - free passage against Germany - due to consideration for his ally the German Emperor. And since all the points must nevertheless be accepted, he was resigning as commander-in-chief. He asked the council's president (Karl Seitz) and the other members to approve the acceptance of the conditions.

While the representatives of German-Austria consulted among themselves, the Emperor once more received G.Lt Cramon. He asked Cramon where the OHL intended to establish a front in the Alps to

646Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 138

cover the German border. The German general responded that the plan was to abandon to the Italians everything south of the Brenner Pass. He spoke with despair in his heart, since "naturally neither the Emperor nor the AOK had any power left to agree with our decision."⁶⁴⁷ In fact the HQ of the Tyrol Army Group were compelled on the 2nd to state, in reply to a question from Baden, that they could no longer count on the German Austrian troops to hold a line at the Brenner Pass.

G.Lt Cramon and GO Arz also took part in the discussions with the representatives of the German-Austrian council. The latter declared that they could choose only between occupation by German or Italian troops; in either case German-Austria would become a battlefield. The Chief of the General Staff spoke frankly; he announced that in the previous night the Tyrolean national council had asked the Foreign Ministry to issue an appeal for immediate peace to the King of Italy and President Wilson. The troops were fleeing to the rear, threatening the most immediately affected province, Tyrol, with a catastrophe. GO Arz furthermore stated that it wasn't possible to hold the front with just German-Austrian units. They were numerically too weak and were interspersed among other troops; some of these units were already disintegrating just like those made up of other nationalities. And German-Austria was also endangered from the east, since the Entente troops wouldn't meet any resistance as they advanced through the territories of the South Slavs, Hungarians and Czechs.

The representatives of German-Austria, like those of the other national states, didn't want to assume any responsibilities from the old Monarchy prior to the impending peace conference.⁶⁴⁸ Between 6:00 and 7:00 PM they appeared before the Emperor. Through their spokesman Dr Viktor Adler, the leader of the Social Democrats, they declared that the regime which had started and carried on the war without consulting the people should now bear full responsibility for bringing it to an end. The German-Austrian national council could not assume this burden.

The decisive Crown Council in Schönbrunn

Meanwhile GO Arz had received further telegrams from the Tyrolean front. As mentioned in an earlier section, the Army Group HQ at Bozen and HQ of 11th Army felt that because of Linder's intervention and the ever more-hopeless situation an unconditional armistice was the only way to avert anarchy and

647Cramon, "Bundesgenosse", p. 196

648Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 416

unimaginable consequences. If an armistice couldn't be attained, perhaps the entire army should surrender. Especially emphatic was Col. Schneller, who'd stayed in Trent; in several messages to the high command he insisted that the conditions had to be accepted completely and immediately. To add to the pressure, the Hungarian Minister of War relentlessly campaigned to have his order forwarded to the Hungarian troops. GO Arz finally declared to Col. Linder that he could only instruct the Hungarian troops to lay down their arms if Hungary specifically accepted the responsibility; the Emperor would have nothing to do with this. Col. Linder replied, "The Hungarian government and nation assume the responsibility for ceasing to fight." Since the Emperor's advisers could devise no other course, the order to the Hungarian troops was finally issued. GO Arz gave the necessary instructions to the Operations Section shortly after 9:00 PM.⁶⁴⁹

In these extraordinary circumstances the Crown Council assembled in Schönbrunn at 9:15 PM. Emperor Charles chaired the meeting. Present were the k.u.k. Foreign Minister Andrassy and Finance Minister Spitzmüller (though both had already resigned) and General Obersten Stöger-Steiner and Arz. Around 10:00 PM they were joined by Austrian Prime Minister Lamasch. The Chief of the General Staff, who meanwhile had received desperate reports from the front, emphatically declared that a continuation of the war was unthinkable. Fighting must be stopped immediately. Every minute of delay was costing thousands or perhaps hundreds of thousand of lives, and no one would want to be blamed for

649In connection with this dispute between GO Arz - in the name of his sovereign - and Linder, there is a note preserved in the military archives in the Emperor's own writing. "Desire [or desires?] that the Hung. troops are taken prisoner so that the peasantry don't take a stand against the current rev. [revolutionary] government." Today it cannot be determined whether this somewhat enigmatic note refers to the Monarch's own desires or those of the Karolyi government as expressed through Linder. The Emperor had a habit of scratching down his thoughts on the nearest piece of paper. Opocensky (p. 379) asserts that this sentence appears "over [the Emperor's] signature" on the order to GdI Weber to conclude the armistice, but in going through the archives we found this is not correct. The document on which the note appears is a statement containing the official position of Foreign Minister Andrassy toward the armistice (entitled, 'Necessity to accept the conditions in their entirety without prejudicing the peace settlement'), which GO Arz himself received by phone at Schönbrunn and hastily wrote down. It is followed by the lines in the Emperor's handwriting.

this.⁶⁵⁰ Since all the demands of the Entente would have to be met, the advisers to the sovereign should no longer have any differences of opinion. They needed, as the Emperor desired, to devise a formula which would object to the advance of the Entente into the rear of Germany without endangering the conclusion of the armistice. The text of this note, in the form of an order to GdI Weber, was completed around 11:30 PM. Deeply shaken, Emperor Charles approved it. But before the order was released to GdI Weber, GO Arz and Prime Minister Lamasch were commissioned by the Monarch to visit the Reichsrat to request the concurrence of the German-Austrian national council to the acceptance of the terms.⁶⁵¹

Toward midnight the Chief of the Military Chancellery GM Zeidler-Sterneck phoned GM Waldstätten from Schönbrunn to let him know that the Crown Council had prepared the order to GdI Weber. GM Waldstätten should be ready to release it, but shouldn't do so until GO Arz, who'd gone with Prime Minister Lamasch to the national council, had returned to Schönbrunn to confirm the transmission. The text of the order to GdI Weber was dictated; it read, "If alleviation of the terms for the armistice can't be achieved without wasting time, they are all to be accepted without prejudicing the peace settlement. We are assuming that Point 4.a of the terms on land and Point 4 of the terms on the sea (concerning right of passage) are not to be exploited by the enemy armies so they can attack Germany. Although in such a case we couldn't stop them, we must enter an emphatic protest. Therefore this point is also accepted, although we will seek to delay any enemy advance. Our efforts to do so however will by no means delay the conclusion of the armistice itself."

Distressing reports from the front in Tyrol

Throughout 2 November reports continued to arrive at Baden from the front. At 10:15 AM Col. Schneller had sent a telegram from Trent to GM Waldstätten; he relayed a report from the Chief of Staff of 11th Army that the troops on Tyrol's southern front could no longer be expected to stand their ground. Col. Schneller urged that the situation should be addressed quickly, which in his opinion could be done only by accepting all the enemy terms. To him it seemed questionable "whether the Italians will continue to recognize that our current leadership is ready to conclude the treaty. Another reason a decision is urgent is that right now the enemy isn't fully aware of our [hopeless]

650Werkmann, p. 342

651Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 417 ff.

situation."⁶⁵²

Around 4:00 PM Col. Schneller pressed more urgently for an immediate decision. It was no longer certain that the commission members in Trent would be able to return to the Villa Giusti, since the discipline of our troops continued to deteriorate. But the Italians were expecting the members to return with a response by the end of the day. Further delay might have fateful consequences. If no instructions were received from Vienna, perhaps the commission itself might accept the terms without qualification. No time was left for deliberation. "The situation at the front makes it necessary to put an end to hostilities, the sooner the better. Every hour is costly."

Another appeal from Trent arrived around 7:00 PM. Col. Schneller reported, "Now it's too late for us to return to the Villa Giusti today. Thus there's a danger that the armistice might not be concluded, or at least not become effective, tomorrow. But a decision is needed if we're going to avert anarchy. I'm reporting with complete objectivity - not exaggerated pessimism - based on local information, orientation by 11th Army HQ, and news from the front. In this situation I believe it is my duty, if I receive no orders, to leave [for the Villa Giusti] so that the commission can conclude a treaty based on our own authority. The individuals who are still hesitating must realize that if the immediate fate of the German-speaking borderlands is determined by fighting the result won't be any different than it will if we now accept the enemy's terms."

In the evening FM Krobatin reported that the troops in the Adige valley were plundering the area between Trent and Lavis. "It's high time to make a final decision." Meanwhile shocking reports had also arrived from the HQ of Armeegruppe Belluno; discipline had broken down completely among the troops streaming back through the Puster valley, and looting had begun. Finally Col. Schneller shared his most serious concerns with GM Waldstätten in a phone conversation around 9:30 PM. Schneller had heard from Freg-Kpt. Liechtenstein (another commission member) that the armistice demands had been forwarded to all the national councils and that their response wasn't expected prior to 3 November. "By then," he stated, "it will be too late to prevent a catastrophe as our armies withdraw through Tyrol. The individuals who are still hesitating must understand what is transpiring as a mass of hundreds of thousands of armed men - most of them released from the strong bonds of discipline - are pressing together in the Adige valley; they must trust the clear-headed opinion of the

⁶⁵²Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 139

military that this situation is very dangerous. Plundering has already started, the roads are clogging up, and communications are breaking down. There will be a costly price to pay in human lives. We (the members of the commission here in Trent) can perhaps still relay a response, but in the morning this may no longer be possible as the front moves in this direction. Finally I must repeat that the soldiers at the front expect an armistice as soon as possible; neither officers nor men understand the delay. This is having an adverse effect on morale, which could improve when it's reported that the treaty is concluded."

The order to cease fire

Because of the frightful condition of the field armies, loss of further lives could no longer be justified. This factor, along with the order already issued to the Hungarian troops to lay down their arms, convinced GM Waldstätten that it was now time to cease firing along the entire front. For him this was all the more urgent since he undoubtedly believed that the Italians had demanded that our troops should stop fighting before the armistice was concluded. The first demand of the draft treaty had been "Immediate cessation of hostilities." GM Waldstätten's interpretation of this point had been strengthened by G.Lt Badoglio's declaration that the Italians would themselves cease firing after all their conditions were accepted. And furthermore the Hungarian troops had already been told to stop shooting. Therefore Waldstätten proposed that a new (second) sentence should be added to the instructions to GdI Weber, stating "The Aus-Hung. troops have accordingly already been ordered to cease hostilities," and that the last sentence ("Our efforts....will by no means delay the conclusion of the armistice itself") should be omitted.

The Emperor's general adjutant, GM Zeidler-Sterneck, agreed with Waldstätten's suggestion but wanted to speak with GO Arz who was at the Reichsrat. GM Waldstätten meanwhile hastened to prepare the necessary orders for GdI Weber and the two army group commanders. At this point, around 12:30 AM on 3 November, Waldstätten was also able to get through by phone to the Reichsrat and spoke with GO Arz. The Chief of the General Staff concurred with Waldstätten's plan, but wanted the revised text sent through GM Zeidler-Sterneck to the Emperor for approval, after which the orders could be released. By 1:00 AM Zeidler-Sterneck called Waldstätten to let him know that the Emperor had adopted his proposed revisions.

Thus the decision to accept all of the armistice terms, in the

revised text, was released shortly after 1:20 AM as Secret Order # 2100. It was sent to Col. Schneller in Trent; he was supposed to forward it in code through the HQ of 26 Italian ID to GdI Weber as soon as possible.⁶⁵³ An identical message was being sent to Weber from the Laaerberg radio station through the Italian high command. Toward 2:00 AM GM Waldstätten also issued instructions to both of the Army Group commanders by phone (Secret Order # 2101): "The Entente's armistice conditions have been accepted. All hostilities on land and in the air are to cease immediately. Details about the armistice conditions will follow."

The important decisions of this hectic night had been based solely on the initial Italian text of the treaty. The AOK were also aware of Weber's report, which arrived at noon, indicating that the effective time of the armistice was still "under consideration" along with other details. The Emperor's advisers, who were beset on all sides and under a great deal of stress, do not seem to have grasped the significance of this report.⁶⁵⁴ The generals and officials in Vienna had heard nothing further from GdI Weber; of his three radio messages (re the deadline for acceptance, the French version of the text, and applicability of the treaty to all fronts), only the first had arrived after midnight.

The decision at Schönbrunn to accept all the enemy's conditions and conclude the treaty had been made even though the other side hadn't made a commitment regarding the most important detail - the timetable for ending hostilities. The AOK were going by the literal meaning of "immediate cessation of hostilities." Furthermore they wished to show their good faith in accepting the treaty by implementing the first point with a cease-fire on the Southwestern front. They trusted that the enemy would follow their example.

Meanwhile at the Reichsrat GO Arz and Prime Minister Lammasch had only been able to locate the president of the German national council (Karl Seitz) and Dr Otto Bauer. Seitz declared that he couldn't speak for the entire council regarding the note to GdI Weber.⁶⁵⁵ The council was scheduled to meet the next morning, but it was very unlikely that they take a position on the issue. Thus when GO Arz returned to Schönbrunn around 2:00 AM, his mission hadn't been accomplished. The Emperor now had new

⁶⁵³Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 146 ff.

⁶⁵⁴Nowak, "Chaos", pp. 142 ff.

⁶⁵⁵Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 367

reservations about accepting the formidable treaty without the concurrence of German-Austria.⁶⁵⁶ And so he instructed GO Arz to bring the note for the armistice commission to the full national council in the morning and to cancel all arrangements that had already been initiated. Informed of this development by GO Arz, GM Waldstätten wanted to retract the orders which had been sent to GdI Weber and to the two army group commanders. The radio message to the Italian high command still hadn't been sent by the Laaerberg station and therefore was canceled. But Secret Order # 2101 (for the cessation of hostilities) had already been received at the front by 11th Army. GM Sündermann resisted the idea of revoking the order since this "would lead to a catastrophe." Therefore GM Waldstätten phoned Sündermann and told him "not to change anything for the time being." GO Arz spoke again with the Emperor and reported that the order regarding the armistice had already been released to the troops of 11th Army. The upshot was that the order to stop fighting was once again issued - in the same words - at 3:35 AM on 3 November. But the AOK were still holding back the radio instructions to GdI Weber to conclude the treaty, since the Emperor hoped to win the approval of the German-Austrian national council. Thus for the time being the Italian high command wouldn't know that the Imperial government was prepared to accept their conditions and in fact was implementing Point 1 already.

During the night of 2-3 November Emperor Charles resigned as commander-in-chief of the Army, which was anyway breaking apart into its national components; he named GO Arz as his successor. Arz in turn told the Monarch that he would sign the armistice treaty but wanted to turn the supreme command over to FM Kövess as the highest-ranking active general. The Emperor therefore entrusted the AOK to FM Kövess. Until the latter arrived from the Southeastern front GO Arz would carry out his duties.

656Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 419

b. Acceptance of the armistice conditions at the Villa GiustiContinuing problems with communications

In the afternoon of 2 November GdI Weber had received the official (French) text of the treaty and learned that the deadline for its acceptance was midnight of 3-4 November. Now it was time to demand that the Italians should finally commit themselves regarding implementation of the individual terms. Until this point G.Lt Badoglio had merely offered some hints. For this purpose both delegations at the Villa Giusti assembled around 6:00 PM. The Italian group was, for the first time, complete; three of the Aus-Hung. members were absent because they were still in Trent. At this meeting the Italians did clarify how all the points of the treaty would be implemented, but there was no negotiation.

The Aus-Hung. representatives suffered severe disappointment regarding the first point - hostilities wouldn't cease until 24 hours after the terms were accepted. GdI Weber sought to make the cease-fire effective as soon as the treaty was signed. His request was turned down because it was necessary to stop the fighting simultaneously on all fronts, including in the Balkans. The Italian troops were on the move everywhere, so it would take at least 24 hours to inform them all that the war was over. GdI Weber then requested that the time frame should be reduced to 12 hours in the Southwestern theater of operations, and again was turned down. The difference of opinion couldn't be resolved, so GdI Weber asked who would arbitrate in cases where the two commissions disagreed. The Italian high command consulted the Allied Supreme Military Council at Versailles, which ruled that in questions of interpretation the opinion of the Italians was binding.⁶⁵⁷ Thus as the discussions proceeded the Aus-Hung. commission could only raise fruitless protests, which were always ignored on the grounds that Austria-Hungary could choose only to accept or reject the demands in their entirety. Any refusal would lead to the breakdown of the "negotiations."

Time was passing; the 3rd of November had already arrived. General Weber had heard nothing from Vienna and was still without instructions. Believing that the radio message he'd sent in the

657Weber, "Die Wahrheit über die Waffenstillstandsverhandlungen im November 1918" (in the 'Innsbruck News' of 13 February 1932). See also Nowak, "Chaos", p. 156

evening about the time limit for acceptance was already in Baden, around 2:00 AM he asked the AOK "for the quickest possible decision regarding the terms, to be sent by radio in the clear through Pola." This appeal didn't reach Baden until 5:10 AM, long after the decision had been made. But Weber knew nothing of this and still didn't get any reply. The result of the lengthy full-scale meeting at the Villa Giusti was that the Aus-Hung. mission had to declare that they understood the implementation conditions which the Italians were demanding. At 3:00 AM GdI Weber hastened to send the voluminous "supplements" which he'd received to Baden through the radio.⁶⁵⁸ At the start was the sentence "Hostilities will cease 24 hours after acceptance of the terms."

Meanwhile, at 1:20 AM on the 3rd Col. Schneller in Trent received the order to accept the armistice conditions; he'd already left the city when the counter-order from the Emperor arrived. Schneller's journey toward Padua was very slow because of the stalled supply columns along the way. In Acquaviva, the HQ of XIV Corps, he learned that 11th Army HQ had received the order to stop fighting and released it to the troops. Corps HQ were very unclear about the situation. The Italians had pushed into Calliano, and no one knew what the Aus-Hung. soldiers were supposed to do if the enemy continued to advance. Col. Schneller advised GdI Verdross to avoid any further combat, since the war was already over for Austria-Hungary. Schneller also told the HQ of 11th Army that they shouldn't hinder an Italian advance. But just as Schneller and the other commission members were getting ready to leave Acquaviva and cross the front lines (around 5:00 AM), they received the order to return to Trent. Col. Schneller forcefully objected to being called back. He was well informed about the situation, and his presence at the Villa Giusti was urgently needed since the commission had to be complete. Any loss of time must be avoided. GM Waldstätten responded, "Col. Schneller may go forward based on his own judgment, but is not to refer to Secret Order # 2100 which has been rescinded."⁶⁵⁹ These anxiously awaited instructions reached Col. Schneller after 5:00 AM. He arrived with Freg-Kpt. Liechtenstein and Capt. Ruggera at the Villa Giusti around 1:00 PM; fully aware of the importance of his action, he immediately informed GdI Weber that the commission had been ordered to accept the conditions but that the order was then canceled. He also reported that our troops had already been informed about the armistice.

⁶⁵⁸This message was received in Pola at 4:59 AM and in Baden at 11:18 AM. For the wording, see Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 149.

⁶⁵⁹Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 148

Back in Vienna, on 3 November GO Arz had tried one more time to obtain the concurrence of the representatives of German-Austria. But in the Reichsrat building he met with only some of the national council members, whom he informed that the Emperor had resigned the supreme command during the night and that FM Kövess had been named commander-in-chief; until the latter arrived, he (Arz) was acting as Kövess' deputy. As such, he had already issued the order to cease firing. Conclusion of the armistice was now essential, and he intended by the end of the morning to order GdI Weber to accept the terms regardless of whether the national council concurred. Around noon GO Arz was informed from the Reichsrat that the council had studied his report that the AOK had been forced by the complete disintegration of the Army to accept the demands of the victors. The council stated, "German-Austria doesn't have its own army; the units are mixed in with those in which the Slavic-Magyar majority no longer wants to fight. Therefore German-Austria isn't in a position to carry on the war by itself." Despite its inability to continue fighting, German-Austria wanted to remain a true friend of Germany and to appear at the side of the allied German Empire during the peace negotiations.

Meanwhile, at 10:00 AM GO Arz had told the Operations Section at Baden to release Secret Order # 2100 to the armistice commission so they would accept all the conditions; at this time he still hadn't received Weber's important message of the preceding day which contained the report about the implementation procedures. The German OHL and Foreign Ministry were informed about the decision. The telegram which finally authorized GdI Weber to sign the treaty was handed to him at the Villa Giusti around 4:30 PM.

GdI Weber's acceptance of the armistice

But by this time it had already been three hours since GdI Weber had made the important decision to take the responsibility of concluding the armistice talks on his own. After Col. Schneller's arrival he had been left alone to face this heavy burden. On his own initiative he asked G.Lt Badoglio to convene a meeting of the two commissions at 3:00 PM. Everyone present was aware of the historical significance of the moment when GdI Weber made the following statement to the assembled commissioners who were seated in the deepest silence: "Based on the full powers invested in me by the k.u.k. high command, I declare that in the name of the Armeeoberkommando I am accepting the armistice conditions set down by the *Conseil supérieur de guerre* at

Versailles on 31 October 1918. This includes Point # 4 of the conditions on land and Points # 4 and 5 of the maritime conditions, but with the proviso that a protest against these points will be filed at the peace conference."

GdI Weber then informed the head of the Italian commission that he had now been informed that the k.u.k. AOK had accepted the terms during the night of 2-3 November and - based on the first point - had already ordered an immediate cease-fire.⁶⁶⁰ He also asked the Italian commission if it would be possible to stop the hostilities right away. G.Lt Badoglio turned down this request, since it would take at least 24 hours to inform his troops.

Badoglio looked at his wristwatch (by now it was 3:20 PM) and said "We'll use 3:00 PM as the exact hour [when the terms were accepted]. According to the implementation procedures the armistice will come into effect tomorrow, 4 November, at 3:00 PM." He sent instructions from the conference room that orders should be released by telephone regarding the time of the cease-fire.

There ensued a lively dispute between the two commissions regarding their interpretations of the first point of the treaty. One of the Aus-Hung. members questioned the authority of the protocol which had been accepted at the meeting the preceding night, since the entire Aus-Hung. delegation hadn't been present. G.Lt Badoglio threatened to break off the meeting and ordered one of his officers to revoke the order for the cease-fire, which had already been issued. Finally the Aus-Hung. commission had to also give in on this point, and to be content with a protest against Badoglio's intention of declaring all troops to be prisoners of war if they were behind the line which the Italians reached by 3:00 PM on 4 November. Thus the order to terminate hostilities remained in effect. At 6:00 PM the treaty (*protocole des conditions d'armistice entre les Puissances alliées et l'Autriche-Hongrie*), along with an attached map and the implementation protocol (*protocole annexe*) were signed by all members of the commissions.

The AOK reacts to the timing issue

660 Simultaneously GdI Weber submitted this information to G.Lt Badoglio in writing. The note stated, "I have the honor of informing Your Excellency that it has been reported to me that the k.u.k. AOK sent me a radio-telegram in the first hours of the morning of 3 November to let me know that the armistice terms have been accepted. I still haven't received this telegram. The k.u.k. AOK simultaneously ordered the Aus-Hung. troops to stop fighting."

When GO Arz issued the order to accept the armistice conditions on 3 November, it seemed to him that the worst was over for the field armies. But finally around noon GdI Weber's delayed radio messages finally arrived, all at roughly the same time, from Budapest.⁶⁶¹ The most important of them - sent around 3:00 AM to describe the night-time meeting of the commissions to discuss implementation - struck the AOK like a lightning bolt. They realized that 24 hours would expire between the time the armistice was signed and its effectuation. But our troops had already been ordered during the night to cease firing, so there was great consternation. The high command responded to Weber's report with a radio message; it stated that they had received the implementation details "only after accepting the armistice terms." Weber was told "to protest against the continuation of the fighting" and to demand that all soldiers taken prisoner "after receiving the order (# 2100) stating the armistice was accepted" should be released.⁶⁶²

Around 11:00 PM the second disturbing report arrived - the armistice treaty had been accepted at 3:00 PM, so the Entente troops would cease firing at 3:00 PM on 4 November. This was exactly 36 hours later than the point at which the AOK had ordered their forces to stop fighting, believing that the Italians would immediately do the same but without consulting the Italian high command.⁶⁶³

661The AOK received the radio messages on 3 November between 11:04 AM and 12:12 PM. It will never be determined exactly why it took so very long to relay the messages - each at a different speed - through the overloaded communications network in these confusing days.

662Both Army Group commanders - Boroevic and Krobatin - were furthermore instructed to lodge a protest "against imprisoning our soldiers after 12:00 midnight, 2-3 November" (that is since the first moments of the 3rd).

663GO Arz explained the principal factor that compelled him to adopt GM Waldstätter's suggestion for an immediate cease-fire in a note he prepared on 3 November: "Since the Hungarian troops were already laying down their arms as ordered by their own government, I was forced to order that all the hostilities should stop; this would avoid possible fights between our own soldiers as well as unnecessary bloodshed." Later - in an appearance on 8 November 1919 before the German-Austrian commission investigating military infractions - GO Arz stated that "none of our war aims could be salvaged, and any further deaths were in vain."

As instructed by the AOK, on 4 November GdI Weber sent a protest to the Italian high command. It was turned down by G.Lt Diaz, who responded:

"1. The armistice negotiations between the allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary were carried out to completion by the properly accredited plenipotentiary representatives of the Italian high command and of the k.u.k. AOK of the Aus-Hung. Army. Only the arrangements prepared by and concluded by these parties under their authority are binding. Any intervention by a third party means nothing.

2. The condition that military operations on land, at sea and in the air between the allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary would cease on all fronts 24 hours after acceptance of the armistice treaty was established with the full knowledge of the plenipotentiaries in the meeting held in the night of 2-3 November. This time limit was absolutely necessary so that the forces on all the land fronts and at sea could learn that the war was ending. And Your Excellency acknowledged this fact in the final meeting in which, as ordered by the AOK, you requested an alteration to the time frame already established. Your Excellency, like all the other Aus-Hung. plenipotentiaries, was involved in the orderly processing of the armistice protocol. Therefore the order issued by the supreme command of the allied forces that hostilities are ending at 3:00 PM today (4 November) is fully consistent with the terms as ratified and is the only interpretation which is legal.

3. Prisoners of war taken prior to 3:00 PM today (4 November) are being captured rightfully, and will not be released."

On 4 November Col. Schneller, with the original copies of the treaty, traveled home through Switzerland; two other officers,

GM Waldstätten publicly took responsibility for the orders implementing the armistice. He declared: "One factor shouldn't be overlooked. How could the men keep fighting when in a few hours the World War would be over? In these hours men could be shot dead or crippled for their entire lives when the Monarchy no longer existed, when there were no longer any strategic or tactical objectives. Why should thousands more men shed their blood? If we'd kept fighting, all the German-speaking troops would have become casualties while the others marched home."

each with a transcript, traveled through Trent. GdI Weber with several members of the mission remained at the Villa Giusti for several days to serve as mediators in further disputes between the AOK and the Italian Commando Supremo.

E. The war's end on the Southwestern front

Col. Schneller, while staying at Trent in the night of 2-3 November, had relayed the orders of the k.u.k. AOK to the HQ of 11th Army which were also in that city. Thus 11th Army learned of the orders to stop fighting around an hour before the Tyrol Army Group HQ. Since the AOK had telegraphed in their first order to the armistice commission that "the Aus-Hung. troops have already received instructions to immediately cease hostilities", HQ of 11th Army saw no reason to wait for further clarification from the Army Group, and immediately ordered their units to lay down their arms. The counter-order from the AOK arrived too late. And the situation thus created, as GM Sündermann (11th Army's Chief of Staff) reported, couldn't be altered. The AOK couldn't have just one army leave the war, and therefore revoked the counter-order. All armies were ordered at 3:35 AM to cease firing immediately. Almost twelve hours later the Aus-Hung. plenipotentiaries officially accepted the enemy's terms, including the one stating that the armistice wouldn't commence for another 24 hours. And so the AOK had terminated hostilities on the Aus-Hung. side 36 hours prior to the Italian high command on the other side. During these fateful 36 hours the last act of the depressing tragedy of the Aus-Hung. Southwestern armies was played out.

1. The Italians advance to Trent, 3 and 4 November

On the Tyrolean front, during 2 November the pursuing detachments of the 6th and 1st Italian Armies had already approached the new positions of the Aus-Hung. 11th Army near the Sieben Gemeinde and on the Folgaria and Lavarone plateaus. In the Adige valley the lines of XXI Corps south of Rovereto had been pierced in the evening of the 2nd. Around the same time the Italian 7th Army, stationed between Lake Garda and the Stilfserjoch, had initiated their attack with increased artillery fire. On 3 November the 6th Italian Army would thrust from the plateaus into the Sugana valley, while the 1st advanced through the Adige valley to Trent. 7th Army would initially force their way through their opponents' positions on the heights and into the valleys of the Sarca and

the Noce.

3 November - 11th Army

On the Aus-Hung. side, between 2:00 and 4:00 AM on 3 November all corps and divisions of 11th Army received the order to immediately cease firing. Like a wild fire, the news spread among the troops that the armistice had been concluded, and was believed everywhere. The fire of the Aus-Hung. guns in the mountains southeast of Trent soon stopped. But at this hour the enemy machine gun fire was continuing. Shells from the Italian artillery still howled over the Lavarone and Folgaria plateaus. Heavy fighting continued to rage in the Adige valley. After the capture of Rovereto (around 1:00 AM), cavalry and Alpini detachments of the 1st Italian Army once more broke through the crumbling lines of 56 Sch Div near Volano on the eastern bank of the Adige. Then they turned against the Aus-Hung. rear guards and reserves at Calliano, which 11th Army HQ had instructed to offer resistance so as to protect the flank and rear of the XIV Corps on the Folgaria plateau.

The Italians pushed into Calliano around 3:00 AM, shortly before our troops received the order about the cease-fire. The Austro-Hungarians informed the enemy that the armistice was already in effect, so the Italian detachments at first hesitated to advance. But after consulting their own commanders they soon resumed and accelerated their drive toward Trent, having been informed that their opponents were in error regarding the armistice.

All the corps and divisions were confused about the situation and unsure how they should react. After being pressed by FML Schamschula, the commander of 52 ID, HQ of III Corps asked the 11th Army HQ at Trent whether the armistice was in fact effective. At this point Army HQ had just forwarded to Col. Schneller the revocation of the order to GdI Weber, and therefore responded that news about the armistice shouldn't be divulged to the troops. But they also emphasized that under no circumstances should hostilities be resumed. Perhaps the Italians just hadn't heard yet about the armistice. Therefore envoys with flags of truce should be sent to as many points as possible along the front to announce that the Austro-Hungarians had already ordered a cease-fire. For the same purpose, after 7:00 AM the 11th Army HQ at Trent - following a suggestion by Col. Schneller - issued the following order to their troops: "Since hostilities have stopped on land and in the air, no resistance is to be offered to an advance by detachments of the Italian Army or their allies, even if they occupy locations far behind the front."

At the same time the troops of 11th Army were ordered to march to the rear - 5 ID and 40 Hon ID into the Fleims valley, 39 Hon ID to the area Pergine-Trent, III Corps to Caldonazzo and Levico, XIV Corps to Vattaro and Valsorda , and finally XXI Corps (west of the Adige) to Aldeno and Vela. To avoid clashes with the advancing Italians, envoys with white flags were to be stationed at the end of each column. The HQ of III, XIV and XXI Corps were told to pull back into Trent. These were the last orders which 11th Army HQ issued in the morning of the 3rd, after which they departed for Gries (near Bozen). Until the staff arrived at their new HQ several hours later, they had no way to communicate with the corps commanders who'd been ordered back to Trent. There were also no further instructions from Innsbruck, the new station of Army Group HQ, after the orders for the armistice had been issued.

In the morning of the 3rd the pursuing Italian troops carried out a concentric advance toward Trent from the southeast, south and west. In the Adige valley the Aus-Hung. XXI Corps, having learned that the armistice was in effect, let the enemy march through. No shots were fired as Italian cavalry rode between k.u.k. detachments that were either withdrawing or resting. Italian armored cars drove along the roads, passing by troops who no longer were fighting and pushing our vehicles out of the way to eliminate traffic jams. Italian infantry followed the horsemen and armored cars and overtook the troops of the 56 Sch Div and 3 CD (with the attached Kaiser Jaeger Sturm Battalion from the Edelweiss Corps); after deploying machine guns and artillery they forced the Austrians to lay down their arms.

Meanwhile on the plateaus east of the Adige the troops of XIV and III Corps were in a very bad situation. The breakthrough in the Adige valley compelled XIV Corps to halt their withdrawal on the Fricca road through Carbonare. Forced to the right, the columns of this Corps crossed the path of those of III Corps, which were leaving the Lavarone plateau. The pursuing detachments of 6th Italian Army were already moving forward in the morning to thrust over the mountains into the Sugana valley. Already around 6:00 AM infantry from the English 48 ID appeared on the Lavarone plateau. The Englishmen overran the rear guards of III Corps stationed near Vezzena and disarmed the unsuspecting IR 127. Soon thereafter they also captured parts of Infantry Regiments 27, 42 and 74. Then the English units came up to the main body of the divisions of III Corps, which was slowly withdrawing into the Sugana valley.

During the morning GO Martiny had already learned from the HQ of 6 ID that the rear guards of his III Corps were being taken prisoner on the plateau by Vezzana. He immediately sent envoys to the front to protest the enemy incursion. Toward noon word reached Trent that the Italians intended to enter the city in the afternoon. Therefore the 11th Army Chief of Staff GM Sündermann, who phoned from Gries shortly after noon, instructed GO Martiny to stay in Trent so he could try to bring order to the chaotic retreat from that point. Sündermann gave these instructions because he was firmly convinced that the enemy would soon allow free passage to the k.u.k. troops they'd overtaken. Between 1:00 and 2:00 PM two English envoys appeared before GO Martiny in Trent and informed him that their troops had received no orders to cease hostilities. Instead, they'd been instructed to occupy Levico, Pergine and Trent. The two Englishmen demanded the unconditional surrender of the Aus-Hung. divisions that had been cut off. GO Martiny responded that it was not the fault of our troops that they were in such a hopeless state, since they'd already received the order to stop fighting from the AOK in the morning. He refused to surrender, but stated that the way to Levico, Pergine and Trent lay open to the enemy.

Meanwhile the leading cavalry units of the 1st Italian Army, with armored cars and machine guns, were hastening through the Adige valley toward Trent. Shortly after 3:00 PM, still breathless from their rapid advance, they reached the goal they'd so eagerly sought. Amid the peal of church bells the Italian squadrons entered the city, which had been disturbed by looters. They loudly celebrated their victory, while the Italian-speaking citizens rejoiced on the streets. The cavalry were followed by assault detachments of XXIX Italian Corps. All the Aus-Hung. troops and staffs still in Trent were declared to be prisoners of war.

While these events unfolded in Trent, the main forces of the 1st Italian Army spread out in the Adige valley as far as Calliano, marched through the Vallarsa to Rovereto, and pushed through the Terragnolo valley onto the Folgaria plateau. In the afternoon, the advanced guards of the 6 Italian ID overtook the Kaiser Jaeger Division on the road from S Sebastiano to Vattaro, cutting off their route - and that of 19 ID - to Trent. The English troops of the 6th Italian Army thrust into the midst of the divisions of III Corps, assembled on the road to Caldronazzo. Italian troops followed the British and also hastened to cut off the Aus-Hung. soldiers, who were no longer fighting. Thus the Hon IR 9 and k.u.k. IR 14 were taken prisoner near Caldronazzo; Hon IR 10 of 39 Hon ID, however, were able to make their way over

the mountains and into the Adige valley north of Trent.⁶⁶⁴ Both divisions of the XX Italian Corps descended from the Sieben Gemeinde into the Sugana valley and pushed their leading troops forward past Borgo. While forces of the 1st Italian Army continued their pursuit through the Adige valley, a cavalry regiment from 4th Army was riding through Pergine in the Sugana valley; late in the evening of the 3rd they made contact with the leading troops of 1st Army in Trent.

3 November - 10th Army

The troops of the 10th Aus-Hung. Army stationed on Tyrol's western front were hit especially hard by the Italian attack. Here by advancing in the valleys the enemy found ample opportunity to cut off the Aus-Hung. troops who were still on the heights and then to declare them prisoners.

XX Corps received the order about the armistice from the neighboring XXI Corps at 2:30 AM on the 3rd. Thereupon the troops of the Riva Sector and 49 ID were instructed to stay in their positions on the heights until daybreak. Rear guards would be left behind. Meanwhile the 7th Italian Army (XXV and III Corps) had already begun their advance toward Mezzolombardo and Bozen. In the Riva Sector the 11 Italian ID started to climb Mt Pari during the night, but didn't secure the area until 8:00 AM on 3 November, taking several hundred prisoners. In the morning 10th Army HQ made arrangements for the troops of the Riva Sector to retreat into the Sarche-Vezzano area, but XX Corps HQ had already anticipated these instructions. The movement took place under pursuing fire from Italian artillery, which gradually subsided toward noon. During the day the 11 Italian ID descended from Mt Pari to Riva, where meanwhile other parts of 1st Italian Army had been shipped over Lake Garda to land in the town.

On the left wing of XXV Italian Corps the 4 ID had already begun to advance, although hesitantly, into the Chiese valley. Their mission was to push through the lines of the k.u.k. 49 ID at Lardaro and Roncone to Tione. At the same hour Alpini battalions from 5 ID of III Italian Corps assaulted the 22 Sch Div at the Tonale Pass. The troops of this unit from the Alpine lands were

664 Szende, "Die Ungarn im Zusammenbruch 1918" (Oldenburg, 1931), p. 120. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: According to the map (Beilage 34, Skizze 2), part of Hon IR 10 were subsequently cut off and forced to surrender at Salurn, north of Trent. However, the text later [on page 744] indicates that "several battalions" of 39 Hon ID (presumably including parts of Hon IR 10) did escape the catastrophe.

taken completely by surprise, since they'd been told shortly before that there was an armistice. Thus the Italians easily disarmed four battalions of the Schützen and took them prisoner. Alpini detachments from 75 Italian ID moved forward from their positions on the Ortler glacier against 164 Inf Bde. An enemy barrage descended on the road from the Stilfserjoch to the Trafoi area. Nevertheless, Lempruch's Brigade were able to withdraw down the valley and to outrun the Italians in a timely retreat to Prad.

Everywhere the quick Italian advance on Tyrol's western front caused panic among the Etappen and March troops of 10th Army. In chaotic, intermingled groups soldiers and supply trains fled through the Vintschgau, from the Noce valley, and over the Mendel Pass. 10th Army HQ left Meran so they wouldn't be cut off; around 10:00 AM, while on their way to Imst, the HQ ordered V and XX Corps not to resist the enemy offensive. Troops who were surrounded should lay down their arms to avoid useless bloodshed. Some front-line battalions of 22 Sch Div and the attached 163 Inf Bde escaped from the Tonale Pass, the Presanella area, F. di Montozzo and Mt Mantello; they withdrew through the Noce valley toward the Nonsberg. When 49 ID learned that the Italians had broken through at the Tonale Pass, they sought to withdraw their widely-dispersed troops from the glacier positions in the Adamello area and from the Judicarien through the Rendena and Genova valleys so they could reach the Sulzberg valley through Madonna di Campiglio prior to the enemy. But the emaciated troops of the 49th didn't assemble in the areas north of Tione and near Pinzolo until the evening of the 3rd. Meanwhile parts of III Italian Corps had already descended from the Tonale through the open gaps in the mountains into the Noce valley. Their foremost troops reached Fucine by evening and were approaching Mezzana. Also in the rear of 49 ID units of the XXV Italian Corps were advancing up the Chiese through Lardaro into the Sarca valley as far as Tione.

During 3 November all the Italian corps and divisions received from Padua the news that the armistice treaty had been signed by the Aus-Hung. plenipotentiaries at 3:00 PM and that the cease-fire would come into effect 24 hours later (at 3:00 PM on 4 November). The Italian high command issued a strict order to all troops involved in the pursuit to ignore any protests from their opponents as the advance continued. Anyone overtaken by the Italians prior to 3:00 PM on the 4th was to be considered a prisoner of war.

4 November

The pursuing detachments of 1st Italian Army began to move out of Trent long before sunrise on 4 November, and around 4:00 AM were already entering Gardolo. English troops of the 6th Italian Army reached Mezocorona three hours later. The Italians in the Adige valley kept heading north and around 3:00 PM - when the armistice became effective - entered Salurn. This weak spearhead of the Italian armies found themselves in the midst of the intermingled remnants of Aus-Hung. units which had fled into the Zambana-Mezzolombardo area and farther north - men from 56 Sch Div, 3 CD and the Riva Sector. Nearby, on the eastern bank of the Adige between Lavis and S Michele, were troops from the 39th Honved Infantry Division.

GdI Verdross and the staff of XIV Corps HQ were taken prisoner by the Italians in Trent early on the 4th, as were the HQ of III Corps. The commander of the enemy troops in Trent didn't appear before GO Martiny until 8:00 AM, at which time he announced that the armistice wouldn't start until 3:00 and that all members of the Aus-Hung. Army in the city therefore were prisoners of war. The Italians established a demarcation line near Gardolo; finally they permitted all Aus-Hung. troops north of the line, who still hadn't been overtaken and forced to lay down their weapons, to withdraw unhindered. All the men south of the line, whether in the Sugana or Adige valleys or in the mountains, were declared to be prisoners.

The troops of XIV, III and VI Corps who'd been withdrawing from Serrada and Vezzana when overtaken by the enemy on the 3rd might perhaps have been able to fight their way free that evening. But they were specifically ordered by 11th Army HQ to offer no resistance to the onrushing detachments of the Italians or their allies. The commanders on the spot had no reason to question this fateful order. Who would want to assume the heavy responsibility of violating an apparent armistice? It is true that many commanders began to have reservations when the Italians insisted that they hadn't received any instructions about an armistice, and when in the night of 3-4 November new enemy detachments continued to move forward toward Trent. But none of the leaders wanted further casualties inflicted on their men. The troops who'd been cut off, completely unaware of the situation, hoped that by negotiating with the Italians they'd gain the favorable outcome of free passage. But when 4 November dawned the soldiers who'd been abandoned to their fate found that the enemy occupied the mountains around them on all sides. It became ever clearer that they were the victims of some enormous misunderstanding and that they'd have to succumb to their

opponents who were pressing relentlessly forward.

Also on Tyrol's western front the Italians on 4 November cut off and captured the Aus-Hung. troops who'd paused from exhaustion in the valleys. Alpini, cavalry and horse artillery from 5 Italian ID thrust ahead from Fucine through the Val di Sol to reach Malé and Cles. Near Dimaro the Italians blocked the road which led out of the Sarca valley through Pinzolo and the mountains into the Sulzberg valley. Thus the main body of 49 ID, withdrawing through Madonna di Campiglio, found themselves cut off. In the afternoon of the 4th the Italians forced them to surrender. Only IR 136 escaped. This Czech regiment, considering themselves released from their military oath due to the revolution at home, had already departed without awaiting orders; along with mutinous Etappen troops they made their way to Bozen.

On the 4th the remnants of 22 Sch Div retreating from the Tonale Pass - about four battalions - slipped through the Mendel Pass to Kaltern. They were pursued by enemy cavalry plus some infantry in armored cars who'd been sent toward Nonsberg to intercept the retreat of the Aus-Hung. troops from Trent through the Adige valley. After moving through Revo and Fondo, the pursuers were already approaching the Mendel Pass around 3:00 PM. In the evening Italian patrols in the Adige valley climbed as far as the river crossing-points west of Bozen.

Pursuing detachments from 75 Italian ID pushed on the 4th from Trafoi through Prad into the upper Adige valley as far as Spondinig and Schluderns; this prevented Aus-Hung. troops from withdrawing through the Vintschgau from Bozen and Meran. The soldiers of 164 Inf Bde who'd managed to outrun the ruthless enemy assembled near Nauders - about 1000 men from the Carinthian Volunteer Rifle Regt and 500 from the three volunteer rifle battalions of Upper Austria, Salzburg and Styria, plus a mountain guide company and parts of a high mountain company. The Standschützen from the Vintschgau also assigned to 164 Inf Bde were dismissed to their homes. The other troops were supposed to take up a position on the Reschenscheideck, but on their own authority marched back to Landeck. The Italians disarmed all detachments still stationed between Spondinig and the Reschen-scheideck, but didn't hinder their departure. Col. Edler von Covin's 159 Inf Bde, undisturbed by the enemy, retreated down the upper Adige valley to Meran on the 4th.

A large number of the troops of the Tyrol Army Group, who'd won countless engagements, were forced into captivity in these unfortunate 36 hours - not after an honorable action, but without

resistance through no fault of their own. Under **11th Army** the 6, 18, 19, 52 and 53 ID plus the Kaiser Jaeger Div and 56 Sch Div were captured by the Italians along with the majority of 3 and 6 CD and of 39 Hon ID. Only a few units managed to leave the danger zone in time - those which had withdrawn over the Cadinjoch into the Fleims valley (5 ID with IR 59 from the Edelweiss Div plus a large part of 40 Hon ID) and the Hungarian formations which had earlier streamed through the Adige valley (16 and 27 ID, 38 and 74 Hon ID).⁶⁶⁵ Also a few small parts of the surrounded divisions - including two battalions from the Kaiser Jaeger Div⁶⁶⁶ and several from 39 Hon ID - escaped the catastrophe. Under **10th Army**, only 159 and 164 Inf Bdes plus parts of 22 Sch Div successfully retreated. The majority of the troops of the Riva Sector, 49 ID, 22 Sch Div and 163 Inf Bde fell into the enemy's hands. Among the prisoners of war on the Tyrolean front were also the commanders of III, XIV and XX Corps - GO Martiny, GdI Verdross and GdI Kalser. They shared the bitter fate of their troops.

2. Retreat of the Belluno Armeegruppe, 3 and 4 November

Fate was kinder to the troops of the Belluno Armeegruppe than to those in Tyrol. During the Armeegruppe's exhausting withdrawal through the Venetian and Fassana Alps they suffered more from lack of food than from enemy pressure, since the pursuers here pushed forward hesitantly. The corps and divisions received the cease-fire orders between 7:00 and 8:00 AM on 3 November. To spare his troops, FZM Goglia gave them nearby objectives for the day's march. On the 3rd, the XXVI Corps rested near Canale S Bovo and Mezzano, and in the narrow valley of Fiera di Primiero. During the day the pursuing detachments of 4th Italian Army reached the Castel Tesino basin, advanced up the Cismon valley, captured a small outpost guarding the pass at the border next to the Mga. Agnerolla, and marched toward Imer. GdI Horsetzky sent an envoy to the advancing Italians to notify them of the armistice. The leader of the enemy detachment agreed to halt his

665Rubint, "Daten über das Verhalten der ungarischen Truppen beim Zusammenbruch" (Budapest, 1923), p. 101.

666TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: One of the two Kaiser Jaeger battalions was I Bn/KJR 1; it had left the line ahead of the others due to a (false) report that it was supposed to go to Innsbruck to maintain order. After a hurried march into the Adige valley the Battalion was able to find a train and did arrive in Innsbruck in the night of 3-4 November. (Bossi-Fedrigotti, "Kaiser Jaeger: Ruhm und Ende" [Graz, 1977], pp. 491-492.)

advance, declaring that he wouldn't continue his march until he received orders from his superiors.

By the evening of the 3rd the I Corps had already retreated to Cencenighe (55 ID), Alleghe (50 ID), Caprile (17 ID) and the area south of the Falzarego Pass (13 Sch Div). XV Corps had pulled 25 ID and the remnants of 31 ID back into the upper Piave valley near Pieve di Cadore, and 60 ID and the remnants of 20 Hon ID into the lower Boite valley. The advanced guards of 8th Italian Army pushed past Agordo in the Cordevole valley and Longarone in the Piave valley. Italian bicyclists and Bersaglieri appeared opposite the k.u.k. 25 ID.

In the evening of the 3rd the HQ of XXVI Corps received, thanks to a radio message intercepted by 28 ID, the surprising news that the Italian troops had been ordered to keep fighting until 3:00 PM on 4 November. The confusion increased when HQ of 39 Hon ID forwarded the contents of an order issued by 11th Army HQ, stating that no resistance should be offered to any enemy thrust past our lines. In the morning of the 4th the Belluno Armee-gruppe HQ ordered that if the Italians did in fact resume hostilities the group shouldn't respond in kind. Soon after 7:00 AM the Italians notified the Aus-Hung. XXVI Corps, camped in the Fiera di Primiero basin, that they intended to resume their advance at 8:00. To avoid pointless fighting, the Corps offered to make an agreement. The enemy would be given free passage to Fiera di Primiero and allowed to station a battalion in that town if they in turn wouldn't hinder the withdrawal of the Aus-Hung. troops encamped farther south.

When the Italians refused to agree, the negotiators gained time by stating that our troops would then use force to continue their retreat. Meanwhile GdI Horsetzky had the divisions of XXVI Corps moving north so that they could make their way over the Rolle Pass with as little interference as possible. The population of Primiero caused trouble for our troops; they blocked the narrow streets of their town with vehicles and began to shoot at the surprised soldiers. Around 3:00 PM Italian units, advancing cautiously, entered Fiera di Primiero. Near Imer they captured a column marching from Canale S Bovo; it consisted of 4 ID's supply train, an artillery detachment from 11th Army (five batteries) and Hon IR 29 from 40 Hon ID.

Under I Corps, on 4 November the 13 Sch Div reached Cortina d'Ampezzo, 17 ID Corvara and Arabba, and 50 ID the area between Pieve and Cherz. 55 ID started marching out of Cencenighe in the morning. Their rear guards, BH IR 2, were attacked by the advancing Italians, and some men were killed or wounded. Under

XV Corps the 60 ID and remnants of 20 Hon ID marched up the valley to Cortina d'Ampezzo. 25 ID and the remnants of 31 ID continued their retreat undisturbed in the upper Piave valley toward the Kreuzberg Pass.

All these divisions marched in orderly columns. Ahead of them, troops from 48 ID and 42 Hon ID were falling back through Predazzo. And the regiments that had mutinied were also still heading home - those of 83 Hon Inf Bde were already near Bruneck and those of 21 Sch Div near Innichen in the Puster valley. Here the disorderly troops broke into and plundered the food supply depots. FZM Goglia sent a wire to the AOK in the morning of the 3rd: "Because of disorder in the rear of the armies, immediate and energetic action by all the new governments and national councils is necessary. The men of the supply trains pouring into the Puster valley, the mutinous regiments, and hordes of deserters and released prisoners of war are plundering all the magazines and farmsteads. No reliable garrisons are available to protect them. The railroad system seems to have broken down completely. All the motorized columns are coming to a halt due to lack of gasoline. The brave troops who've been in the front lines are now stuck deep in the mountains and hungry because no more food is available in the Puster valley."⁶⁶⁷ But the AOK had no resources on hand to provide any assistance.

3. Last actions of the 6th and Isonzo Armies, 3 and 4 November

The order to stop fighting reached the divisions of the 6th and Isonzo Armies between 7:00 and 9:00 AM on 3 November. At this point the majority of the combat troops of both armies were still with their units on the Tagliamento.

3 November - 6th Army

Around this time, on the Italian side the pursuing mounted squadrons of the Count of Turin were nearing the river; some of them had already reached the western bank the evening before. 1 CD were instructed to advance along the foot of the mountains through Pinzano to the road junction at Stazione per la Carnia, while sending a side column through the upper Meduna valley to Ampezzo and Tolmezzo, which would block the Mauria Pass. 3 CD were already in contact with the front of the Aus-Hung. 6th Army at Pinzano, Spilimbergo and Bonzicco. They were ordered to

667Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p. 150

thrust over the Tagliamento to Udine and Cividale.

The HQ of II Aus-Hung. Corps were aware that the movement of 1 Italian CD into the enormous gap between 6th Army and the Belluno Armeegruppe posed a danger to the columns falling back toward the Plöcken Pass and through the Fella valley. To close the routes through the mountains leading from the south into the upper Tagliamento valley, troops from 12 Reit Sch Div were supposed to march to Tolmezzo, and all the bridges in this area were to be destroyed. But now (in the morning of the 3rd), these measures were canceled when the order to cease fire arrived. Destruction of the bridges at Pinzano and Bonzicco, where explosives were already in place, was also canceled. But meanwhile on the eastern wing of the Italian front as elsewhere the enemy didn't seem to be observing an armistice. Already in the morning of the 3rd the Hussar Regt # 2, holding the line in front of 34 ID's sector on the Torrente Arzino, were suddenly attacked by Italian mounted detachments advancing from the opposite bank.⁶⁶⁸ The hussars didn't return fire, but hoisted white flags to remind the enemy of the supposed armistice. The Italian horsemen regarded this as a sign of surrender; they continued to cross the stream, intending to disarm the hussars. They knew nothing about a cease-fire. However, they finally agreed to remain on the eastern bank until they received a decision from their commanders.

In the afternoon II Corps' Chief of Staff Col. Podhajsky tried to call the HQ of 6th Army and of the Army Group to clarify the uncertain situation. However, telephone connections with both HQ had been severed by the Yugoslavs. Finally Podhajsky was able by chance to get through to Baden, and learned that the AOK had been trying to relay the details about the armistice to FM Boroevic but also had been unable to reach his HQ at Velden. Through this fortuitous phone call Col. Podhajsky learned for the first time that the Italians weren't going to stop fighting until 24 hours after Austria had accepted their terms. II Corps HQ then tried to forward this important information to XXIV Corps and, through IV Corps, to the Isonzo Army. But the lines to both of these corps HQ had been cut, as was the direct line to Isonzo Army HQ at Laibach.

The 3 Italian CD had discovered that the bridge at Bonzicco wasn't destroyed. In the morning of the 3rd their horsemen crossed here into the defensive sector of the southern wing of XXIV Corps, held by 44 Sch Div which now consisted of 86 Sch Bde

668HR # 2 had been attached to 1 CD, but they stayed in Venetia when that Division left the Southwestern front.

and SchR 21. The Schützen didn't open fire, since they'd already received the order to stop fighting. The enemy cavalry rode right up to the Aus-Hung. artillery positions. At noon FML Schönauer, commanding 44 Sch Div, opened negotiations with the commander of 3 Italian CD, G.Lt conte Guicciardi. The Italian general pulled his men back to the eastern bank. However, one squadron meanwhile had passed through the Aus-Hung. lines without meeting opposition, and proceeded forward toward Udine. In the afternoon G.Lt Guicciardi and the commander of 4 Italian CD (G.Lt conte Barattieri) reported to FML Schönauer that they'd received no information about the conclusion of an armistice; also, based on the orders of their corps HQ they demanded that the defenders surrender their weapons. This disgraceful demand was refused. However, FML Schönauer and the commander of the attached 19 Inf Bde (GM Weisz) finally decided to trust the orders of the AOK. They told the Italian generals that they would in fact hand over the weapons of 44 Sch Div and 19 Inf Bde and permit the enemy cavalry to pass through their lines. The Italians in turn agreed to return the arms to the Aus-Hung. soldiers if it turned out that the AOK's information about the armistice was correct.⁶⁶⁹

3 November - the Isonzo Army

On the northern wing of the Isonzo Army, the weak regiments of 29 ID and several battalions from 201 Lst Inf Bde had taken up a position early on 3 November along the eastern bank of the Tagliamento next to the destroyed bridges (Pt. d. Delizia) near Codroipo so they could cover the withdrawal of XVI Corps. To their left the 24 ID and remnants of 7 ID were also on the river. To the north were troops of the 43rd Schützen Division. During the day English and Italian detachments from Cavan's Army appeared on the Tagliamento. Also Americans (the 332nd IR) were identified for the first time on XVI Corps' front. The troops of 26 Sch Div had already resumed their rearward march from Codroipo into the area southwest of Udine in the night of 2-3 November. Udine itself was troubled by assaults on supply depots and plundering by hordes of soldiers on their way home, by released prisoners of war and also by the city's inhabitants; it was necessary to send parts of SchR 9 and some other troops to restore order. Southwest of the city this group was fired on by armed bands. In the afternoon the Italian squadron which had ridden through the lines of 44 Sch Div on the Tagliamento entered Udine. Since the Austrian troops knew about the armistice, they didn't attach any importance to its arrival. The main body of 26 Sch Div marched undisturbed through Campoformido and to the east

669Nowak, "Chaos", pp. 173 ff. Ratzenhofer, "Waffenstillstand von Gilla Giusti", p. 835

in the night of 3-4 November.

Early on the 3rd the western bank of the lower Tagliamento was still being held by Uhlan Regiments # 11 and 12 (of 8 CD) plus a detachment from 70 Hon ID. The rear guards of VII Corps - some men from 12 and 33 ID - crossed the river before dawn near Latisanotta. Thereupon the 46 Sch Div and 4 Inf Bde of XXIII Corps evacuated the Lemene sector and pulled back over the bridge near Latisana. Around 9:00 AM ill tidings were received from the Uhlan regiments which had stayed on the western bank; they had been taken prisoner by the enemy's 2 CD and bicyclists despite protesting. Soon afterward the Italian cavalry, along with infantry detachments of the 3rd Army, appeared on the lower Tagliamento and began to cross the river. Because of the enemy activity the commander of IV Corps, FZM Tamasy, had the units still stationed on the eastern bank of the river (parts of 70 Hon ID plus Dragoon Regiments # 2 and 14 of 8 CD) blow up the pontoon bridge at S Paolo and finally, in the evening, also the bridge at Madrisio. Farther down river, in the sector of VII and XXIII Corps, the bridges near Latisana were still intact. At Latisanotta the Italians demanded that IR 19 of 33 ID, which was guarding the crossing-point, should allow them to pass.⁶⁷⁰ But the Italian commander also chivalrously declared that he wouldn't pursue the Aus-Hung. rear guards or initiate fighting. VII Corps HQ therefore decided to pull IR 19 back from the bridge. The leading troops of 3rd Italian Army had meanwhile already taken possession of the bridge at Latisana in the early afternoon, but refrained from pushing further ahead or from attacking the 46 Sch Div stationed on the eastern bank.

In general the pursuing Italian detachments in the Venetian plains were hesitant to attack opponents who'd already stopped firing. During 3 November they stopped advancing, much to the chagrin of the Italian high command who wanted the pace to accelerate. The commanders wanted to use the last 24 hours of the war to cut off as many of the Austro-Hungarians as possible.

Thus the rear guards of the Isonzo Army on the Tagliamento, believing that the armistice was already in effect, had stopped fighting and were negotiating with the enemy in an attempt to induce them to also cease hostilities. Meanwhile the majority of the Army were already marching back toward the pre-war boundary and the Isonzo. The main body of 26 Sch Div withdrew from Campoformido to Manzano, and 64 Hon ID moved from Bicinicco toward Palmanova. 14 ID were marching through Cervignano, and behind them 2 ID through S Giorgio and 58 ID through Muzzana.

⁶⁷⁰Szende, pp. 118 ff.

The chaos in the rear of the Isonzo Army had become intolerable. Without firing a shot, Bersaglieri and an Italian marine detachment landed in Trieste in the afternoon of the 3rd, at almost the same time that Italian cavalry were entering Trent and hoisting their tricolor on the Doss di Trento. To secure the Army's southern flank the 14 ID were ordered to Monfalcone. Meanwhile Yugoslav National Guards occupied the bridges over the Isonzo and wanted to disarm the Aus-Hung. troops as they withdrew. FZM Tamasy had kept both his Honved divisions in order and, despite Linder's instructions, intended to bring them home completely armed; he sent the Sturm Battalion of 64 Hon ID forward to secure the line of retreat. GdI Schariczer, commanding VII Corps, informed his troops - based on orders from FM Boroevic - that they were to regard the national council at Laibach as "an enemy." If their marching columns suffered any interference from the Slovenes they were "to use force to continue on their way."⁶⁷¹

4 November - the 6th Army

On 4 November all of 6th Army's troops still on the Tagliamento resumed their withdrawal. II Corps started marching before dawn, intending to retreat through Gemona and Stazione per la Carnia through the Fella valley. At the head of the Corps marched SchR 2, which had been detached from 44 Sch Div and was supposed to go to Vienna for Assistenz duty; they were followed by 34 ID and finally by 12 Reit Sch Div. Landsturm Etappen battalions stationed at Tolmezzo were instructed to cover the Corps' western flank and then to form the rear guard. Several batteries were ordered to Tolmezzo (but in fact were abandoned). The bridges on the Tagliamento were left intact because of the supposed armistice. But meanwhile an Italian column, consisting of parts of 1 CD plus three Bersaglieri battalions and seven armored cars, had advanced up the Meduna and into the upper Tagliamento where they disarmed the Landsturm Etappen troops. The commander of II Corps, GdI Rudolf Krauss, immediately realized the danger and ordered 34 FA Bde to fire on the enemy if they tried to interfere with the Corps' withdrawal over the bridge at Stazione per la Carnia. But the Artillery Brigade had already pushed their way to the front of the column because of the angry demands of the personnel who only wanted to go home, and had passed Stazione per la Carnia. Now the "Linz" SchR 2 were instructed to guard the withdrawal, but this Regiment also demanded to be sent home immediately. And so the pursuing Italians overtook the Corps' columns without meeting any resistance. Around noon the armored cars from Tolmezzo reached Stazione per la Carnia; from that town

⁶⁷¹Szende, pp. 118 and 128

they drove forward, firing their machine guns into the marching troops of II Corps, as far as the bridge east of Resiutta. Italian patrols hastened ahead to Pontebba between 3:00 and 4:00 PM. All units in the rear of these Italian soldiers, who'd advanced far into the Fella valley, were declared to be taken prisoner. Our troops protested because they'd been told the armistice had been in effect since the 3rd. This didn't help at all; the Italians responded that the orders of the Aus-Hung. AOK meant nothing to them. The armistice hadn't started until 3:00 PM on the 4th. Thus the entire 34 ID, along with FML Luxardo's divisional HQ, the Linz SchR 2, and FML von Schamschula's XXIV Corps HQ were taken prisoner in the Fella valley. Armed resistance was impossible because the sudden arrival of the armored cars and their machine gun fire had caused panic among the Aus-Hung. troops, whose units broke apart in disorder.⁶⁷²

The troops of XXIV Corps were also in a very precarious situation. The negotiations at Bonzicco had opened the roads leading east to Italian cavalry. Thus 41 and 51 Hon ID could no longer take the route through Udine and Cividale. Honved Infantry Regiments # 12 and 301 had just started to march to Gemona in the morning of the 4th when they came under fire near Majano from pursuing Italians and some local citizens. As ordered, neither regiment returned fire and so it was easy for the Italians to disarm them. But when the following regiment (Hon IR 20) did start fighting, the 12th and 301st also recovered their rifles. All the other detachments of XXIV Corps also entered the bloody fighting, and kept the enemy out of Gemona.⁶⁷³

The Italians, since they'd already blocked the Fella valley, still were able to prevent the Honved from marching any further. They declared that both divisions of XXIV Corps, along with 12 Reit Sch Div which had stayed at Venzone, were now prisoners of war. Our envoys demanded that the Corps be given free passage. The commander of the enemy troops in the Fella valley responded that the most he'd concede would be to let our men proceed if

672 Valori, p. 501. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The text doesn't say what happened to FML Krauss and his II Corps HQ, who aren't mentioned again after issuing the futile orders for the defense of Stazione per la Carnia. Nor does it explain how the HQ of XXIV Corps happened to be swept up in the disaster of II Corps. As the next few paragraphs explain, the units of XXIV Corps, left on their own, were made of sterner stuff than those of II Corps. 12 Reit Sch Div, which had been marching in the rear of Krauss' group, avoided captivity by joining XXIV Corps.

673 Szende, pp. 115 and 119

they were completely disarmed. 12 Reit Sch Div now wanted to fight their way through the Fella valley and asked the Honved for support. But GM Daubner of 51 Hon ID, who'd assumed leadership of all three divisions after XXIV Corps HQ were captured, didn't want to be responsible for breaking the armistice. Also it was known that Hungary's new War Minister had ordered all of his country's troops to lay down their arms. On the 6th the commanders of the three isolated divisions met at Gemona to discuss the situation. They wouldn't agree to the shame of turning in their weapons. The enemy were stationed to the north and also coming up from the south. It seemed hopeless to fight the well-equipped Italians with exhausted troops who were almost out of ammunition. So the only course was to retreat northeast over the enormous cliffs of the Julian Alps, even though the Italians might have already occupied Saga. The guns were wrecked and all military equipment that couldn't be carried by the weakened horses was destroyed. 51 Hon ID started moving after darkness fell on the 7th. In the glare of torches the inhabitants of Gemona fell with ravenous haste upon the many vehicles and depots of clothing and food that had been left behind. In the night of 7-8 November the 12 Reit Sch Div were also able to quietly slip away from the enemy and to initiate a difficult march over the mountains. They left rear guards behind at Venzone to deceive the Italians. For three days the troops took the narrow paths through the wild ridges and ravines of the mountains by the Isonzo, weakened by hunger and freezing in their ragged uniforms; finally they reached Saga on the 10th. The breakthrough had succeeded. 41 Hon ID meanwhile had also left Gemona. However, they had to surrender their weapons; in turn the Italians gave them free passage. Accompanied by Bersaglieri battalions the Honved marched home through the Fella valley to Tarvis.⁶⁷⁴

674Szende, pp. 116 ff. On 5 November the AOK had also intervened for 34 ID, 41 and 51 Hon ID, and 12 Reit Sch Div, by protesting in a radio message to the Italian high command about the "violation of the treaty." At 1:30 AM on 7 November the Laaerberg station received the Italian reply: "At the time when the cessation of hostilities was effective, detachments of the 34, 41 and 51 ID and of 12 Reit Sch Div had been partly encircled and not in a position to continue their retreat. They will be set free to continue their withdrawal as soon as they hand over all equipment and vehicles specified in the armistice conditions. So they won't have to march home on difficult paths, they will be allowed to use the Pontebba road." But it seems that only some small parts of the Aus-Hung. units were still able to take advantage of this concession by the Italian high command.

The 44 Sch Div and 19 Inf Bde (of 10 ID) had already been disarmed by the Italians and taken prisoner in the night of 3-4 November. FML Schönauer and three brigadiers shared the harsh fate of their soldiers. Thus the episode at Bonzicco came to an end.

4 November - the Isonzo Army

From Bonzicco, the 3 Italian CD set out on the 4th through the opened front in the direction of Udine. 4 CD, which had crossed the Tagliamento at S Odorico, took the road to Pozzuolo, while 2 CD and other pursuing detachments came over the river at Codroipo, Pieve di Rosa, Madrisio and Latisana. And so on 4 November, as the rear guards of the Isonzo Army pulled back from the Tagliamento they were everywhere pursued by the mounted squadrons of the Count of Turin as well as by bicycle detachments and armored cars from 10th and 3rd Italian Armies. For many miles the ruthlessly advancing enemy encountered no resistance. Many times they thrust against defenseless opponents who merely cried out "Armistice! Peace! Peace!" They came upon units which had collapsed from exhaustion and apathetically allowed themselves to be disarmed, or upon fleeing hordes of soldiers from units that had broken up. Our troops had heard that the Italians had crossed the Tagliamento at many points, but weren't sure of the enemy's intentions since they still believed that the armistice was already in effect; this caused great confusion and panic. Many commanders did recognize the danger immediately and on their own responsibility ordered fighting to resume. In the night of 3-4 November the AOK had wired both Army Group HQ, "The allies are stopping hostilities at 3:00 PM on 4 November." This information gradually filtered through to the troops during the day. There were still numerous detachments of the Isonzo Army in these final and most difficult hours of the war who obeyed the orders of their superiors and turned for a last time against the enemy so as to avoid being cut off and taken prisoner just before the end.

Above all, the Sudeten German troops of 29 ID refused to surrender their weapons to the enemy. During the retreat from the Tagliamento an Italian cavalry regiment tried to overrun a battalion of the Reichenberg IR 94, but was met with fire and forced to flee.⁶⁷⁵ Troops of the Hungarian 7 ID also defeated Italian cavalry during the withdrawal, although the majority of this Division's remnants did fall into the Italians' hands.

675 Stoffer Jakobs, "Der Marsch in die Heimat" (in "Volk und Führung", 1937 edition; Reichenberg; pp. 289 ff.)

Southwest of Udine other detachments of XVI Corps, including a battalion of SchR "Leitmeritz" # 9 which had ceased firing, were surrounded by Italian horsemen and surrendered. These soldiers mistakenly believed that they would be given free passage. But instead of enjoying their return home they were taking a miserable road into captivity! Similar events unfolded between noon and 3:00 PM near Pozzuolo, where a large part of the Galician 24 ID were overtaken by Italian cavalry and forced to submit. Only some isolated detachments of IR 10 were able to avoid captivity by accelerating their withdrawal.

Enemy horsemen swarmed to the north and south of XVI Corps' rear guards, who were also pursued from the west. FML Berndt, commanding the rear guards, wanted to guard his flank and gave this assignment to 29 FA Bde. He sent an envoy to Udine to let the Italians know he'd bombard the city if they didn't stop their advance. The rear guards of XVI Corps closed up together as the retreat continued. FML Berndt led them over the Judrio back to Cormons. The 3 Italian CD, which had already entered Udine around noon, continued to advance to Cividale by the end of the 4th, and sent patrols through Robic toward Karfreit. Hastily-riding squadrons of 4 Italian CD reached Manzano around 3:00 PM and in the evening probed forward to the Judrio. Also at 3:00 PM a brigade of 2 Italian CD occupied Mortegliano; their leading troops rode forward past Palmanova, considerably in advance to the marching columns of IV Aus-Hung. Corps farther north.

Pursuing Italian detachments, whom the Galician 24 ID allowed to proceed unhindered onto the eastern bank of the Tagliamento at Pieve di Rosa, had already cut off two and a half regiments of 70 Hon ID (IV Corps) during the morning. A rear-guard squadron of 8 CD were also captured by the enemy. FZM Tamasy, the commander of IV Corps, immediately ordered the remaining troops of 70 Hon ID to resist the Italians with force. Meanwhile GM Edler von Dokonal, the commander of 8 CD, was trying to halt the pursuers west of Mortegliano. But the withdrawal of neighboring troops compelled UR 8 and DR 14 to soon abandon their rear-guard positions.⁶⁷⁶ While the 8th Uhlans were soon backed up by the 2nd

676 Foerster-Seyffertitz, pp. 330 ff. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The supposed presence of UR # 8 in these actions can't be explained. It was part of 10 CD, which in late October moved from Tyrol to the Balkans. The original text doesn't state that it had been detached from 10 CD. This passage may therefore be in error; the other possibility is that the Regiment had in fact been diverted from the rest of 10 CD and attached to 8 CD at the very end of the war - but if so, it's strange that there is no reference to such a re-assignment in

Dragoons (stationed near Mortegliano as the Division's reserve), the 14th Dragoons were forced to continue their withdrawal to Gris without a pause; their southern flank had already been enveloped by the detachment of 2 Italian CD which was riding to Palmanova. Just before 3:00 PM (when the armistice would start) DR 14 were retreating to Bicinicco when they were suddenly attacked by Italian cavalry with machine guns, and suffered painful losses. But the Italians were unable to capture the remaining troops of 8 CD who finally rested, completely exhausted, at Bicinicco.

The pursuing detachments of the Italian 2 CD and 3rd Army on the lower Tagliamento had advanced to the eastern bank of that river in the night of 3-4 November, behind 46 Sch Div which was on the Stella and marching to the rear. These enemy troops fell upon the flank of parts of 33 ID which were still stationed along the river north of Latisana; also pushed in the front by lines of enemy skirmishers advancing over the broad, gravelly bed of the Tagliamento, the men of the 33rd withdrew to the Stella. And the rear guards of VII and XXIII Corps were also threatened from the south. 58 ID, marching behind 2 ID along the road through Muzzana to Cervignano, had withdrawn the coast defense outposts since they believed that the armistice was already effective. This allowed small detachments of Italian marines to land from the lagoons near Marano and advance to Muzzana. The marines, joined by some Italian prisoners of war who'd escaped, thrust into the midst of the marching columns of 58 ID. The sounds of fighting from Muzzana, and from Latisana where the streets were full of plunderers, caused great confusion in the units and supply columns of 46 Sch Div which had withdrawn to the area between these two towns during the night. The supply trains fled to the north. At dawn the Italian detachments which had penetrated into Muzzana surrendered after they were bombarded by our artillery. The way to the rear was now open. 58 ID immediately marched to Cervignano. 46 Sch Div, 4 Inf Bde and 33 ID were still on the Stella. As pursuing Italian detachments advanced against this sector around noon, the rear guards of XXIII and VII Corps resumed their retreat. 46 Sch Div and 4 Inf Bde took the main road leading from Muzzana through S Giorgio to Cervignano; farther north the columns of VII Corps marched through Ariis toward Ajello. Numerous supply trains withdrew between the infantry. Meanwhile the news that the armistice would finally be effective at 3:00 PM reached the corps and divisions. The troops of 33 ID were ordered to respond to any enemy advance with strong fire. In the afternoon, when the regiments of 33 ID were already approaching the border, Italian

the text.

cavalry appeared and attacked the disorderly supply trains, causing great panic. But machine gun fire from Infantry Regiments 12 and 83 mowed down the enemy horsemen. The exhausted troops of 33 ID reached Ajello. As far as this town they continued to encounter enemy armored cars and horsemen, but the Italians were content to declare that only the detachments of VII Corps which they'd overtaken by 3:00 PM were to be considered prisoners.

The 46 Sch Div suffered greatly as they retreated, relentlessly pursued by the enemy. Near S Giorgio SchR 32 were suddenly confronted by Italian armored cars, bicyclists and horsemen; the Schützen lost their composure and broke up in flight. But there were still some gallant troops left in 46 Sch Div; they defended S Giorgio until the enemy were deep in their southern flank. The remnants of 46 Sch Div and of 4 Inf Bde conducted a fighting retreat to Cervignano, where they rested in the afternoon. Meanwhile the 58 ID and the other half of 2 ID, concerned only about getting home, had already passed the Isonzo. The other unit entrusted with guarding the Army's southern flank, 14 ID, marched past Doberdo because their Slovakian troops (IR 71 and 72) refused to halt at Monfalcone. Thus the remnants of 46 Sch Div in Cervignano had been abandoned in the midst of territory that was in an uproar. The Division had already lost the majority of their troops during the painful retreat, as the pursuing detachments of 3rd Italian Army netted thousands of stragglers without weapons. Around 5:00 PM, after the armistice was already effective, Italian armored cars finally appeared in Cervignano. Other detachments landed at Grado. Encircled on all sides the last soldiers of 46 Sch Div fell into the enemy's hands.

57 ID, which had been ordered to Opcina, made their way - without seeing any action - to Laibach. Here the regiments remained until the time came for their journey to their homes.

4. The men of the Southwestern armies return home

Around noon on 4 November the wires from Padua carried proud news to all the cities and towns of Italy - "The Aus-Hung. Army is destroyed." There were 300,000 prisoners. No fewer than 5000 guns and a mass of military equipment had also been captured. On the previous day (at noon on 3 November) the Italian high command had estimated the numbers as 100,000 men and 2000 guns.⁶⁷⁷ By 11 November the reports from Italian HQ gave a total of 436,674 prisoners of war. Thus in the unlucky final 36 hours of the war more than 300,000 men from the Aus-Hung. Southwestern armies had been taken captive.⁶⁷⁸ A very large portion of the prisoners were troops from the lines of communication, since in the Aus-Hung. divisions on the Southwestern front (51 infantry and 5 cavalry) there were only 260,000 combat troops at the end of the war.⁶⁷⁹ Around 16 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions had been captured, along with 4 corps, 10 division and 21 brigade staffs.⁶⁸⁰ 24 generals shared the bitter fate of their troops. Especially painful was the death of a large number (30,000) of weakened soldiers who succumbed to disease during their unexpectedly long period of captivity. No episode in military history is similar to this final fight of the Southwestern armies, a "mixture of battle, capitulation and peacetime maneuver."⁶⁸¹

The Italians gave their final offensive the glorious-sounding name "*vittoria di Vittorio Veneto*"; since they kept fighting for 36 hours after their opponents had initiated a one-sided cease-

677Dupont, p. 262 and pp. 280 ff.

678Figures showing the number of prisoners taken by the Italians and their allies from 24 October to 4 November vary between 400,000 and 480,000 men. According to Rocca (pp. 389 ff.) the grand total was 483,000 men, plus 7571 guns. See also Ratzenhofer, "Waffenstillstand von Villa Giusti", p. 837.

679The ration strength of the Southwestern front was 2,500,000 men. TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Only 14% of the Aus-Hung. force in the only active theater of operations was composed of combat troops. This alone goes a long way toward explaining the collapse of the armed forces and of the Monarchy.

680Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 422. Ratzenhofer, "Die Deutschen im sterbenden k.u.k. Heer (in "Mil. wiss. Mitt.", Vienna; 1929 edition, pp. 622 ff.). Also by Ratzenhofer, "Die Flucht der höheren Führer" (in the "Reichspost" for 15 August 1926).

681Stegemann, "Geschichte des Krieges" (Stuttgart, 1921), Vol. IV, p. 656

fire, they'd crowned their success by capturing hundreds of thousands of Aus-Hung. soldiers. And meanwhile they were pushing toward the southern border of the German Empire. The Villa Giusti armistice had thrown open the doors to the mighty mountain fortress of Tyrol. On 2 and 3 November the inter-allied supreme command decided that their armies who'd hitherto been engaged against Austria-Hungary would use the territory of the former Danube Monarchy as a base to attack southern Germany in case the Berlin government didn't also submit to the armistice conditions of the Entente.⁶⁸² G.Lt Diaz concurred with this plan and on 4 November sent a wire to Italian Prime Minister Orlando (who was staying in Paris) to inform him that the allied forces would be striking the southern flank of the German Empire. Two armies would invade Bavaria - one with 10 divisions from Innsbruck and the other with 20 to 30 divisions (under Italian command) from Salzburg, Braunau and Linz. For an offensive against Saxony the allies could be based in Bohemia, where the Czecho-Slovakian Division which had served in Italy would be the kernel of a new army supporting the Entente. The attacking armies could be redeployed in about a month, with the forces in the Balkans as a reserve.

But first the task of transporting, feeding and housing the unexpectedly enormous mass of prisoners was no easy burden for the Italian high command. Crowds of disarmed Aus-Hung. troops blocked all highways and roads, interspersed in confusing fashion with the columns of Italian soldiers marching into the area of Trent.

Chaos in Tyrol

The still large columns of Aus-Hung. troops who'd survived the final act of the depressing drama were meanwhile heading for their homes as quickly as possible. The remnants of 10th Army flowed over the Reschenscheideck and the Jaufen Pass. Along with some parts of the 10th that marched back through the Adige valley, the 11th Army had come up the eastern bank of the Adige - despite considerable traffic jams - and marched through the Brenner Pass into the upper Inn valley where they'd wait for trains to take them home. The route of these troops merged with that of the streams of men and supply trains that flowed out of the Puster valley at Franzensfeste.⁶⁸³

It should be emphasized that during this retreat from southern Tyrol into the upper Inn valley, as elsewhere, there were still

682Tournès, p. 300. Opocensky, pp. 382 ff.

683Szende, p. 142. Nowak, "Chaos", pp. 167 ff.

many formations which marched in tolerably good order.⁶⁸⁴ But naturally the food in the supply depots was being plundered every day by hungry troops. The worst transgressions took place along the rail lines and at the stations, particularly at Innsbruck and Villach. Large groups of deserters lurked by the stations and also near open stretches of track, waiting to board the trains as they went by. On every train even the locomotives, the running boards and the roofs of the boxcars were full of men. Hundreds of soldiers paid for their eagerness to get home with their lives when the trains passed through tunnels and under bridge girders, or made sharp turns.⁶⁸⁵ In frenzied celebrations many others were accidentally shot or blown up with grenades.

The greatest concern of the military authorities was the food shortage, which was provoking the wild disturbances. In the afternoon of 3 November the HQ of 11th Army had already asked the allied troops at Trent to occupy the rail lines from Trent to the Brenner Pass and from Franzensfeste to Bruneck, so they could "protect the remaining supply depots and prevent the robberies and other disturbances which are becoming more of a problem every day."

The HQ of the Tyrol Army Group were reduced to despair by the robberies committed by masses of hungry men on their way home. On 4 November they sent a request by wire to Baden, and on 5 November a second (more urgent) request that the troops must under all circumstances be kept south of the Brenner Pass where they could be fed by the Entente. "Even their captivity would be preferable to spreading hunger and devastation throughout northern Tyrol."⁶⁸⁶ At the same time the HQ of 11th Army ordered a staff officer to contact the commander of the Entente forces at Trent; he was to describe the "catastrophic logistical situation"

684 Rubint, pp. 95 ff.

685 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 411

686 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This statement by the Tyrol Army Group HQ is one of the principal sources for the accusation, made at the time and subsequently, that the leaders of the Aus-Hung. Army deliberately permitted large numbers of troops to be captured to avoid anarchy in the interior. GO Arz refuted rumors to this effect as "totally unfounded" and indicated that the statement of the Tyrol Army Group was only their reaction to a "dramatic situation" (in "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", pp. 378-79). As the preceding chapters have indicated, wishful thinking (on the part of Arz and many others), as well as incompetence are a sufficient explanation of the strange events of 2-4 November.

and to request food supplies for the Aus-Hung. troops still south of the Brenner. Also requested was a "flour train", to be sent to Innsbruck under the protection of English troops. Army Group HQ furthermore sent telegrams to the border sector HQ at Finstermünz and Bregenz: "The complete disorganization in the Army and in the interior precludes the restoration of order by our own authorities. The only salvation from starvation and devastation is to have the Entente take charge of military and civil administration south of the Brenner Pass, along with responsibility for feeding the troops and civilian population. Thereafter the Army can be evacuated in orderly fashion. Use all available channels to get this message to the Entente through the Swiss government and also through direct contact with the Italians over the Stilfserjoch."

A member of the Tyrolean national committee, Dr Michael Mayr, traveled to Bern to ask the Swiss confederation's assembly to forward the following message to Paris: "Due to a lack of food supplies, the AOK has had to order the troops in southern Tyrol to refrain from moving to the north. They are urgently requesting the Entente governments to quickly occupy Tyrol and to provide for the sustenance of the Army and the population. The [Tyrolean] national committee concurs with this request, since in their opinion this is the only way to protect the Army and population from deadly hunger and ruin."⁶⁸⁷

The Aus-Hung. high command meanwhile appealed directly to their Italian counterparts, who hastened to send 50,000 daily rations to feed the Aus-Hung. troops who were still stuck on the southern slopes of the Brenner.

The brief German intervention

The Tyrolean national committee and some of the local mayors had meanwhile also asked the Bavarian government to help protect the population of northern Tyrol from depredations by non-German-speaking troops as they passed through.⁶⁸⁸ The II Bavarian Corps and local border guards were already prepared to enter northern Tyrol under the command of GdA Krafft.

On 4 November Emperor Charles had informed the German sovereign

687 Werkmann, "Glückloser Kaiser" (manuscript). Ertl, "Was ist die Wahrheit über die Gefangennahme der österreichischen Truppen im Jahre 1918?" (in "Volks-Zeitung Innsbruck", Issue # 209, 11 September 1926)

688 From a letter by GdA Krafft to the Military Archives (15 October 1937)

of the conclusion of the armistice. He had been forced to accept the terms under the pressure of events. At the close of Charles' telegram to his Imperial ally, he stated "We have stood by each other in good times and bad throughout the long war. In the bitter days which I'm now experiencing, and in which I'm full of concern for the fate of my peoples, I remember you in heart-felt and sincere friendship. This friendship and our faithful memories will support us and help us through difficult times."⁶⁸⁹

Although the Germans were in a hopeless position, after the Villa Giusti armistice they sought to cover the open southern border of Bavaria by guarding the Reschenscheideck and Brenner mountain passes, as well as the Tauern Tunnel at Bad Gastein. Quick action seemed necessary because it was believed that the Italians had already reached Franzensfeste. On 5 November the leading Bavarian troops crossed Tyrol's northern border between the Fern Pass and Kössen. Shortly before noon the Tyrolean national council received from GdA Krafft a telegram stating that the armistice between Austria-Hungary and the Entente was forcing Germany to guard its borders by sending troops into northern Tyrol. At the same time, these troops would help ensure that the withdrawal of the former Aus-Hung. Southwestern armies to the east took place in orderly fashion, avoiding anarchy. In the same night two regiments from II Bavarian Corps arrived by train; IR # 9 went to Innsbruck while IR # 4 proceeded through Salzburg to Bad Gastein. The AOK was compelled to protest this intervention, since the armistice terms required all German troops to leave Austria-Hungary within 14 days. The national councils of Tyrol and Salzburg also expressed reservations. GdA Krafft acknowledged these statements, but didn't change his orders. On the 6th the Bavarian IR 9 deployed at the Brenner Pass and on the 7th they occupied Franzensfeste and the Jaufen Pass. The remainder of 4 Bav ID, with the HQ, stayed at Innsbruck, except for IR 5 which was in reserve at Garmisch. But the outbreak of revolution in Munich compelled the Bavarians to return home, putting a quick end to their occupation of northern Tyrol and Salzburg. GdA Krafft's troops began to evacuate the high mountain passes on 8 November. Italian detachments occupied Franzensfeste, Brixen and Toblach on the 11th. In the morning of the next day (the 12th), the last Bavarian soldiers left Innsbruck and in the afternoon the Italians entered the city so they could secure northern Tyrol.

The end of FM Boroevic's Army Group

The troops of the Belluno Armeegruppe withdrew through the

689Werkmann, p. 350

Dolomites into the Puster valley and those of 6th Army who'd escaped captivity withdrew through Pontafel and the Predil Pass into the valleys of the Gail and upper Drava rivers. All of the territory as far as Villach had been plundered, compelling the Belluno Armeegruppe HQ two days after the armistice to ask the Italian authorities for food. When the regiments did find magazines which still contained rations they had to seize them by force from escaped prisoners or bands of mutineers, and then to guard them with storm companies. Under the Belluno group, as under the other commands, tens of thousands of soldiers left their columns when they came near railroad stations, demanding transportation back home. "All the stations were packed, and all the roads full of cars and trucks, each loaded with men and gear. Supply depots were abandoned and if the contents couldn't be stolen they were often set on fire. Many of the local authorities and citizens joined in plundering the Army or their own neighbors. And a lively market developed for military equipment, in which the sellers often received much less than they'd expected. Everything was going at bargain prices."⁶⁹⁰

Nevertheless, hundreds of autos and thousands of wagons were abandoned on the streets or near the stations. Thousands and thousands of unclaimed horses wandered in the area around Villach, in the middle Drava valley, and in the upper Inn valley. Without grooming, shelter or fodder, they were left to die of hunger.

The marching columns of the Isonzo Army moved slowly into the Isonzo valley, since the soldiers were completely exhausted after being harassed by Italian cavalry up to the last hour of the war. There were enormous explosions as ammunition depots were set on fire. The landscape, full of guns that had been deserted along with their shells and countless abandoned wagons (some with teams of horses still attached), presented a dismal picture. As the troops passed through villages they were sometimes fired upon by the inhabitants. At the bridges over the Isonzo the Slovene National Guards were stationed; having been joined by some deserters, they tried to disarm the soldiers. The divisions of GM Wurm's Army plunged into this hubbub of chaos and robbery along the river as they marched through Monfalcone and Gradisca, through the plundered town of Cormons and through Görz where the Slovenes and Italians were wildly rejoicing. Here the streams of troops branched off. The majority of the Army withdrew along the Wippach through Heidenschaft into the Laibach basin. Other columns took the route up the Isonzo through Canale so they could get through the mountains of upper Carniola to Bischofslack. The

⁶⁹⁰Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", p. 423

men suffered from exposure, cold and hunger along the way.

In the second week of November the masses of the Southwestern armies reached the valleys of the upper Inn, the Rienz, the upper Drava and Gail, and the basins of Villach and Laibach. After entering the Puster valley from the Dolomites the Belluno Armee-gruppe was dissolved and its troops placed under 6th Army until they could be sent home.

The last common War Minister of the old and now broken Habsburg Monarchy, GO Stöger-Steiner, had meanwhile prepared the order for the demobilization of the Army; he presented it to the Emperor after the conclusion of the armistice (on 5 November). The order, issued by Emperor Charles from Schönbrunn on the 6th, stated: "To comply with the pertinent armistice conditions, and in accordance with the national defense laws, I order the demobilization of the entire armed forces and the dissolution of the Landsturm. During demobilization the existing forces are to be reduced to a maximum of 20 divisions, maintained at the peacetime strength levels in effect prior to the war."

This was the final order issued to the armed forces of Austria-Hungary, which had ceased to exist. The field troops, most of whom had already been divided into national contingents, were returning to their homelands with great speed. But, as we've already narrated, few trains were available to transport the troops because the borders of the new national states were being barricaded. This was still causing disturbances. Mass movement finally started on 6 November thanks to an agreement between the successor states. Each day 140,000 men left the Southwestern areas on 14 trains from Innsbruck, 18 from Villach and Klagenfurt, and 32 from Laibach. This enormous movement lasted until the middle of November. About 460,000 men returned to their homes in the Alpine and coastal provinces by foot. But there were also some Hungarian units which marched to their homeland - still armed and in orderly columns - through Carniola, Carinthia and Styria.

On 6 November the high command ordered that before the troops boarded the trains for home they were to hand over their weapons at the stations to representatives of their respective national councils; however, only a small number of men even received this order. The AOK, which a short time previously had been such a powerful and important HQ but now was already greatly shrunken in size, moved from Baden to Vienna. From here they tried to oversee the dismantling of the fronts and field armies. The HQ of FM Boroevic's Army Group ceased functioning on 8 November,

followed on the 11th by FM Krobatin's Army Group HQ and 10th Army HQ at Innsbruck, on the 14th by Isonzo Army HQ at Laibach, and on the 18th by 6 Army HQ at Klagenfurt. 11th Army HQ, which meanwhile moved to Innsbruck, continued to work until 17 November until they also were dissolved.

Such was the end of the Southwestern armies, which in 1918 made up Austria-Hungary's principal military force. The soldiers who'd done their best on the Karst and on the Alpine peaks and glaciers, as well as on the Isonzo and the Piave, received no thanks from the new homelands which arose out of the wreckage of the Monarchy.

F. The last weeks of the war on other fronts

1. The evacuation of Serbia

a. The enemy commanders' plans for an offensive

The disarmament and demobilization of the Bulgarian Army in the first days of October were completed more rapidly than expected.⁶⁹¹ This ended any danger that the Army of the Orient could still anticipate from the Bulgarian side. Substantial forces were now released for maneuvers aimed at new objectives; these were the troops of the 2nd Serbian Army which had been standing guard on the pre-war border between Egri Palanka and Carevoselo in case they needed to invade Bulgarian soil, the British and Greek divisions stationed farther south, and the main body of the French forces.

In fact General Franchet d'Esperey had been planning an offensive that would have rivaled the campaigns of Alexander the Great - through Budapest and Vienna to Berlin. However, for now he'd have to pursue more limited goals due to the unclear situation in the Balkans, insufficient intelligence about the opposing forces, and the scanty transportation and logistical resources of the area.⁶⁹² And so on 4 October Franchet d'Esperey decided that after Nish was captured he'd move the main body of his forces (17 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions) north on a broad front between the Drina and Danube, while guarding against thrusts from the

⁶⁹¹Deygas, "L'armée d'orient dans la guerre mondiale 1915-1919" (Paris, 1932), p. 280

⁶⁹²Larcher, pp. 41 and 268 plus Appendix 3. French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 371 and Document # 1457.

direction of either Romania or Turkey. Thus he would create a firm front in northern Serbia, where he could either thwart an eventual counterattack by the Central Powers or open his own offensive in the direction of Belgrade.⁶⁹³ The Serbs would remain responsible for securing their own homeland, and so the 2nd Serbian Army (three divisions) would thrust into the area west of that held by 1st Serbian Army. Although this plan entailed the difficult transfer of the 2nd Army from the eastern to the western wing of the Entente forces, it was necessary so as to avoid unpleasant consequences which were feared if Serbian troops crossed the border into Bulgaria. The French Army of the Orient (eight divisions) would operate to the east of the 1st Serbian Army; along with the English contingent (three divisions) on their right wing they would advance along the line Sofia - Lom Palanka. To secure this offensive on the Danube against any interference from the east, a French division would occupy the Danube harbors and the railheads at Samovit, Sistov and Rustchuk, while an English brigade occupied the harbors of Varna and Burgas on the Black Sea and then Pazardzik. Finally an Anglo-French corps was to secure the railroad between Dedeagac and Adrianople. For now the protection of the western flank (in the direction of Albania) was entrusted to the French 57 ID. Two French divisions in Bulgaria and a Greek corps in eastern Macedonia would constitute the strategic reserve.

Some of these troop movements had already begun when the supreme military council of the allied powers at Paris issued wider-ranging goals to the Army of the Orient on 7 October.⁶⁹⁴ War was now to be waged along the Aus-Hung. borders, in Romania and finally in southern Russia. For this purpose, Serbia would first be freed, Bulgaria occupied, and a front established from the Adriatic coast through Serbia and along the Danube down to the Black Sea. Turkey would be isolated and, if possible, forced to make peace. After these tasks were accomplished the offensive would continue through Romania and into Russia so that an Eastern front against the Central Powers could once more be created.

In orders issued on 10, 12 and 18 October General Franchet d'Esperey took account of the latest instructions from Paris, and also of the fact that analysis of the transportation lines indicated that the original deployment plan would have to be modified anyway.⁶⁹⁵ The offensive into northern Serbia to

693French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 369

694French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 415, and Documents # 1378, 1380 and 1381

695*Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, pp. 372, 374 and 417. See also

complete the liberation of the country would now be carried out only by Serbian and French forces; after Serbia was recovered a defensive front would temporarily be set up along the Sava and Danube Rivers. To shield the western wing, the recovery of Montenegro would proceed hand in hand with that of Serbia. Strong Serbian forces were to be sent from Mitrovica through Ipek, Podgorica and Cetinje to Cattaro, and a weaker column from Tirana through Alessio and Scutari to Antivari. In particular Franchet d'Esperey ordered General Henrys, the leader of the French Orient Army, to have his right wing thrust to the Danube as quickly as possible so as to cut off their opponents' considerable shipping traffic on the river.⁶⁹⁶ G.Lt Milne's British army, reinforced by a French infantry division and a Greek corps, were to open the Dardanelles; this would permit the naval forces to carry out a direct blow against Constantinople and force Turkey to capitulate.⁶⁹⁷ To initiate the operation against the Turkish capital, Milne would first secure the crossing points over the lower Marica at Adrianople. The occupation of Bulgaria was already in progress; for the later thrust into Romania Franchet d'Esperey intended to employ three or four divisions.

The commanders of the sub-armies made their dispositions based on these orders from Franchet d'Esperey. Voivode Bojovic, commanding the 1st Serbian Army, would halt his divisions on the line Krusevac-Aleksinac after the capture of Nish, allowing them several days of rest after their prolonged actions and marches. Only the Cavalry Division, supported by several infantry battalions, would thrust forward on both sides of the Morava to reconnoiter the opposing positions. Then on 18 October, Bojovic ordered, his Army would resume their advance north along a broad front on both sides of the Morava without waiting to link up directly with their neighbors. The Morava ID would attack through Parcin and Cuprija, and the Drina ID through Krusevac toward Kragujevac; the Dunava ID would follow them as a reserve, concentrated in the Morava valley. Jouinot-Gambetta's French Cavalry Brigade were to reach Negotin, with a side column advancing to Dl. Milanovac. The Serbian Cavalry Division would scout in front of 1st Serbian Army and send a regiment to Kraljevo.⁶⁹⁸

Ratzenhofer, "Der Stoss aus Saloniki - Abwehrmassnahmen" (in 'Militär-Wochenblatt', Berlin [1930, Issues # 11 and 12]).

⁶⁹⁶French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part; p. 451 and Documents # 1429, 1455, 1541 and 1543.

⁶⁹⁷Ibid., Vol. VIII, 3rd Part; p. 451 and Document # 145. English Official History, "Macedonia", p. 262

In mid-October the French Orient Army were still spread over a wide area. The 2nd Divisional Group (17 Col and 76 ID) had already reached the Kjustendil area, while the rearmost units were still far behind in southern Macedonia. Therefore General Henrys envisioned using the most advanced troops (2nd Divisional Group) as a vanguard for his main body, which were to reach the Danube to the east of the Serbs. But their first mission was to guard the eastern wing of 1st Serbian Army toward the north and northeast and to interrupt the ship traffic on the Danube.⁶⁹⁹ For this purpose the 17 Col ID would advance to Pirot while 76 ID sent forward a regiment plus artillery to Lom Palanka and Vidin. Tranié's detachment of the 2nd Divisional Group (a brigade of 11 Col ID plus a Greek infantry division) were at this time marching from Pristina to Kursumlja. Because the roads were so crowded, for now General Henrys didn't put the other troops of his army in motion except for French 30 ID which he sent through Kjustendil to occupy the Danube harbors.

Similarly, in mid-October Voivode Stepanovic's 2nd Serbian Army were still hanging back, far behind the western wing of the other Serbian army. On 16 October the 2nd Army, after their difficult transfer from the eastern to the western wing, were finally advancing from the Skopje-Veles area, with the Yugoslav ID moving north and northwest in the Ibar valley. They were supposed to make every effort to draw even with the 1st Serbian Army. A regiment of the Yugoslav ID were instructed to advance from Mitrovica through Ipek and Podgorica to Scutari.

British G.Lt Milne was told to move his troops by train or ship to the lower Marica. The Greek supreme command were to re-occupy the eastern part of Macedonia, which had belonged to Greece since 1913.

Some time would commence before all of this wide-ranging plan would come to fruition, since most of the allied divisions were far from the areas where they would deploy and from their objectives. And the logistical situation was difficult. The only serious fighting in the immediate future was expected in Serbia, where the two sides were near each other. Here the Serbian armies were determined to liberate their home territory, and finding many helpers among the population. Including some French formations, their total strength was 9½ infantry and 2 cavalry divisions. Their opponents were 6 weakened, burnt-out and overworked divisions of the Central Powers.

698French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Party; Documents # 1523 and 1534.

699*Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, Document # 1475

b. FM Kövess decides to retreat

Kövess' Army Group HQ were confronting very difficult decisions in mid-October. The leading elements of the reinforcements were approaching the Sava and the Danube; the first troops of the k.u.k. 59 ID and 4 CD were expected to reach Belgrade on 19 October, when parts of k.u.k. 32 ID would reach Slav. Brod. The deployment of these divisions would depend on whether GdI Steuben's 11th German Army were able to remain on Serbian soil south of the Danube. In this case - which was what Army Group HQ was hoping for - all three divisions would secure and exploit the success of 11th Army. Otherwise the k.u.k. 32 ID and presumably further reinforcements would have to deploy in Bosnia to protect the province's inadequately-garrisoned eastern border. It was essential to cover the area on the lower Drina because it connected Bosnia with the rest of the Monarchy. It was questionable whether the AOK were correct in their calculation that 32 ID, with only three regiments, would be sufficient to guard the 200 km stretch of the Drina between Visegrad and the river's junction with the Sava. Currently it was garrisoned by just two detachments, each consisting of one officer and 50 men. If 11th Army did retreat over the Danube and the Sava it was also doubtful that all or part of the k.u.k. 30 ID would be able to withdraw through Valjevo to the upper Drina. GO Sarkotic, the commanding general at Sarajevo, estimated that two divisions were needed to cover the entire boundary area between Kamenica (30 km north of Visegrad) and the Drina-Sava confluence.⁷⁰⁰

Analysis of the situation by the Army and Army Group HQ

Before making a decision, on 16 October the Army Group HQ requested the opinion of 11th Army HQ. The latter believed that in the present circumstances the Army could hardly withstand a serious attack. They had just 13,000 riflemen to guard a front of 170 km between Cacak and Zajecar. For the foreseeable future the k.u.k. 9 ID wouldn't be ready for combat; 6 Res ID, still being formed, had three weak battalions and three batteries ready. On the other hand the enemy, who were powerfully supported by the local population, had a total of nine strong infantry and two cavalry divisions. Opposite the center of the German Army were the 4 divisions of 1st Serbian Army (3 infantry, 1 cavalry), with another division probably coming up toward Nish. On the western wing a French unit (apparently 11 Col ID) was

700Konopicky (unpublished manuscript)

advancing southwest of Krusevac. According to intelligence reports, on the eastern wing was a French cavalry division followed by the 2nd Serbian Army and two more French units (17 Col and 76 ID). The leading troops of 2nd Serbian Army - the Yugoslav ID - had allegedly already reached Pirot. The location of three French and one Italian divisions was uncertain. The allies' numerical superiority allowed them to concentrate their forces at any point they chose and then to burst through our thinly-occupied positions.

Therefore GdI Steuben intended for now to avoid any major fighting. He would "hold the current position for as long as possible" and when necessary "withdraw in stages toward the Danube-Sava line." Determined resistance could be offered on the line Cacak-Paracin, then on the line Cacak - Kragujevac - Morava valley - Petrovac - Grn. Milanovac - Palanka - Pozarevac. Later, perhaps near Belgrade, it might be possible to strike a blow against the Serbs. But for this purpose the bridgehead at Belgrade and the bridges there must be held under all circumstances. Retention of the Serbian capital would also provide "a powerful shield for Bosnia and Herzegovina", since it would certainly tie down substantial enemy forces.

On 17 October FM Kövess, informed of the opinions of the Army commander, assigned him the Aus-Hung. 59 ID, which was coming by rail from Ukraine and would detrain in the Jagodina-Cuprija-Paracin area. After this new force arrived the burnt-out 9 ID could be moved to the area south of Belgrade to rebuild. Here 9 ID would be joined later by 4 CD (also coming from Ukraine); they'd both be placed under the HQ of FZM Habermann's XI k.u.k. Corps (which arrived in the Serbian capital on the 18th), and provide a reserve for the Army Group in the Belgrade bridgehead.

But protection of the Bosnian borders wasn't the only serious concern of Kövess' Army Group HQ; they also needed to secure the Danube outside of the immediate area commanded by the German 11th Army (between the mouth of the Morava and the Romanian border, where the territory under Mackensen's control started). The Hungarian counties north of the Danube had no protection. South of the Danube the only units available to guard ship traffic on a stretch of about 200 km of river were two battalions under the Temesvar [VII] Military District, with 900 riflemen. Special concern was expressed for the railroad line to Romania which ran directly along the bank of the Danube between Orsova and Turnu-Severin, since strong enemy forces were approaching through Zajecar. Neither the Temesvar Military District nor Mackensen's command could spare any troops to guard this line, so Kövess'

Army Group detached UR # 13 (which was moving by train through Temesvar) and two batteries of the k.u.k. 4 CD which were already at Belgrade; they intended that these units would protect the bend in the Danube at Orsova and Turnu-Severin by occupying the southern bank between Dl. Milanovac and Brza Palanka. Army Group HQ counted on assistance here from the k.u.k. Danube Flotilla, whose main body (the 1st Monitor Division under Korvetten-Kapitän Wulff) had since 15 October been guarding the crossing of German troops to the Romanian side of the river; on the 17th Wulff's Division began their upstream voyage to Turnu-Severin, where all available vessels were to assemble.

The enemy approaches

In this period (16 to 19 October) there were only skirmishes with cavalry patrols or partisans along 11th Army's front. Thrusts by isolated Serbian battalions on both sides of the Morava were easily repulsed, and the front seemed to be solid. But reconnaissance reports on the 19th, both on land and from the air, indicated that strong enemy columns were approaching on both sides of the Morava. It seemed that a major offensive against the Alpenkorps and the German 219 ID was imminent. Now the question confronting Kövess' Army Group HQ was where and how Steuben's Army should react. The main mission of 11th Army and of the approaching reinforcements was still to protect the borders of the Monarchy (including northeastern Bosnia). For this purpose the divisions would have to be kept as strong as possible. In their present positions they could delay the enemy for one or two days, but on the other hand there was a danger that defeat could damage the Army's cohesion.

While analyzing the situation, on 20 October Army Group HQ again contacted 11th Army HQ and asked them to state their opinion "without pessimism." Nothing had happened since the 16th that would cause Army HQ to revise their analysis of that date. They couldn't count on the k.u.k. 59 ID, whose arrival had been greatly delayed on the railroads. The first battalion of this Division - FJB # 3 which was recruited around Pancsova - did arrive at Jagodina on the 19th; however, the Jaeger refused to march toward the enemy, starting that they would only fight within Hungary. The Battalion was sent back through Belgrade to Semlin so as to avoid an armed clash between Aus-Hung. troops on enemy soil.⁷⁰¹ The withdrawal of the k.u.k. 9 ID to the area south of Belgrade had already started. GdI Steuben was watching the situation on his Army's open eastern flank with concern, even though 6 Res ID were marching on 20 October into the area

⁷⁰¹Szende, pp. 48 ff.

southeast of Petrovac where they could support that wing. Thus the reply of 11th Army HQ to the Army Group was the same on the 21st as it had been on 16 October. The Army commander GdI Steuben felt "it would be correct to withdraw in stages behind the Sava-Danube line."

Army Group HQ couldn't disagree that there were weighty reasons why the defenders should retreat behind the mighty river barriers. The riflemen of Steuben's Army seemed to be outnumbered 2:1 by those of the enemy. At most the infantry strength of 11th Army was just 14,000 and that of the enemy forces on the Morava battlefield was estimated to be at least 28,000. Behind the long, thin front there were no strong reserves which could oppose an enemy penetration. Arrival of the k.u.k. 59 ID wouldn't be complete for another 14 days, and at the time there was no idea how long it would take the k.u.k. 4 CD to arrive. The spirit and battle-worthiness of the reinforcements coming from the East seemed to have suffered under the influence of Bolshevik ideas. Their uniforms and equipment were "objects of derision." The ever-stronger activity of partisans on the Army's flanks and rear were gradually sapping the Army's resilience. The lines of communications were always being broken, and surprise assaults on small detachments or columns of wagons were an everyday occurrence. Many brave soldiers had been ambushed and shot while carrying messages among unseen enemies. Under these difficult conditions it seemed best to have the German 11th Army avoid a decisive battle in the positions behind the Morava, since if they were defeated they might not be able to conduct an orderly retreat behind the Danube.

The decision to withdraw to the Danube-Sava line

Therefore FM Kövess, who'd been given "complete freedom of decision" by the k.u.k. high command, resolved on 21 October to conduct the defense of the Monarchy behind the border rivers - the Danube, Sava and Drina. To gain time to evacuate the most valuable goods and to prepare the defenses, the retreat was to be carried out in stages and only when forced to continue by enemy pressure. Since the start of October the k.u.k. Military Government had been dismantling many of the installations and evacuating the accumulated supplies, since when the allied forces moved north the military administration of the abandoned territories would come to an end.⁷⁰²

Despite his decision to retreat, FM Kövess privately hoped that conditions would still allow him to offer prolonged resistance

702Kerchnawe, "Die Militärverwaltung", pp. 264 ff.

south of the Danube. Therefore every opportunity would be evaluated to see if the troops could halt for a considerable period or if a general counterattack could develop. The withdrawal would be strictly controlled so that the troops wouldn't get the impression that they were being beaten by an overwhelming enemy. 11th Army HQ would decide when to retreat; they were advised on the 21st "to avoid a decisive battle" on the line they presently occupied.

The higher-level HQ now made every effort to ensure that the troops of the Central Powers, beginning on the left wing of the Army Group, would have as many routes as possible to leave Serbia by crossing the border rivers. There was one large ferry apiece at Dubravica, Semendria, Pancsova, Zabrez and Sabac; each was capable of transporting in one trip either 3 battalions of infantry or 1½ batteries or 26 wagons each drawn by two horses. At Belgrade were three ferries, each with the same capacity. Another crossing point had been set up at Janja to reflect the local conditions there. Finally, there was still a great bridge of boats and a railroad bridge at Belgrade plus a military bridge at Kupinovo. The German LXI Corps HQ, as the "Danube Staff", were entrusted with preparing all the details for the river crossings. 11th Army ordered that LIII Corps (217 and 219 ID) would withdraw through Dubravica, Semendria and Pancsova; XXXIX Res Corps (the Alpenkorps and k.u.k. 59 ID) through Belgrade, Zabrez and Kupinovo, and the k.u.k. 30 ID through Sabac and Janja. Prior to these full divisions, the 6 Res ID and then the smaller units and columns directly under Army HQ were to cross the Danube and the Sava.

Also the evacuation of the large stocks of supplies and the valuable river vessels⁷⁰³ should proceed without delay. And so on 22 October the order was issued to completely evacuate the Sava and Tisza Rivers and to tow away the docking installations at Neusatz.

The decision to actually start the retreat was already taken on the battlefield on 21 October. Fighting had broken out on the fronts of the Alpenkorps and of 219 ID on the 20th. On 20 and 21 October the Serbs made several thrusts in considerable strength against the positions on the high ground of the Bukovik and on the forested slopes of the Drenova glava south of the confluence of the Western and Southern Morava Rivers. On the second day of fighting they gained a limited local success on the Bukovik. But

703At the end of September there were 1162 vessels on the Sava and on the Danube between Neusatz (Ujvidek) and Sulina.
(Wulff, pp. 183 and 220)

the Bavarians of the Alpenkorps still blocked the important entrance to the ancient highway in the valley of the (combined) Morava River with their determined resistance.⁷⁰⁴ Thus far only patrol and partisan actions had developed on the Army's wings. There was every indication that the enemy attack would continue on 22 October.

It was doubtful that 219 ID would be able to withstand the imminent attack by a larger enemy force. Since furthermore the preparations for a withdrawal to the next position were finished on 21 October, Army HQ felt that the time had come to break off the battle. They intended to pull the troops back to Cacak, to the heights 20 km south and southeast of Kragujevac, to Paracin and to the northern bank of the Crnica; here they could renew their resistance.

704 "Das deutsche Alpenkorps im Westen und Rückmarsch in Serbien" (Munich, 1926), pp. 67 ff. "Das Königlich Bayerische Infanterie-Leibregiment im Weltkrieg 1914-1918" (Munich, 1931), pp. 441 ff.

Dis-engagement from the enemy would take place in the night of 21-22 October, and the new positions occupied on the 24th. But once the withdrawal started, it wouldn't in fact be possible to halt it anywhere on Serbian soil.

c. Defensive actions in the Kragujevac-Paracin area, 24 to 26 October

By early on 24 October the troops of 11th German Army, almost undisturbed by the enemy, had occupied their assigned positions which stretched in a wide arc from the west to the southeast around Kragujevac. The extreme right wing was still secured by Lt Col. Zsivanovits' detachment (six companies formerly of the Serbian garrison) near Cacak. The two brigades of GM Phleps' k.u.k. 30 ID held a line of heights north of and running parallel to the Western Morava, as far as the Jasenova gl. [glava].⁷⁰⁵ The next unit in line was Col. Klemm's detachment (two battalions of the former Streif Regt "Serbien") which had been placed under the German Alpenkorps; the Alpenkorps blocked the Krusevac-Kragujevac road and held the territory as far as the (combined) Morava River. East of the river the heights were guarded by the German 219 ID (near Paracin) and 217 ID (on the northern bank of the Crnica). As previously, 6 Res ID protected the Army's left flank from a rearward position in the Petrovac area.

The great length of the Army's front and the reduced size of its components made it necessary to employ all units in the foremost line. The concerns of the leadership were increased by new cases of insubordination among some of the Aus-Hung. troops, most recently within the Bukovina FJB 27 (under 30 ID) at Kragujevac. And on 23 October the second unit of 59 ID had arrived by train at Cuprija but refused to follow orders; the men of this unit (I Battalion of IR 41 - also from Bukovina), like FJB 3 earlier, stated that they would only fight in Hungary, not Serbia. The 11th Army commander therefore placed 59 ID, which was supposed to be his reserve, back under the authority of the Army Group. FM Kövess now halted the remaining trains carrying the Division at Semlin; he brought all its troops to Batajnica north of the Sava,

705 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: I have corrected the text here based on the map (Beilage 36). The text has "Vk. Drenova" rather than "Jasenova gl.", but the map shows that Vk. Drenova was the junction point of 30 ID and the Alpenkorps in the old line which had just been evacuated. As of 24 October the two units came together at the Jasenova gl. (Presumably the map is correct.)

where they were assigned to XI Corps HQ as a reserve of the Army Group.

As noted earlier, the four rifle and two machine gun squadrons of the Galician UR 13, which arrived at Turnu-Severin on 21 October, had refused to be shipped to the southern bank of the Danube since "they belonged to Galicia and had no interest in fighting any further." When FM Kövess learned this he ordered the Uhlan regiments to be replaced by the next regiment of 4 CD to arrive, which was the Ruthenian DR 9.⁷⁰⁶ Two squadrons of the 9th Dragoons had already reached Belgrade, but the others were still in trains coming through Szegedin, about a day's travel distant. Thus for the time being it was impossible to count on 4 CD intervening in the area south of Belgrade. The leading battalions of 32 ID had arrived at Slav. Brod on 20 October, but this Division was earmarked to protect the eastern border of Bosnia. Thus FM Kövess and GdI Steuben had no reserves available for the upcoming actions in 11th Army's sector other than the badly-damaged 9 ID.

The commander of 1st Serbian Army anticipated stubborn resistance in the fighting south of Kragujevac and Paracin. Voivode Bojovic could expect no immediate help from 2nd Serbian Army, since the heads of their long columns were still advancing through Mitrovica as of 21 October. Therefore Bojovic asked the French Orient Army to threaten the eastern flank of his opponents by moving toward Svilajnac. This would involve the 2nd French Divisional Group, which was in advance of the other units. On 24 October the leading troops of 17 Col ID, who'd reached Zajecar the day before, were ordered to push ahead to Paracin; the Division's main body in the Pirot-Caribrod area would follow on 26 October. The majority of 76 French ID were to assemble around Zajecar on the 27th, so they could start advancing through Petrovac to Pozarevac on the 28th.⁷⁰⁷ Jouinot-Gambetta's Cavalry Brigade, which had ridden through Negotin to the Danube on 19 October, would interrupt the ship traffic on the river.

But meanwhile the divisions of 1st Serbian Army had sharply pursued the retreating troops of 11th German Army on and east of the Krusevac-Kragujevac road, as well as east of the Morava. The Morava ID, thrusting toward Paracin, were able to penetrate the

706 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually the composition of DR # 9 in 1918 was quite mixed. It was yet another unit from Bukovina (and from a slice of eastern Galicia) - the personnel were 34% Ruthenian, 28% Romanian, 22% German/Jewish and 10% Polish (see Plaschka, Vol. II, p. 344).

707 French Official History, Vol. VIII, 3rd Part, p. 456; also Documents # 1605, 1611, 1612 and 1630.

lines of German 219 ID and in places to gain footholds on the northern bank of the Crnica. The Drina ID deployed to attack opposite the inner wings of the Alpenkorps (Klemm's detachment) and of the Aus-Hung. 30 ID (60 Inf Bde). Thus at first the only serious fighting occurred in the center of Steuben's Army, around Paracin and on the road to Kragujevac; on the flanks there was merely some skirmishing against enemy detachments.

In stubborn actions the German 219 ID were able to repulse all the assaults and finally to throw the Serbs back behind the Crnica. In the first hours of the morning the Drina ID also began to attack on both sides of the road to Kragujevac, where the Alpenkorps stood fast. But at noon the right wing of Klemm's detachment and the neighboring 60 Inf Bde gave way to enemy pressure, so the Alpenkorps also had to withdraw to the north.

Thus a significant gap developed in the defenses of Steuben's Army. The Krusevac-Kragujevac road, the only line of retreat for the Alpenkorps, was greatly endangered and seemed about to fall to the Serbs. Enemy artillery began to fire upon the road at 4:00 PM. Under all circumstances it was necessary to keep the Serbs from pushing parts of the German 11th Army to the east with a victorious advance. Efforts were made to halt the retreat of 60 Inf Bde on a line of heights south of Kragujevac which still covered the road, but all were in vain. Therefore 11th Army HQ ordered a retreat to positions which ran through the narrow part of the Morava valley north of Kragujevac, saving the western wing of the Army from destruction.

Occupation of an intermediate line directly south of Kragujevac would make it possible for the Alpenkorps to withdraw through the city. By early on 25 October the k.u.k. 30 ID were able to occupy their new line of resistance. The group stationed on the wing by Cacak remained in place; 59 Inf Bde pivoted back to the Stolica Heights where they blocked the routes leading to Kragujevac from the southwest. 60 Inf Bde occupied the Strazara, next to Klemm's detachment on the east. The Alpenkorps took up a position on the heights southeast of Kragujevac. The units of LIII Corps (217 and 219 ID) broke off contact with the enemy during the night; untroubled by the enemy and covered by rear guards, they reached the area around Jagodina. 6 Res ID remained near Petrovac. New fighting soon raged around Kragujevac. The Serbs attacked the Strazara-Stolica sector around 10:00 AM. In the afternoon the defenders began to evacuate their positions. At the last moment they were able to temporarily establish defenses on the southern edge of Kragujevac; covered by this line the Alpenkorps and the eastern wing of 30 ID retreated through

the city in the night of 25-26 October. The divisions of the Army's eastern wing, which were only in loose contact with the enemy, planned to continue their march in the morning of the 26th.

Thus the battle of Steuben's Army was developing in a manner contrary to the hopes of Army Group HQ. Events seemed to be slipping out of control; the tempo of the retreat was no longer being determined by the leadership but by the enemy's actions on the battlefield. Army Group HQ believed that now was the last time that this trend could be halted. 11th Army had just two possibilities - either "to hurl [the enemy] back with a counter-attack" or to "flee" behind the Drina, the Sava and the Danube; any "middle" course would be difficult. A counterattack might be feasible because the Army was opposed by just three divisions; our opponents were weak in artillery and couldn't be in good shape after prolonged fighting and marching in pursuit. The poor roads must be interfering with the Serbs' supply services. But as 11th Army fell back its front was becoming longer and hence thinner, so any counter-thrust would have to be initiated without delay. On the other hand, if there was to be no assault on our part it would be best to immediately complete the retreat in one bound so we could break contact with the enemy and systematically bring the troops and equipment over the great river barriers.

Thus 11th Army HQ were being asked for a third time to take a position on this very significant question. On 26 October they once more decided in favor of a wide-ranging retreat, just as they had on the 16th and 20th. They felt that the chances of staying for a prolonged period on Serbian soil were continuing to deteriorate. Army HQ estimated that they were faced by six rather than three enemy divisions. In addition to the three Serbian divisions (Drina, Morava and Danube) and the French 11 Col ID (whose leading elements were already intervening in the fighting near Kragujevac), Steuben's staff included yet another approaching French unit and a Greek division in their calculations. They erroneously believed that the foremost troops of the 2nd Serbian Army were at Zajecar - in fact the units there were French - and feared that this force could take the shortest possible route to the Danube through Pozarevac, posing a danger to the eastern flank of 11th Army. It was known that the French had reached the Danube near Negotin and Vidin. According to prisoners' statements, the spirit of the Serbs was very good; no one wanted to leave the colors until the homeland was completely liberated. From day to day the local population was joining the battle with greater fervor. Strong bands of partisans were appearing on the wings and in the rear of the Army, especially to

the northwest of Cacak, requiring the implementation of strong counter-measures. Thus 1½ battalions were required to guard the railroad between Cacak and Lajkovac, and a battle group of 2000 riflemen had been brought together at Valjevo to at least partially suppress the guerillas. And 11th Army HQ could count on just the four divisions spread along the front, since 6 Res ID consisted of just six weak battalions with three batteries. There were no reserves.

Leaving the developments in Serbia aside, the general situation presented quite a dismal picture to Army Group HQ. Emperor Charles considered the domestic political crisis in Hungary very dangerous, which is why he ordered the change in the Army Group's command which we discussed earlier. Actually, however, Archduke Joseph never did arrive to succeed FM Kövess. Disturbances had broken out at many places in Croatia and Slavonia, and in some cases the garrisons had even joined the rebels. On 22 October the Zagreb [XIII] Military District HQ reported that the situation in the Croatian capital was "very grave"; they demanded two battalions with artillery to put down mutinies at Pozega.

The disintegration of the Monarchy and its effects in the interior and on the Southwestern front have already been described. The impact was also felt on the Balkan front, where soldiers who'd hitherto fought well throughout the war now became unreliable.

After weighing all these factors, it was clear that the troops could no longer be relied upon to continue the current battle. Therefore FM Kövess concurred with the opinion of 11th Army HQ and finally abandoned any thought of offering resistance on Serbian soil. All energies were now to be devoted to the task of bringing the forces of the Central Powers over the border rivers in good order and with minimal casualties. They would defend the Monarchy from behind the rivers.

d. The retreat behind the Danube and the Sava

On 26 October FM Kövess was preparing to defend the pre-war borders, which stretched 900 km from Orsova to the Adriatic at Cattaro. Counting the forces of General Obersten Sarkotic and Pflanzer-Baltin, he had available about 12 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions, all of them battle-weary and most of them weak in numbers. The units had already been affected by the latest political developments. Some of them were still on their way to the Balkans.

Planning for the final stand

Protection of Herzegovina, with the fortresses of Bileca, Trebinje and Cattaro, was entrusted to the Albania Armeegruppe, whose main body had reached Lake Scutari. To cover the eastern border of Bosnia the main body of 45 Sch Div had meanwhile arrived in the Rogatica-Sarajevo area, and about half of 32 ID were deployed in the Tuzla sector. FML von Bauer's 10 CD, which had come from the Italian front, were assembling around Brcka along with FAR 59; the last train transports were expected on 2 November. Temporarily held at the disposal of Army Group HQ, once complete the 10 CD would deploy on the lower Drina. 48 FA Bde had also been ordered to Bosnia; GO Sarkotic planned to divide the Bde to support all parts of the Tuzla sector.

As 11th Army retreated to the Janja-Dubravica border sector, they were supposed to keep the enemy from trying to cross the Sava-Danube river line between the mouth of the Drina and Vk.

Gradiste. For this purpose, GdI Steuben intended that the Sava would be guarded between the Drina and Semlin by the k.u.k. XI Corps (9 and 30 ID) and by XXXIX Res Corps (219 ID and the Alpenkorps). The Danube between Semlin and Vk. Gradiste would be guarded by LIII Corps (217 ID and 6 Res ID) and by a new "Weisskirchen" Group (half of UR 13, one battery and the mounted squadron of 4 CD plus Sturm Battalion 59) under GM Lubenski, the commander of the k.u.k. 4 CD. From Vk. Gradiste down to the Romanian border the Temesvar [VII] Military District would watch the river with the second half of UR 13, a battery from 4 CD, and special detachments. The other troops of 4 CD, now still entrained, would eventually deploy along the Danube near Weisskirchen. 59 ID would assemble behind the Sava in the area west of Irig. Mackensen's command would shift units to the southern bank of the Danube between Turnu-Severin and Orsova. As requested by the German OHL, the Aus-Hung. battalions currently stationed at the bend in the river were to be relieved by a German division as soon as 11th Army reached the northern bank.

For a mixture of military and political reasons, the k.u.k. AOK were also assigning 27 and 15 ID to Kövess' Army Group. 27 ID were supposed to leave Tyrol after the movement of 10 CD; it was estimated that the Division's first troops would arrive around 7 November. 15 ID from Ukraine would join the Army Group between 3 and 21 November. Both divisions would back up the Sava line. Furthermore the AOK would recall 5 Hon CD from Ukraine; its movement could start around mid-November. Eventually the 16 and 53 ID plus 145 Inf Bde and 2 CD might also join the new Southern

front, but there was no schedule for transporting these final units.

FM Kövess wanted to be sure of the valuable assistance of the Danube Flotilla, which currently were guarding the Danube near Turnu-Severin in Mackensen's sector with three monitors and five patrol boats. Therefore he had the AOK give him command of all elements of the Flotilla. He ordered them to steam to Dubravica, where on 28 October they could protect the eastern wing of 11th Army against enemy interference during the river crossing.

While the border defenses were being prepared everywhere in Bosnia and southern Hungary, Steuben's Army in Serbia moved back toward the Drina, Sava and Danube; they were to cross the rivers between Janja and Dubravica. On 26 October the Army HQ had given up their plan of the day before to offer lengthy resistance on the line from the heights northwest of Grn. Milanovac through Palanka to Pozarevac; they issued orders to retreat to and over the great rivers. 6 Res ID, making up the Army's left wing, were two days' long marches from the easternmost crossing point at Dubravica. The k.u.k. 30 ID on the right (western) wing were six to eight day's marches away from their intended crossing points at Sabac and Janja. Therefore the retreat had to develop in echelon, starting on the eastern wing. It could start on 28 October and finish on 2 November. The units near the enemy would have to undertake long marches to cross over in time. Since the course of the fighting couldn't be predicted, the lines of retreat and the specific crossing points for the various units were only sketched in outline; the marching goals would be set on a daily basis. Rear guards would prevent the enemy from pursuing, and detachments would guard the bridgeheads while the rivers were crossed. The Danube Flotilla would protect the Army's eastern flank.

In general the 11th Army were able to follow the evacuation plan they'd already developed in outline. The only changes were required because FZM Habermann's k.u.k. XI Corps had just been placed under 11th Army. This corps' 59 ID were already north of the Danube and 9 ID could easily reach the river from their quarters south of Belgrade. Therefore on the 28th the 9 ID would leave Serbia at Belgrade while 6 Res ID did so at Dubravica. In the next two days the 217 ID would cross the Danube at Semendria, with some elements at Pancsova. The Division's line of retreat was the road through Kusiljevo and Vuk. Plana. 219 ID would withdraw through Markovac, Topola and Ralja to Belgrade, where they'd cross the river on 31 October. The Alpenkorps were to retreat through Arangjelovac and Mecak, then use the crossing

points at Belgrade, Kupinovo and Zabrez on 31 October and 1 November. The k.u.k. 30 ID, whose route led through Lazarevac, would have their main body cross the border rivers on 3 November at Sabac while three battalions and two batteries crossed at Janja. All units not belonging to 11th Army were to evacuate Belgrade by 30 October at the latest.

26-28 October

In the morning of 26 October the Alpenkorps were stationed on the heights directly northwest of Kragujevac, astride the road to Topola. Farther southwest the Aus-Hung. 30 ID were guarding the road which led from the Kragujevac-Cacak area to Rudnik, along a front that was 46 km broad. 60 Inf Bde made up the Division's left wing, with their main body near Kutlovo plus forward outposts which linked up with those of the Alpenkorps. Then to the west the 59 Inf Bde were deployed and finally the detachment of Lt Col. Swietochowski (formerly led by Zsivanovits), which held the heights north of Cacak. In order to protect the withdrawal of 219 ID of the neighboring corps, the Alpenkorps and 30 ID weren't supposed to evacuate their own positions until 3:00 PM. The troops of LIII Corps and of 6 Res ID had started to withdraw from Jagodina and the area farther east in the morning, covered by rear guards - 219 ID through Markovac to the vicinity of Raca and Saranovo, 217 ID to Kusiljevo and Svilajnac, and 6 Res ID to Rasanc and Petrovac. The three divisions weren't troubled by the enemy and reached their day's goals without fighting.

In the Army's western half, the troops of XXXIX Res Corps were in loose contact with the enemy during the morning. The Alpenkorps were able to reach Cumic despite some light skirmishing; the k.u.k. 60 Inf Bde experienced heavier fighting on the Kragujevac-Rudnik road. Here parts of the Drina ID broke through the rear guards of 60th Brigade around noon. The brigadier, Col. Edler von Wosatka, thereupon continued his march following the same direction as the Alpenkorps since the route toward the right flank and his own Division seemed too risky due to lively partisan activity and the approach of the regular enemy troops. When the 60 Inf Bde came to Petrovac at 3:00 AM on 27 October they had to take up a position south of the village to keep the Serbs from advancing any further during the day; thus the Brigade enabled the Alpenkorps and 219 ID to pass through Topola without interference. During strenuous marches and frequent partisan assaults the 59 Inf Bde and Swietochowski's group meanwhile reached the area around Gr. Milanovac in the night of 26-27 October.

On 27 October the 6 Res ID moved on to Pozarevac - Lucica, 217 ID to Palanka - Vuk. Plana, 219 ID to Natalinci - Topola, the Alpenkorps to Topola - Arangjelovac, and the main body of 30 ID to Rudnik. Almost all these units, as well as 59 Inf Bde of 30 ID, marched to their night-time billets without seeing any action, since the enemy were hardly pushing forward at all. Once again the only fighting involved 60 Inf Bde and the western wing of the Alpenkorps, where in the afternoon the Serbs attacked the rear guards on both sides of the Kragujevac-Topola road. While the Alpenkorps held their lines, the k.u.k. Feld Jaeger Battalions 15 and 16 evacuated the positions south of Plaskovac without offering much resistance. IR 89 then fell upon the enemy north of the town and kept them from advancing any further.

Thus far the retreat of GM Phleps' 30 Aus-Hung. ID had been especially difficult. They marched in two columns separated by wide stretches of trackless, forested hills, mostly without any contact between each other or with the higher HQ. The troops, lacking food and equipment, hastened along the wretched mountain roads through an area that was in full revolt between Rudnik and Valjevo on the Kolubara. An estimated 4000 guerillas were in the vicinity. Because of the diminished strength of the troops, on 27 October the divisional HQ reported that it was "completely impossible" to reach Janja on time. This made it questionable whether the whole Division could get to Sabac, and therefore Army HQ ordered them to use the crossing points at Zabrez and Kupinovo as well as Sabac. The Alpenkorps would move in their entirety to Belgrade, leaving the route through Zabrez and Kupinovo open to 30 ID.

On 28 October the k.u.k. 9 ID used the railroad and highway bridges to cross the Sava near Belgrade; they proceeded to their assigned positions in the sector between Klenak and the mouth of the Kolubara, which they reached on the 30th. Army Group HQ pulled back to Neusatz and XI Corps HQ to Ruma. The withdrawal of the other divisions and their river crossing proceeded according to plan despite the exhaustion of the soldiers after long marches over the bottomless roads through the pouring rain. 1st Serbian Army followed their retreating opponents on a broad front - the three infantry divisions in one line with the Cavalry Division on the right wing - in the direction of Belgrade. They were about one day's march behind 11th Army.

29 October to 2 November

On 29 October the 6 Res ID finished crossing the Danube by boat

at Dubravica, covered by the seven monitors, and deployed north of the river between Kevevara and Bazias. From 29 October to the afternoon of the 30th the main body of 217 ID were shipped across at Semendria and the rest at Pancsova, without incident. After three days of strenuous marching the leading troops of the Alpenkorps and 219 ID were 8 km south of Belgrade; on the next day, after another short march these units started to cross the rivers protected by the Danube monitors and by four battalions which held the bridgehead. The Emperor's order to hand over the Flotilla to the Hungarian government had already been issued.⁷⁰⁸ But the crews, made up primarily of Slavs and Magyars, still had spirit; they provided full support to their comrades of the land forces as the latter came over the rivers. Then the Flotilla, which lost the monitor *Bodrog* on 1 November, pulled back to Neusatz; several days later it steamed up to Budapest.⁷⁰⁹ Col. Klemm's detachment, which had marched back with the Alpenkorps, were shipped over near Pancsova where they took up defensive positions under LIII Corps on the northern bank opposite Belgrade. All the troops, including the last rear guards, had finished their movement by dawn on 1 November. Now the railroad and highway bridges to Belgrade were blown up, for the third time during the war. 219 ID deployed to guard the north bank of the Sava while the Alpenkorps took up quarters around Karlowitz.

Under the k.u.k. 30 ID the 60 Inf Bde, whose marching columns had merged with those of the Alpenkorps on 28 October, came through Arangjelovac to Progoreoci, while 59 Inf Bde reached Kalanjevci. In the evening of 29 October the entire 30 ID united west of the Kolubara in the area around and east of Lajkovac. During this march the Division's western flank had been covered by Swietochowski's group (which withdrew through Banjani to Lajkovac) and by two groups of garrison troops, each about a battalion strong, which the Serbian General Government deployed at Lajkovac and Valjevo.

The arrival of 10 CD was still delayed as of 29 October and thus the lower Drina was inadequately protected. Therefore FM Kövess once more urged that four or five battalions of 30 ID should march to this area, where they could cross the Drina at Janja. But once again the divisional commander GM Phleps couldn't go along with the wishes of the Field Marshal, because the effectiveness of his troops had greatly deteriorated by now; for

⁷⁰⁸When the ships were handed over the non-Hungarian citizens of the crews were simultaneously released to depart, which would have hampered the effectiveness of the vessels.

⁷⁰⁹Wulff, pp. 185 ff. *Bodrog* was stranded on the shore at Visnica.

30 October he instructed 60 Inf Bde with Swietochowski's group to withdraw to Obrenovac and Zabrez, and 59 Inf Bde with the covering group at Valjevo to withdraw to Sabac. At the end of the 30th the 60 Inf Bde camped for the last time on Serbian soil in the area around Stubline. On 31 October these troops crossed the Sava while a line of outposts stood guard on the heights south of Obrenovac; at Zabrez they were shipped over on boats and at Kupinovo they used the military bridge (which was broken up the next day). 59 Inf Bde, whose rear guards still had to endure a difficult action with a strong partisan force on the Kolubara, retreated on 31 October to within 10 km of Sabac; they camped for the night around Miokus and Svezd. The security forces at Valjevo were ambushed by guerillas in the city streets during the night of 29-30 October; after breaking through they covered the 54 kilometers back to Cerovac in one bound, pausing just twice for rest. They reached Cerovac by the evening of the 31st. The supply trains of 30 ID had already started to cross the Sava at Sabac on the 30th; withdrawal of the combat and support units of 59 Inf Bde and the Valjevo group was finished by midnight of 1-2 November. Only one detached company withdrew over the Drina at Janja. 30 ID now took up their assigned position between Klenak and the mouth of the Drina.

On 2 November there wasn't a single soldier of Kövess' Army Group left in Serbia. The retreat of 11th Army and the crossing of the mighty river barriers had been accomplished without any significant casualties or loss of equipment despite the unfavorable circumstances and all the difficulties. Most of the Aus-Hung. vessels had sailed or been towed up the Danube past Semlin by 1 November. The Aus-Hung. and German troops were now protected by wide streams that would be difficult for the enemy's Army of the Orient to cross.

Early on 1 November the advanced guards of Bojovic's Serbian Army had reached the line Bolec - Avala Heights - Obrenovac; in the morning the Dunava ID made a ceremonial entry into their capital city. The units of the 2nd French Divisional Group had never been engaged because of the rapid withdrawal of their opponents. While the forces of the Central Powers evacuated Serbia, the defenses on Bosnia-Herzegovina's eastern border were gradually being beefed up despite some problems. SchR 17 from 45 Sch Div would protect Herzegovina from enemy raids until the Albania Armeegruppe could assume this responsibility. The other troops of GM Meisel's 45 Sch Div - except for two battalions held at Sarajevo as GO Sarkotic's reserves - were assembled in the Rogatica defensive sector. On the Drina, FML Bellmond's 32 ID deployed with eight battalions at and east of Tuzla; the security

of the lower course of the Drina was left to HR 9 (of 10 CD) which was coming up through Bijeljina. The sector's artillery for the time being was made up of Hvy FAR 48 plus two batteries apiece from FAR 48 and FAR 59.

The enemy's regular troops still hadn't appeared along the frontier. Intelligence reports indicated that part of the Serbian forces were marching to Visegrad. On an almost daily basis the Aus-Hung. outposts and detachments on the border had to fend off enterprising partisans.

As of 1 November the 2nd Serbian Army had the Timok ID at Pozega and the Sumadija ID at Cacak. The parts of the Yugoslav ID which they'd sent to Montenegro had reached the towns of Podgorica, Scutari and Niksic. The Serbian forces had now been ordered by the allied commander-in-chief Franchet d'Esperey to establish a firm front along the Danube.

2. The disintegration of Kövess' Army Group

a. The end of the border defense against Serbia

While the troops of Steuben's Army were being led back from Serbia over the old borders of the Danube Monarchy, in the interior of the Habsburgs' realm the nationalities had meanwhile abandoned the idea of maintaining a common state. Kövess' Army Group thus lost any reason for continuing to carry out their duties.

The isolation of the forces in the Balkans

At the end of October the South Slavic movement destroyed the old bands that held the country together in Croatia, Slavonia and south Hungary, then finally in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Dalmatia. Political disturbances in the cities caused open rebellion in the countryside, where bands of armed deserters had long been a nuisance. Partisan groups from Serbia and Montenegro penetrated Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbo-Croatian propaganda affected the Aus-Hung. troops still assigned to the 11th German Army, the majority of whom were Slavs. The Hungarian railroad employees were driven out of Croatia and Slavonia, while the Hungarian government and Croatian national council blocked the rail lines leading to the neighboring territories and to the fronts. Therefore train travel to and within the territory occupied by Kövess' Army Group was soon crippled. The units coming as reinforcements, stuck in jammed rail traffic, broke apart; supplies of food and ammunition no longer arrived. Soon the Army Group HQ were also deprived of all communications with the outside world, cut off both from the high command at Baden and from their own troops. Telegraph and phone lines to GO Sarkotic at Sarajevo and to the Albania Armeegruppe had already all been cut in the last days of October; since 1 November it was even impossible to send radio messages. After the evening of 1 November the HQ could no longer communicate over the wires with Baden on a regular daily basis.⁷¹⁰

Thus the staff at Neusatz, relying solely on news reports and rumors, were completely unaware of the political situation. FM Kövess couldn't clarify his role *vis a vis* the new government administrations in Budapest and Zagreb. As we described earlier, GO Sarkotic resigned his position at Sarajevo on 1 November. GO Pflanzer-Baltin needed instructions for his Armeegruppe, which was completely isolated by the developing Yugoslav state that now also controlled the fleet. He reported his decision to continue retreating on 2 November to the line Cattaro-Avtovac. In the evening of 31 October the high command had stated that "because of the political situation it no longer seems necessary to hold onto the eastern border of Bosnia-Herzegovina" and "thus the new line of resistance will run only along the Sava and Danube." But this caused new confusion and concerns on FM Kövess' staff. What would happen to Dalmatia, which couldn't be held for long without Bosnia-Herzegovina? What about Mt Lovcen, which was essential for the defense of Cattaro?

Unrest increased among the troops, fed by the feeling that in

710Szende, pp. 96 ff.

their immediate homelands important events were unfolding in which they wanted to participate. On 29 October the Emperor's Military Chancellery, believing that the troops were still royalist, had requested that units should be asked for their opinion about the monarchical institution. In many cases this request was interpreted as a chance to vote for a new form of government, a subject upon which opinion was much more divided than the Chancellery imagined. For example, in 9 ID the Bohemian IR 91 were outspoken in their loyalty to the Supreme War Lord, but IR 30 refused to answer until they could learn more about the political situation in their east Galician homeland.

Preparations to defend the river line, still incomplete, began to fall apart on 1 November. As requested by the German OHL, the HQ and units of their 11th Army were removed from the control of FM Kövess' Army Group and placed under GFM Mackensen. The Alpenkorps were scheduled to leave for Bavaria on 3 November, while the other divisions would shift east to link up with Mackensen's forces in Wallachia. Thus the most effective units disappeared from the defenses along the Sava and Danube. FM Kövess could hardly plug the resultant gaps with the weak force which remained - two and a half infantry and parts of two cavalry divisions⁷¹¹; no further reinforcements arrived. On 2 November the HQ of XI Corps were ordered to relieve the 219 German ID on the Sava with several battalions and batteries, mainly from the k.u.k. 59 ID. For the time being Klemm's detachment and 4 CD remained under the German Army HQ. But because of the increasing political and military chaos, and the unruliness of the troops, FM Kövess secretly informed the Corps commander FZM Habermann that if the Sava-Danube line could no longer be held the 9, 30 and 59 ID were to be withdrawn from Slavonia to Hungarian soil along the Danube (between the mouths of the Drava and Tisza Rivers).

Just as they had for the Southwestern front, in October the high command had prepared an armistice commission for Kövess' Army

7119 and 30 ID plus the incomplete 59 ID; parts of 4 and 10 CD.

On 1 November FML Aust arrived with the first part of his 15 ID - the units belonging to the divisional staff; to FM Kövess he claimed that his regiments were reliable. However, a few hours later the General had to report that the personnel of the telegraph company and the staff platoon had already deserted. 15 ID's leading regiment - IR # 65, had crossed the border between Galicia and Hungary the day before near Körösmezö, but didn't proceed any further toward the Balkans; instead they headed for Miskolcz, from where they proceeded to their homes.

Group. After negotiations started with Italy, this commission (headed by GM Laxa), were waiting to contact the HQ of the Entente's Army of the Orient as they'd been instructed in the last orders received from Baden.

Interference from the Hungarian government

The Hungarian national council, completely under the influence of Karolyi's government, believed they would receive better treatment from the enemy if they portrayed themselves as a neutral state friendly to the Western Powers. To demonstrate their good intentions to the entire world, they wanted Hungarian troops on all fronts to lay down their arms while an armistice was requested from their opponents. In the afternoon of 1 November the War Minister Linder phoned Army Group HQ to inform them of this initiative but the Chief of Staff FML Konopicky refused to carry out Linder's instructions. As we narrated above, in the evening of the next day (the 2nd) Linder was able to get the AOK to release the order which he'd prepared to the entire armed forces. Meanwhile the contents of the order had already been reported from the radio station at Laaerberg near Vienna. Furthermore, Army Group HQ had again been advised by Budapest that "the Hungarian troops and eventually all non-Hungarian troops would stop fighting", and knew that armistice negotiations had been initiated in Italy. Therefore on 3 November FM Kövess sent two staff officers of Laxa's commission to Belgrade by ship.⁷¹²

GdI Weber had reported from Padua that the treaty he'd concluded was effective on all fronts, but the AOK at Baden didn't receive this information until noon on 3 November. Then they informed Minister Linder, who rejoined that the Hungarian government didn't recognize GdI Weber as their representative because of the independence of Hungary, which was also acknowledged by the King. However, his government were willing to let the General "temporarily" represent the interests of Hungary "only because of the pressure of events and because we don't want to be guilty of delaying the conclusion of the armistice."⁷¹³ When Weber learned of this through a radio message, he'd already signed the treaty.

As Army Group HQ later reported, Minister Linder's instructions to stop fighting, transmitted in an open (non-encoded) broadcast, caused "extraordinary convulsions" among the troops; "discipline was broken and every man believed he could do as he pleased." Leaderless soldiers, deserters, and men on their way home filled the lines of communication and the cities where the commanders and their staffs were situated; the officers had lost their power. Newly-constituted revolutionary groups took over the outlying towns. On 3 November the Army Group's HQ left Neusatz,

712Arz, "Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges", p. 373

713Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", p 151. However, a Honved staff officer had been part of GdI Weber's armistice commission.

which was swarming with revolutionary mobs, and moved up the Danube to Apatin.

The units fall apart

While the commanders of 9 and 30 ID reported that their regiments no longer had any combat value, XI Corps was falling apart. Therefore on 4 November FZM Habermann ordered the units to withdraw to the Danube between the mouths of the Tisza and Drava. 30 ID and the parts of 59 ID at Vikovci were to cross the Danube at Palanka, while 9 ID with the other parts of 59 ID did so at Futak and Peterwardein. The enormous mass of naval supplies and equipment at Neusatz had to be abandoned. It was too late to start evacuating it (a process which would have taken weeks), and anyway the Croats had built a barricade of boats near Vukovar to prevent transports from being towed up the Danube.

On 4 November the Army Group HQ at Apatin were able to re-establish contact with the AOK. On the next day FM Kövess learned the terms of the treaty concluded at the Villa Giusti, and that he'd been recalled to Vienna so he could assume the post of commander-in-chief. While traveling through Budapest the Field Marshal tried to ensure that the non-Hungarian units could leave for home in an orderly fashion, but didn't get any cooperation. On 11 November at Vienna Kövess took control of the AOK, which was already falling apart; he led it until 20 December.

Meanwhile it had still been possible to withdraw the troops of XI Corps over the Danube in tolerable order, if only because they were concerned about being overtaken by the Serbs or disarmed by the Croats. Once the units were safely over the river, all bonds of discipline disappeared. The men rushed to the railroad stations and stormed the trains; only a few units pulled back to Zombor or Szabadka where they demobilized in an orderly process. When the last elements of XI Corps were north of the Danube on 9 November, the Corps HQ also moved to Szabadka, where they entrained for Vienna on the 12th. In the other sectors of Kövess' Army Group, particularly in Bosnia, the fate of the Aus-Hung. units was similar to that of XI Corps. Units recruited locally disintegrated; some of their personnel joined loosely-organized new forces. Troops from other provinces headed for their homes, some still in formation and others in disorderly groups. The commander of 32 ID, FML Bellmond, brought his regiments back in good order from the Drina through Brcko and Gombos to Hungary. The last days of Pflanzer-Baltin's Armeegruppe will be described in the next section. The German

11th Army withdrew north into the area between the Tisza and the Bazias-Temesvar railroad line, where they were supposed to protect the western flank of Mackensen's Army Group.

The political turmoil in the South Slavic lands of the Danube Monarchy and the rapid disintegration of Kövess' Army Group allowed the Serbs to immediately thrust over the borders, hoping to accelerate the fall of Vienna and Budapest. Thus Serbian detachments crossed the Sava and the Danube during 4 and 5 November and pushed forward without encountering resistance. While GO Sarkotic was leaving Sarajevo on 6 November, the Serbs were sending trains to Visegrad, carrying troops from 2nd Army who were supposed to occupy the Bosnian capital.

The treaty of Villa Giusti had been concluded between the enemy coalition and Austria-Hungary; its text and that of the subsequent clarifications made further negotiations on the Balkan front unnecessary. Nevertheless the Budapest government decided to send their own mission to the HQ of the Orient Army; they wanted to emphasize their friendliness to the Entente and expected to reap some advantage for their country from the supposed pro-Hungarian sentiment of the French. But when negotiators led by Count Karolyi arrived in Belgrade, they were bluntly informed on 7 November by General Franchet d'Esperey that Hungary was a conquered country rather than a neutral state. The French demanded the evacuation of southern Hungary and of Transylvania as far as the Maros. On 13 November at Belgrade Minister Linder concluded a military convention, supplemental to the armistice treaty, with General Henrys (commanding the French Orient Army) and the Serbian Voivode Bojovic.⁷¹⁴

b. The withdrawal of Pflanzer-Baltin's Armeegruppe from northern Albania and Montenegro

An earlier section described how GO Pflanzer-Baltin withdrew most of his forces from Albania in mid-October. The only fighting in the second half of the month took place in the area of the Vjeternik, where the first Serbian troops joined the partisans. Danger from this direction diminished when the main body of 81 ID intervened in the Podgorica area, and Col. Hospodarz's group were

714 Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 446 ff. Szende, pp. 180 ff. The text of the military convention is in Niemayer's "Die völkerrechtlichen Urkunden des Weltkrieges" (in 'Jahrbuch des Völkerrechtes', Vol. VIII; Munich and Leipzig, 1922; pp. 709 ff.)

able to shift to Niksic. Undisturbed by the enemy, 9 CD stood guard on the Mati, from where they withdrew on 28 October to Antivari. Meanwhile 47 ID, now assembled around Scutari, assumed responsibility for security toward the south, along the Bojana; IR 88 remained south of this river as a rear guard.

Thus the troops had gotten through the dangerously narrow coastal area, and the Armeegruppe had drawn together in an area where they had multiple lines of retreat. Since the tactical situation in general also wasn't unfavorable, it was possible to give the troops some rest. "Their morale had suffered and they had little spirit for attacking; however, discipline was holding up well. A mutiny by Hungarian March units in Cetinje was quelled by the personal intervention of the Armeegruppe commander, and remained an isolated incident. A new problem developed during these days - lack of fodder. Previously it had been barely possible to feed the horses, and now there was no way to keep them nourished in the barren, rocky countryside during late autumn. They were dying in droves, and some animals had to be given away to the local population."⁷¹⁵

Little information was at hand about the Italian advance over the coastal plains. It was known only that cavalry identified on 28 October near Alessio had been reinforced by troops who landed from the sea. In fact the Tanaro Brigade had reached Durazzo and on 30 October landed a battalion at S Giovanni di Medua, while most of the Palermo Bridge had shifted to Vorra. The Italians were increasing their pace so they could arrive in Scutari before the Serbs. But they were already too late, since in the afternoon of the 30th Serbian troops - advancing from the east - overran the detachment of the k.u.k. 47 ID which was posted north of the city and occupied the northern part of Scutari.⁷¹⁶ Although the Serbs' further advance was checked in street fighting, the troops of 47 ID still stationed south of the Drin had to quickly withdraw over the river. IR 88, serving as rear guards south of the Bojana, secured the crossing points on that stream in fighting during the evening of 31 October, and withdrew over it in the night. Also on the 31st the parts of 81 ID stationed in the area of the Vjeternik pulled back after heavy fighting with a larger enemy force; in the following morning other parts of this Division were withdrawn as far as the heights west of Podgorica. At the same time the Serbs crossed Lake Scutari and pushed from the rear against the positions of 47 ID on the slope of the Tarabos Heights. Thus it was necessary to retreat behind the Monarchy's borders, all the more so as the

715Veith, p. 556

716Szende, pp. 149 ff.

reports of revolutionary developments in the rear became ever more distressing.

Per orders issued on 1 November, the retreat of the Armeegruppe was to be carried out immediately as far as the prepared positions south of Cattaro. On the next day GO Pflanzer-Baltin arrived at Cattaro, where Counter-Admiral Edler von Catinelli had already relinquished command of the naval vessels to a Yugoslav admiral. FZM Edler von Guseck, commanding the military harbor, informed Pflanzer-Baltin about the break-up of the Monarchy and its replacement by national states. To somewhat clarify the situation, Armeegruppe HQ attempted that evening to restore their interrupted communications with Sarajevo, Belgrade and Baden. Finally on 3 November new orders arrived from the AOK - the retreat was to continue to the Sava, where the Slavic personnel would be sent home by sea and the others overland; even these instructions had been overtaken by events and couldn't be implemented. From intercepted radio messages it was learned that an armistice was already effective for the night of 3-4 November; this information was confirmed from Sarajevo. Then communications were broken for good, and the Armeegruppe were left entirely on their own. Even the conditions of the armistice with the Entente could only be approximately constructed by Col. Schneider (the Chief of Staff) from incomplete and garbled messages. GO Pflanzer-Baltin only learned the actual conditions, already in place, much later from a French naval officer.

Without further guidance, the General Oberst led his troops back to the Bocche di Cattaro, where he'd break up the units based on nationality. By 7 November the 47 ID had reached Budua, 81 ID the town of Cattaro, and 9 CD Risano. The Armeegruppe HQ were at Gravosa.

Thus the troops were within the former borders of the Monarchy, but now on Yugoslav soil. GO Pflanzer-Baltin worked hard to maintain order and discipline, and to fulfill the desire of the soldiers to go home to the various new states. The energetic and prudent commander negotiated with the admirals of the Entente naval commands stationed in the harbors and received effective assistance. After almost all of the former Aus-Hung. troops had been shipped out, on 22 November the General Oberst himself boarded an Italian torpedo boat to leave what was now a foreign country.

In similar fashion the former Aus-Hung. military plenipotentiary at Constantinople, FML Pomiankowski, labored for the detachments who'd come together there after fighting under the crescent flag.

The general embarked with most of the men on a steamer, which first had to be repaired; they sailed to Trieste, from where the men left as individuals for their homes.⁷¹⁷

717Pomiankowski, pp. 414 ff. Adam, p. 568

3. The evacuation of Wallachia

Soon after Mackensen's HQ were instructed to create a new line of resistance along the Danube, the first Entente troops appeared on the river's southern bank. On 20 October French forces were already identified in the Bulgarian river ports, where they interfered with shipping. Two days later an Aus-Hung. Danube monitor, sailing upstream with some other vessels from the mouth of the Sulina, needed help from land batteries to deal with enemy artillery near Lom Palanka and Vidin before it could join the main body of the Danube Flotilla at Turnu-Severin.⁷¹⁸ On 25 October the Flotilla itself was re-assigned to Kövess' Army Group. In the last week of October FML Salis-Seewis took command of a new detachment of Aus-Hung. and German troops on the southern bank of the Danube at Turnu-Severin; their mission was to assist the eastern wing of the allied forces withdrawing from Serbia. The detachment engaged in some minor skirmishes with enemy scouts.

In these days Prime Minister Wekerle and Honved Minister GdI Szurmay were demanding that the high command should protect the southern and eastern borders of Hungary with mostly Hungarian troops. On 25 October GO Arz replied that for the moment there was no concern about a Romanian invasion of Transylvania; the menace to unprotected Bukovina was somewhat greater. Already the 15 ID and 155 Hon ID plus 5 Hon CD had been ordered to move from Ukraine to the menaced borders of Hungary, as had 32 ID from the interior. The Italian front was already under very heavy attack. Meanwhile the behavior of 27 ID and 38 Hon ID had forced the Chief of the General Staff to order these units to leave Tyrol for Hungary as soon as they could follow 10 CD. Arz's report to Szurmay also noted that when these troops did arrive the Slavic regiments, whose willingness to fight was questionable, were to be removed. Further Hungarian divisions would be sent if necessary.

Troops from the Eastern Army who'd arrived on the Hungarian-Wallachian border were already refusing to cross the Danube. Also refusing to obey orders were a battalion of k.k. Lst IR 27 (62 ID) and the k.u. Lst IR 5 which had meanwhile arrived from Tyrol to join 155 Hon ID.⁷¹⁹ It was an indication of the desperate situation that commanding officers gladly dispensed with "help" from formations like these and sent them away so they

⁷¹⁸Wulff, pp. 178 ff.

⁷¹⁹Kerchnawe, "Zusammenbruch", pp. 65 and 85. Szende, p. 49

couldn't infect neighboring units.

In October the Central Powers resumed diplomatic negotiations with the Romanian government in Bucharest and Jassy. Prime Minister Marghiloman at first seemed receptive. The negotiators soon recognized, however, that the time wasn't propitious for ratifying the peace treaty, and that the Romanians still wanted to occupy the territories of the Danube Monarchy inhabited by members of their nationality. As in the spring, Col. Randa was sent to speak with King Ferdinand, but his initiative was fruitless. To save the treaty and to keep the Kingdom neutral, both Empires finally proposed favorable revisions to Articles X through XII (by which Romania would have gained Dobruja if they gave some territory along their border to Austria-Hungary). Discussions on this basis continued into the last days of October, but the Romanians weren't very interested. They could reap greater advantage from the other side. The representative of the Aus-Hung. Foreign Office at Bucharest, Graf Demblin, reported that the only question was which would happen first - conclusion of an armistice between the Central Powers and the Entente or Romania's adherence to the enemy coalition.

155 Hon ID had been ordered to Wallachia, but at the end of October only their first elements had joined the 16th General Command; the Hungarian 1st IR 20 were already displaying a bad attitude. The next troops of the Division were diverted to Hungary for Assistenz service. 143 Inf Bde reported that desertion was increasing among the Italians of Southwest Battalion # 4; it was becoming questionable whether the Brigade would be able to carry out their mission on the Sereth, since the other troops were in turmoil over the confusing reports from back home. Even high-ranking officers couldn't tell which of the disturbing rumors and incredible reports about the collapse of the Aus-Hung. state were true and which were false. On 31 October the k.u.k. liaison officer attached to Mackensen's HQ, Lt Col. Ritter von Förster-Streffleur, asked Baden whether the troops at Prague, Zagreb and Budapest had been placed under their national councils by the Emperor or were mutineers. The AOK responded that the Monarch had placed the garrisons under the national councils. Thereafter the telephone connection with Baden was broken for a long time.

On 2 November the Transylvania Group HQ received the instructions from the new Hungarian War Minister Linder regarding the cessation of hostilities by the Hungarian units and their demobilization. The high command, on the other hand, issued orders on the same day that if the Romanians did attack the

Transylvania group would be placed under GFM Mackensen and the 4th General Command under the Eastern Army. But this was an empty gesture. The troops on the Transylvania border were starting to leave their positions regardless of orders and were going home.⁷²⁰ By 4 November only weak remnants were left of 216 Hon Inf Bde and of 1 CD. The leader of 216th Bde, GM von Szabo, succeeded FML Goldbach as commander of the Transylvania group.

The troops in Wallachia also demanded to be sent home quickly. On 3 November FML Salis-Seewis moved his HQ from Craiova to Bucharest so he could plan the evacuation of the province in conjunction with Mackensen's German HQ. The 16th General Command received the order of Hungarian Minister Linder through Kronstadt, but wouldn't publish it because it hadn't been confirmed by Baden. They asked the troops to remain calm since they would soon be discharged; in the meantime several battalions of 143 Inf Bde were disarmed to prevent disturbances. On 5 November the AOK instructed the HQ at Bucharest that all Aus-Hung. forces in Romania were subject to the provisions of the armistice that became effective on the 3rd. The troops were to be sent to Kronstadt and Hermannstadt, from where they could go home as soon as rail traffic permitted. FML Salis-Seewis raised a question regarding the chain of command, and was informed that Emperor and King Charles was permitting the troops to "give allegiance to the current national councils" but "hadn't released them from their oath [to him]."

The 16th General Command assembled the troops in three areas - eastern, central and western Wallachia - where they were discharged. On 10 November Romania mobilized its Army in a new armed attempt to enlarge the Kingdom by redeeming the failure of the 1916 campaign.⁷²¹ On the same day GFM Mackensen began moving his army out of the country.⁷²²

4. The evacuation of Ukraine and the end of the Eastern Army

GdI Krauss' Eastern Army had already been considerably reduced in size prior to 17 October, when he received an order to relinquish

720Szende, pp. 110 ff.

721Kiritzesco, pp. 436 ff.

722Barkoczy-Klopsch, "Der Heimzug der Armee des General-Feldmarschalls von Mackensen durch Ungarn nach dem Zusammenbruch" (Budapest, 1928). Luyken, "General-Feldmarschall von Mackensen - von Bukarest bis Saloniki" (Munich, 1920).

still more troops. He could no longer garrison all of the occupied territory. On 23 October the AOK also asked for 5 Hon CD, although the condition of the overloaded railroads prevented that unit from leaving until the collapse of the Monarchy had already begun. 5 Hon CD was the last component of XII Corps, so the Ekaterinoslav Government had to be abandoned. The OHL asked their allies to keep guarding the most important rail lines in cooperation with the Kiev Army Group (which were also evacuating the easternmost part of their territory) only until German troops could take over this task. Meanwhile the situation continued to deteriorate, since the defeat of Turkey would permit enemy naval vessels to enter the Black Sea. On 27 October GdI Krauss presented his deployment plan to Baden by wire. Corps XVII (11 ID) and XXV (54 Sch Div, 7 CD) were to protect the railroads; FML Böltz's force (145 Inf Bde, 2 CD) would guard the coast in the Odessa area. However, Böltz's weak group could only deal with small enemy landing parties. As soon as the main Entente fleets passed through the Dardanelles the Army HQ would be moved inland from Odessa to Vinnitsa.

But the rapid course of events overtook all plans. On 28 October the personnel of a hussar regiment of 2 CD demanded that they should be employed only to defend their homeland, and be commanded by Hungarian officers. Battalions of the 145 Inf Bde displayed similar ideas. The AOK ordered that both units should be transferred to FM Kövess' Army Group in Hungary, and that the territory east of the Bug should be evacuated. Because of the soldiers' insistence to go home, no reliable forces were left; the troops couldn't be used to keep order in the large city of Odessa if disturbances broke out. Although regiments from 11 ID were brought to Odessa, they too had been affected by nationalist sentiment and thus couldn't be left as a garrison; therefore on the 29th the Eastern Army HQ ordered that the port city on the Black Sea should be systematically evacuated. GO Arz concurred. The Austrians asked for help from several battalions of the 7 German LW ID (passing through the area on their way to Mackensen's Army Group), but the request was turned down by the Kiev Army Group which wanted at all costs to avoid any clashes between the hitherto allied forces. On 30 October Eastern Army HQ departed Odessa for Vinnitsa.

The HQ of GdI Fabini's XVII Corps arrived in Odessa on 2 November to oversee the departure of the troops from the city and from the Cherson Government. Since the Eastern Army contained a preponderance of soldiers from nationalities which had broken completely with the Habsburg Monarchy, its disintegration occurred quickly. The bands of discipline and obedience snapped.

GdI Hofmann and the staff of his XXV Corps were temporarily arrested, as were the commanders of 54 Sch Div and of 2 CD. Soldiers plundered magazines, selling off equipment and supplies. Many detachments left their stations without orders or seized trains so they could leave the area. In units of mixed nationality the soldiers broke apart and created new groups with their co-nationals. The urge to go home overcame any feeling of common interests.

On 4 November the AOK, where Emperor Charles had already relinquished the supreme command, instructed that Ukrainian territory was to be completely evacuated; authority should be turned over either to the Germans or to the local governments. The troops, now citizens of new states, were to be sent home. But Eastern Army HQ at Vinnitsa soon found that the breakdown of the communications system made it impossible to control their units. All the latter could do was to impose a measure of order upon the troops' wild movement toward their homes. Since Ukraine's rail traffic was controlled by the central office at Kiev, Army HQ directed the corps to deal directly with the plenipotentiary general in that city - GM Spannocchi - and to let him oversee the entire demobilization. On 8 November the Eastern Army HQ ceased to function and traveled home through Rovno. Safe passage for the troops was arranged through negotiations with the new governments at Lemberg and Warsaw.

The city commander at Odessa, FML Böltz, had a nervous breakdown and committed suicide. XVII Corps HQ left the city on 9 November, but remained at Zmerinka until the 26th. XXV Corps HQ, formerly in charge at Zmerinka, were no longer operational after their rough treatment at the hands of their own soldiers; the remnants of that staff crossed over the Galician border on 11 November and the HQ were dissolved. The HQ of XII Corps didn't leave Ekaterinoslav until 19 November, after all the troops and supporting services had gone home.⁷²³ GM Spannocchi, assisted by staff officers sent by GdI Krauss from the former Army HQ, remained at his post in Kiev until all the remaining men who'd been part of the Aus-Hung. Army left Ukraine during December. He finally departed from the Ukrainian capital on 5 January 1919.⁷²⁴ The effectiveness of the German forces on Russian and Ukrainian soil was also greatly shaken in November 1918, as they began to depart amidst growing signs that their homeland too was

⁷²³Dragon, "Besetzung der Ukraine", p. 287

⁷²⁴Entries in the private diaries of GdI Fabini and GM Spannocchi were used in our preparation of this narrative of events in Ukraine.

collapsing.⁷²⁵

5. The end of the war in the West

The fighting in France and Belgium continued into the first days of November with undiminished fury. The German Western armies continued to resist with bitter stubbornness. But their battle effectiveness was being worn down; casualties were so heavy that more than 20 divisions had to be dissolved. It was not unusual to find battalions with 150 riflemen and divisions with between 800 and 1200. The Americans and French on the Meuse gained ground in the direction of Sedan; the British and French between the Oise and the Scheldt continued to attack, and the Belgians on the lower course of the Scheldt advanced to just in front of Ghent.

To provide some relief to the German northern wing next to the sea, the entire High Seas Fleet was supposed to set sail at the end of October; thus in the last battle they'd fight alongside the land forces which had been heavily engaged for so long. But the order that all vessels were to sail touched off a rebellion at the military harbor of Kiel. Secret agitation by radicals among the enlisted men led to mutiny and prevented the ships from setting forth. On 4 November the authorities were unable to suppress the uprising, which developed into a revolutionary, anti-monarchical movement and quickly spread from the coastal cities into the interior.

The persistent pressure from the Entente armies on the Western battlefields forced the German OHL on 4 November to order the withdrawal of their forces into the Antwerp-Meuse position. Because of Austria-Hungary's armistice negotiations, on 29 October the OHL had already provided that the k.u.k. divisions should be pulled from the front. On 5 November, when FML Ludwig Goiginger (XVIII Corps HQ) relinquished command over the Ornes Sector, the military activity of the Aus-Hung. units in the West came to an end. The last of the troops had already left the front on the 3rd and assembled along the lines of communication.⁷²⁶ XVIII Corps HQ were responsible for bringing the men home. The 1st, 35th and 106th Divisions were broken up by nationality. Their

725Forschungsanstalt für Kriegs- und Heeres- Geschichte, "Die Rückführung des Ostheeres" (in "Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps", Vol. I [Berlin, 1936])

726Franek, "K.u.k. Truppen im Westen", pp. 426 ff. Szende, pp. 171 ff.

return journey was delayed because heavy traffic on the railroads made it impossible to provide trains. Therefore they marched as far as the eastern bank of the Rhine. 37 Hon ID had been employed apart from the other units to build fortifications, and never saw action; remaining independent of XVIII Corps, they crossed the Rhine on 12 November. The soldiers - mainly from Hungary with also a large contingent from the Sudeten lands - finally boarded trains at the end of November in Heilbronn, Pforzheim and Ulm.

In the first week of November the German Western armies fell back to the last line of resistance that had been established on enemy territory, while revolutionaries were already seizing power in the populous cities of Germany. At the end of the week (6 and 7 November) Wilson's fourth note arrived in Berlin. It stated that Marshal Foch was empowered to meet with representatives of the Empire to inform them of the armistice conditions.⁷²⁷ Although Wilson's reply didn't again mention the issue of the Emperor, his previous notes had already made it the center of debate among all political parties and the press. Large segments of the population believed that favorable armistice and peace conditions could be achieved only if the Monarch renounced his throne. On 7 November the Socialist members of the cabinet demanded that the Emperor and Crown Prince should abdicate to prevent revolution. Finally the Imperial Chancellor Prince Max also became convinced that this measure was necessary to avoid civil war and to achieve peace for the country.⁷²⁸ On 8 November the King of Bavaria and Duke of Brunswick relinquished control of their governments. On the next day Prince Max, believing that he could at least save the monarchical form of government, announced that the Emperor was abdicating and that the Crown Prince had given up his claim to the throne - even before he'd actually received the final confirmation from William II who was at the OHL's HQ in Spa. Now all the other princes had to lay down their authority, which was replaced throughout the Empire by a "people's government" on Socialist lines. As advised by his entourage, William II moved to Holland on the 10th. GFM Hindenburg assumed command of the Army.

Two days earlier (on 8 November) German delegates had begun to meet with the Entente's Generalissimo, Marshal Foch, in the Compiegne Forest. They suggested that a temporary truce should be implemented during the meetings, but Foch turned them down. The Germans were informed that they'd have just 72 hours to

⁷²⁷Schwertfeger, pp. 181 ff.

⁷²⁸Stutzenberger, "Die Abdankung Kaiser Wilhelms II." (Berlin, 1937), pp. 185 ff.

either accept or reject the dictated terms. The delegates, who'd already been given full powers by the new government, were also instructed by Hindenburg (in a wire on the 10th) to accept the treaty if it was impossible to obtain milder terms, while protesting against certain points. The fateful document was signed in the early morning of the next day (11 November); the armistice became effective at noon.⁷²⁹

In reality the German Empire had capitulated completely. The occupied areas in the West were to be evacuated, along with German territory west of the Rhine. The allies furthermore would secure bridgeheads on the eastern bank of that river. Enormous amounts of military and transportation equipment were to be handed over, as well as a large part of the fleet; prisoners of war were to be released without compensation. The troops in German East Africa, who'd stayed in action throughout the war, had to surrender the colony.

On 11 November the armistice of Compiègne put an end to the war which had raged since the high summer of 1914 between the Central Powers and the Entente states; the latter had meanwhile expanded into a world-wide coalition.

G. The conclusion of peace

The sounds of battle ceased on 11 November 1918. A new era of peace and prosperity was supposed to begin for mankind, according to the sonorous words emanating from Washington. Since September the members of the Quadruple Alliance had been forced to lay down their arms and request armistices from their opponents - first Bulgaria, then Turkey and Austria-Hungary, and now Germany. Each of these states had left the conflict after their governmental structures suffered severe damage. The Habsburg Monarchy had suffered the harshest fate - complete destruction. For this venerable state the war which started in 1914 wasn't just a fight to maintain its standing as a Great Power, but literally a struggle for its very existence. This was recognized by no less a figure than the bearer of the Habsburg crowns - the aged Emperor Franz Joseph, who himself had become a symbol of the Empire. He'd been full of gloomy forebodings that the Monarchy was sinking to destruction, as he confided in a conversation with the Chief of the General Staff.⁷³⁰

729For the text of the armistice, see Niemeyer, pp. 711 ff.

730This conversation was described in Volume V. See also Conrad, "Aus meiner Dienst-zeit 1906 bis 1918" (Vienna, 1921-25), Vol.

On 3 November 1918, when the representatives of the Aus-Hung. Army signed the armistice at Villa Giusti, they did so in the name of an Austria-Hungary that no longer existed. The Monarchy to which the victors were dictating such harsh terms didn't possess an effective administration that could implement them. The Danube realm was splitting up into new states plus areas which were claimed by neighboring countries based on their national composition. Thus Italy and Romania were obtaining territory; South Slavic and Czecho-Slovakian states were being created. Galicia was joining an independent Poland with its center at Warsaw; however, the Poles and Ruthenes of eastern Galicia couldn't come to any agreement between themselves or with Ukraine. Thus except for Hungary - which was also going its own way - the only territory remaining to the Habsburg Monarchy was the compact German-speaking territory along the Danube and in the Alps. The parts of the Sudeten lands where Germans lived wanted to join this rump state, which inherited from the extinct Great Power the name "Austria" (although for now in the form of "German-Austria").

The hope that the House of Habsburg could still retain power at least in their German hereditary lands soon disappeared.⁷³¹ Continuing political convulsions within the rump of Austria led in a radical-socialist direction. On 11 November Emperor Charles renounced any participation in the government and recognized that German-Austria could decide its own political future. On the next day a national assembly in Vienna adopted a republican constitution and declared that their state was a component of the German Republic. On 13 November representatives of the Hungarian government came to the Eckartsau castle to receive a similar statement from the bearer of St Stephen's Crown; as in Austria, Charles renounced any role in the government. Thus the World War ended for Austria-Hungary with the complete collapse of the Monarchy and the fall of the ruling dynasty.

After the conclusion of the armistice, fighting on the battlefields was followed by negotiations between statesmen. Representatives of the victorious coalition assembled in Paris. President Wilson crossed the ocean to Europe. But this peculiar advocate of right and justice soon proved to be no match for the crafty diplomats of the Old World. Among the "Big Four" (Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Orlando and Wilson) - who now acted as arbitrators not only in Europe but throughout the world - the President of the United States was no longer the spiritual

IV, p. 162.

⁷³¹Glaise-Horstenau, "Die Katastrophe", pp. 440 ff.

leader. The peace conference at Paris opened on 18 January 1919. Under the influence of Clemenceau, the "old tiger", the conference became a tribunal in which the victors served as both prosecutors and judges against the vanquished, who were regarded as criminals.

When the Central Powers sought peace, they'd trusted in Wilson's officially-proclaimed guidelines. Now their representatives at Paris soon recognized that the beguiling theory that after the war there would be neither winners nor losers no longer came into play. Other ideals - such as the right of peoples to self-determination - were applied only to the victorious powers, not for their beaten opponents. After considerable discussion, debate and bargaining about provinces and borders, the map of Europe was redrawn. Territories in Asia, Africa and even the Pacific Islands became subject to new rulers or exploiters.

The first of the defeated states to accept the dictated peace terms was Germany (at Versailles on 28 June 1919).⁷³² The treaty stated that the Germans were guilty of starting the war, and therefore were to be fully disarmed and punished.⁷³³ The treaties inflicted upon the other members of the defeated coalition reflected the same spirit. Seven states divided the territory of the former Danube Monarchy. Five of them belonged to the victorious Entente - the Kingdoms of Italy, Romania and Yugoslavia and the Republics of Czechoslovakia and Poland.⁷³⁴ The other two - tiny Austria and mutilated Hungary - were regarded as the successors of the vanished Habsburg Great Power; both were subject to very harsh terms since their inhabitants had been the backbone of resistance during the war. On 10 September the Austrian Republic concluded peace with 17 foreign states in the Treaty of St Germain en Laye.⁷³⁵ Article 88 of the Treaty ordered the Republic to accept "independence", which couldn't be renounced without the approval of the victorious powers. Thus Austria's citizens were prevented from joining the larger German national community.

The treaty between Bulgaria and the multi-national coalition was

⁷³²Schmittner, "Weltgeschichte vom Frankfurter Frieden bis zur Gegenwart" (Leipzig, 1933), pp. 597 ff.

⁷³³Niemeyer, pp. 87 ff.

⁷³⁴Technically, at the very start of their existence Yugoslavia was called the "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes", and Czecho-Slovakia was hyphenated.

⁷³⁵"Der Staatsvertrag von St Germain" (Vienna, 1919). Niemeyer, pp. 250 ff.

signed at Neuilly on 27 November 1919.⁷³⁶ Hungary, which meanwhile had temporarily fallen under Communist rule and sought to defend its borders in new armed clashes, ended its state of war on 4 June 1920 with the Treaty of Trianon. Turkey, greatly diminished in size and driven almost completely from Europe, had to relinquish large stretches of territory to six of the victorious states. Its peace treaty was signed at Sèvres on 10 August 1920.⁷³⁷

A direct result of the peace treaties was the creation of a new international body based on Wilson's ideas. This "League of Nations" was supposed to unite all peoples as brothers and ensure the preservation of world peace. The horrors of death and destruction which the war had inflicted upon mankind were to be disappear in the future. Since that time the world has witnessed the extent to which the League has been able to solve political problems between countries by arbitration and to prevent the outbreak of new wars.

IX. The World War Reviewed in Retrospect

A. *The most important issues of the war*

1. Relative strength and resources of the combatants

On 12 December 1916 the Central Powers issued a peace proposal. At that time the Entente responded that the proposal, which referred to the military situation in Europe, concealed the facts. A true picture of the military situation could be seen only on a map of the world. Thus the enemy coalition touched upon the basic issue of the war, which always affected the political, military and economic decisions of the leaders and finally became fatal for the Quadruple Alliance.

At the outset of the Great War the central European Empires, abandoned by their allies, were already confronted by three Great Powers and three smaller states. In Europe the enemy coalition had a population of 240 million; counting the colonies, the total was 665 million. During the war 20 more states joined the side of the Entente, including the enormous and wealthy North American

736Niemeyer, pp. 386 ff.

737Ibid., pp. 471 ff. (for Bulgaria) and 589 ff. (for Turkey).

Union. Two-thirds of the 150 million square kilometers of the earth's land surface belonged to this vast coalition, along with 1½ billion of our planet's 2 billion people. The area which the Central Powers controlled after they were joined by Turkey and Bulgaria (excluding the distant and isolated outposts of the Ottoman Empire) was at most 2½ million square kilometers with 150 million inhabitants. It is true that a large portion of the enormous number of men living in the lands of the enemy coalition never actually fought in the war - China and Brazil remained aloof from the fighting and Japan's participation was limited to achieving its own limited goals. Nonetheless, the numerical discrepancy was tremendous.

When the war started the enemy already had access to the riches of the entire world, thanks to England's command of the sea and the pro-Entente stance of the President of the United States of America. As the alliance expanded, these riches became ever more accessible and the Central Powers became ever more isolated. The neutral states with significant relations to the warring parties had to accommodate themselves to this situation, for good or ill.

In this situation, undoubtedly the task of the political and military leadership of the Central Powers from the very beginning was to seek a decision by force of arms as quickly as possible, since time was unmistakably working against them. It's true that the war also imposed hardship and heavy sacrifice upon the Entente, causing even the great Russian Empire to succumb in the third year of fighting. An earlier conclusion would thus have been of advantage to the enemy, especially since from the start they had rather unrealistic hopes of victory. But their generals could much more easily survive setbacks and even major defeats caused by their own errors and omissions; compared to the leaders of the Central Powers, they made more use of this freedom right up until the great turn of fortune in summer 1918. As long as they could avoid a death thrust from their opponents' sword, the Entente could wait for better times. Their superiority in numbers and resources finally would have to play into their hands! Unlike their more fortunate foes, to the commanders of the Central Powers every hour in which the military decision was postponed was an irreparable loss.

In the decades prior to the war the Central Powers had no territorial ambitions. Germany believed that its tasks in the future were to raise the people's standard of living, to make full use of its hitherto relatively under-developed colonies, and to expand its trade connections which already extended over the entire world. At least since 1909 Austria-Hungary had also

reduced its desire for new territory, which could only be gained in the southeast, to essentially nothing. And thus for political reasons the military preparations of the Central Powers were directed solely toward defensive measures, which because of the greater strength of their potential enemies would anyway greatly strain the resources of the governments and populations. Few of the leading personalities were as aware of the increasing danger of encirclement as Conrad von Hötzendorf, who'd been constantly advocating a preventive war since 1907.

The burdens which the Central Powers assumed because of the international situation were certainly not light, but by comparison they were far, far less than those assumed by their adversaries. After a long delay, Germany finally initiated a major army expansion several years prior to the war but still didn't make as wide-ranging use of its manpower as did France. In Austria-Hungary the "withering Army" were finally permitted in 1912 to increase the annual number of its draftees while the period of military service was reduced from three to two years. But this measure was initiated too late. In 1914 it was decided to further increase the Army's size, but since the armed forces were called into the field just eight weeks later they received no actual benefit during the first difficult actions. And therefore unlike all the other military Great Powers Austria-Hungary had no reserve army; the field forces had to employ, as a fully inadequate substitute, the less effective March and Landsturm formations in the front lines for the opening battles.

In August 1914, after mobilization the total strength of Russia's forces was 4 to 5 million men; France had 3.8 million, Great Britain 1 million, Belgium and Serbia 300,000 apiece and Montenegro 50,000. Thus the grand total was about 10 million men. On the other side Germany deployed 3.8 million troops and Austria-Hungary 2.3 million, for a total of 6 million. The following chart provides details about the first and second line troops (active and reserve formations) at the outbreak of the war.⁷³⁸

- . The Central Powers had 138 ½ active and reserve infantry and 22 cavalry divisions, for a total of 3,819,00 men -
 - . Germany: 87 ½ active and reserve infantry divisions (including 6 ½ Ersatz formations) plus 11 cavalry divisions; 2,398,000 men
 - . Austria-Hungary: 51 active infantry divisions (actually 48 ½ divisions plus 5 independent mountain brigades) and 11

⁷³⁸Information from Montgelas' figures in the "Propyläen Weltgeschichte" (Berlin, 1933), Vol. X, p. 379

- cavalry divisions; 1,421,000 men
- . The Entente and their allies had 211 active and reserve infantry and 49 cavalry divisions, for a total of 5,806,000 men -
 - . France: 73 active and reserve infantry, 10 cavalry divisions; 1,867,000 men
 - . Russia: 114 ½ active and reserve infantry, 36 cavalry divisions; 3,420,000 men
 - . England (includes only the Expeditionary Corps that fought in France): 6 active infantry divisions, 1 cavalry division; 155,000 men
 - . Belgium: 6 active infantry divisions, 1 cavalry division; 117,000 men
 - . Serbia: 11 ½ active and reserve infantry divisions, 1 cavalry division; 247,000 men
 - . Montenegro: No units at division level; 25,000 of the troops were equivalent to second line soldiers of other armies

The figures show how great was the numerical superiority of the forces which the Central Powers had to face from the beginning. This unfavorable ratio would never be reduced; instead it increased gradually until it assumed catastrophic proportions in summer 1918. By the end of the war, the Quadruple Alliance called up about 21.2 million men for front-line service, and the Entente called up 39 million. The numbers mobilized (including men serving in the rear) may be estimated as about 15 to 20% higher.

The situation in regard to the artillery and other weapons, as well as military equipment, was similar. The German Army was relatively well-equipped, but not to the extent that it could overcome the enemy's numerical superiority. The artillery of the Aus-Hung. armed forces left much to be desired at the start of the fighting. Industries in both Empires sought during the war to make up the deficiencies, and their achievements were enormous. But their efficiency was increasingly impaired by the growing shortage of raw materials, and supplies were also consumed by the poorly-armed allies in the southeast. The enemy coalition had access to the raw materials and factories of the entire world. This gave them a substantial advantage in producing not only artillery and the weapons needed for trench warfare, but also the new arms to equip air and tank units.

Despite the strength of German industry the balance of power was no better in the war at sea, which in this summary will be mentioned only to the extent necessary to understand the overall military situation. The tonnage of Great Britain's operational

fleet in the summer of 1914 was 2 million; the French Navy had 670,000 tons and the Russian 334,000. Thus the grand total was 3 million tons of ships, to which the Central Powers could oppose just 1.2 million (963,000 German and 235,000 Austro-Hungarian).

2. Waging war on exterior and interior lines

Thus the numerical and material superiority of the enemy coalition on the land was undeniable; it was even greater on the sea, except during the episode of unrestricted submarine warfare. The geographical situation on the European mainland did provide the Central Powers one advantage - their armies were in possession of the "interior lines." According to Jomini, operating on the interior lines is advantageous as long as it isn't counteracted by an extraordinarily unfavorable balance of forces. In the European theater of operations, where alone the contest would be decided, the enemies of the Central Powers fought on the "exterior lines." Thus the Russian Army was isolated from the other major Entente forces. Neither the northern coast of their country, locked in ice for most of the year, nor the Trans-Siberian Railroad could be used to quickly move troops to or from other fronts in numbers that could decisively affect the balance of forces. Transportation of large quantities of equipment also cost much time, and was dangerous because of German submarines. And the route through Constantinople was barred to the Russians and their Western allies by Turkey. The Turks' adherence to the side of the Central Powers and their courageous, successful defense of the Dardanelles more than made up for their many weaknesses. The Central Powers' other ally, Bulgaria, effectively blocked the overland routes to Russia through the Balkans.

Although the Western Powers were cut off from Russia, behind and parallel to their own front on French soil they had a large network of railroads which was substantially improved during the war. Communications between the French and Italian battlefields were less satisfactory; besides the dangerous route over the sea only two rail lines were available. Nevertheless the movement of a Franco-British army to upper Italy in late autumn 1917 took place with remarkable speed, though admittedly due in part to substantial advance preparations. This proved that it wasn't completely impossible to shift forces between the English Channel and the Adriatic Sea. It was more difficult to reach the secondary fronts north of Salonika and in Albania. However, the ongoing reinforcement of the Salonika front indicated that there were no insuperable obstacles to troop movements in this

direction. In general it can hardly be denied that the enormous numerical superiority of the Entente on all the principal fronts made the basic strategic problems for their coalition relatively simple. If they were able to simultaneously attack everywhere they would do so with very favorable chances of success.

On the other hand, if the commanders of the Central Powers proceeded according to a careful plan they had the ability to concentrate their main strength against one enemy. For such operations on the "interior lines" the German railroad network stretching between the Western and Eastern fronts was a tremendous resource. The situation in Austria-Hungary was less favorable for a variety of geographical, political and economic-cultural reasons; however, the transportation network here was at least adequate. Naturally the length of the fronts in Russia and the Balkans created problems for the Central Powers that they only gradually - and never completely - overcame. Despite many improvements, communications with the distant Turkish fronts in general remained unsatisfactory. From the start of the war the German colonies were left completely on their own.

3. Questions regarding overall command

Since the Central Powers needed to wage war on the interior lines, they had a lasting need for unified leadership to a greater extent than did the enemy coalition. But for most of the time unity was conspicuously absent. Despite the lessons of history - the centenary of the War of Liberation had just been celebrated in 1913 - preparations to coordinate planning between Vienna and Berlin in peacetime left much to be desired. Before the war the two general staffs agreed on just one point - that Germany would first have to concentrate the main body of its forces in the French theater of operations. In the first campaign conducted by the allies in the East there was little evidence of any shared concept. In fact, the war here began with wide-ranging differences of opinion that for a long time were a source of aggravation to the principal Aus-Hung. figure, Conrad. As the war progressed, there were increasing conflicts of personality between Conrad and Falkenhayn which made the process of arriving at understandings on a case-by-case basis even more clumsy. Finally, after Falkenhayn fell from power, Emperor Franz Josef overcame Conrad's resistance to a treaty establishing an "supreme high command" for the Quadruple Alliance. This treaty, effective in September 1916, seemed to greatly simplify the command structure. It was made possible by the complete confidence of all parties in the dual leadership of Hindenburg

and Ludendorff at the head of the German OHL, and proved its worth in the successful campaign to overthrow Romania. But on 6 September 1916 limitations were already imposed on the OHL's authority by a secret article, applicable only to Germany and Austria. This illustrates that, as in all alliances involving at least nominally equal partners, difficulties over the supreme command arose not so much from military as from domestic political considerations.⁷³⁹

The problem was also evident when the treaty between the two Central Powers was further altered due to the accession of Emperor Charles. After this change Emperor William of Germany still was supposed to make ultimate decisions in questions regarding strictly military leadership. But in fact he never exercised this authority. And there was never any real chance that his leadership would extend to questions of vital political or economic interests involving one or more of the partners.

The states of the Entente also were content to arrive at agreements on a case-by-case basis for the first three years of the war; the process of achieving consensus was even more difficult for them than for their opponents. Finally in fall 1917, under the impact of the defeat of Italy, measures were taken to address the problem. A permanent military council was established to oversee the national high commands; in the following months it created its own general staff which could make suggestions to the front-line commanders. But the first actual operations under this umbrella authority didn't take place until the end of March 1918, and were a reaction to the unprecedented menace to the Entente's defensive system from the great German offensive. After the decisive turning point in early summer, the laurels which Marshal Foch won by his success enabled him to gradually extend his influence to all the Entente fronts.

Thus both sides found it difficult and problematic to create unified commands over their coalitions at the highest level; the problem also bedeviled operations at the front in specific areas and situations, most obviously along the Franco-British front in the West. On the other side, it was above all on the Russian front that the Central Powers were hampered from the beginning by lack of an overall commander. Solutions were suggested, but not adopted. Thus in November 1914 Archduke Frederick's staff suggested that he should be placed in charge of the Eastern front with Ludendorff as his chief of staff, while GdI Conrad became

739See also Wetzell, "Der Bündniskrieg" (Berlin, 1937), pp. 42 ff.

overall commander-in-chief of the Aus-Hung. forces. It was not until the summer of 1916, after the catastrophes of Luck and Okna, that the majority of the Eastern front was placed under GFM Hindenburg (who was succeeded at the end of August by GFM Prince Leopold of Bavaria, with Colonel Hoffmann as his chief of staff). This arrangement proved its worth in the defensive victories over the Russians in fall 1916 and summer 1917, and in the allied counter-offensive which followed the latter operation. The glorious and fruitful campaign against Serbia in fall 1915 also took place under a unified command structure. However, it ended with a serious argument, and temporarily a complete rift, between Conrad and Falkenhayn.

B. The major phases of the war

1. The period of the greatest military opportunities (in 1914-15)

If the Central Powers wished to win this war against superior enemy forces and to avoid being literally starved out, they would have to destroy such a large part of the opposing armies that the entire edifice of the hostile coalition would crumble, forcing them to accept peace. It was impossible to predict in detail how this could be accomplished. In any event all possible forces should be concentrated to overthrow one enemy state, the selection of which would depend on military, political and economic factors. The offensive should be carried out by commanders and troops with a strong will to destroy their foe. "Ordinary victories" - in which only some parts of the enemy army were knocked out of action - would be insufficient. Although such triumphs might bring immediate relief, as the war dragged on they would only increase rather than diminish the bitterness of the enemy. This was also true, to an even greater degree, of the strategy of waging battles of attrition in an attempt to make the other side grow tired of the war.

No matter how carefully the Central Powers prepared for any such attempt to win a final victory on land, implementation of their plans would be extremely difficult. Nevertheless, there were points during the war in which victory was possible. There was considerably less chance of success at sea, although it could be argued based on the initial success of the unrestricted submarine campaign that it might have been decisive if executed earlier in the war with greater strength.

The 1914 campaigns

Since the Central Powers intended to anticipate their enemy's attack at the start of any conflict, regardless of the overall strategic situation, they unjustly incurred the odium of being solely guilty of starting the World War. As far as we can tell, the plan of seeking a decision first in the West was never questioned during discussions between the general staffs at Berlin and Vienna after the last years of the 19th century. We do not have space here to examine this issue more closely, but since the war there have always been knowledgeable individuals who have doubted whether the plan was correct. Graf Schlieffen, the author of the basic concept of the French campaign, was certainly motivated in the extreme by a desire to annihilate the enemy. Literature about the war has examined in great detail how Schlieffen's ideas were insufficiently implemented in a watered-down form. Leaving aside the failures of the commanders in 1914, it must be noted that the enemy's tremendous efforts from the start of the war on all three fronts (French, Russian and Serbian) limited the effectiveness of our use of the interior lines. Realistically, it appears that Schlieffen's primary strategic goal - pinning the enemy back against the Swiss border and then destroying them - would have been impossible to realize even if the Battle of the Marne had been successful. Nevertheless, the glorious outset of the German campaign in France was worth while insofar as it pinned down the French and British on this front throughout 1914 and crossed up the Entente's plan for a general offensive. The "Race to the Sea", which for both sides was the inevitable next step, and the actions which followed also kept the attention of the German Army focused on this area until deep into the year 1915; thus they made no further effort to take advantage of the interior lines.

Meanwhile the Eastern front was in general left to fend for itself. Nonetheless the allied commanders in all three of its sectors (Serbian, Galician-Polish and East Prussian) were determined to oppose the enemy by attacking. They didn't utilize the advantages which the latest weaponry provided for numerically

weaker defending forces, but trusted rather in their own superior ability to maneuver which seemed to offer the best chance of dealing with the larger Russian Army. Therefore in 1914 alone Conrad sent the Aus-Hung. northern forces to attack four times; he initiated three further offensives prior to the fall of Przemysl.

Similarly FZM Potiorek strove to overcome the difficulties of the war with Serbia with a thrust into the enemy's territory. He felt compelled to adopt this course because of the length of the border, the political sensitivity of the Monarchy's South Slavic territory (with its long coastline) and the lack of railroads running parallel to the front. The last, but not least, factor to consider was pressure from the Foreign Ministry to win the adherence of Bulgaria to the Central Powers with a quick and highly-visible victory. However, there is no reason to doubt the Feldzeugmeister's assertion (at the time when he was relieved of his post) that he never had any exaggerated hopes for success. After three offensives, in which his own forces suffered very large casualties (some of which could have been avoided), he at least crippled the gallant and experienced Serbian Army - probably to a greater extent than by carrying out a defensive campaign. This result of Potiorek's offensive made it possible for the high command in 1915 to remove units from the Balkan forces, first to reinforce the Carpathian front and then to build up the defenses on the Isonzo.

A whole chapter could be devoted to the dual role of the k.u.k. 2nd Army at the start of the war. As explained in Volume I, the problem was caused by the unclear political situation in the last week of July 1914. The offensive in Serbia certainly drew in units which otherwise would have been available to the Aus-Hung. northern armies. Thus from the very beginning the Russian Southwestern Front was larger than Archduke Frederick's armies, and its superiority grew ever larger after the start of September. At the end of October the allies in Galicia and Poland were outnumbered by 300 battalions.

Nevertheless, even before Conrad's forces were fully assembled he sent them to attack, starting on the left wing. His plan was to decisively defeat the Russian Southwestern Front by having the Aus-Hung. forces execute a gigantic pivot to the right, driving the Russians through Poland and Volhynia into the area south of the Pripyat marshes; then the enemy would be vulnerable to destruction due to isolation from their sources of supply. Conrad's decision to attack - and to do so from the left wing - has also been subjected to much criticism. But critics should

take note of the obvious fact that from the first day of the battle events compelled the leadership to shift the main effort away from the left and toward the center. Whatever one might think of the details of Conrad's plan, his acceptance of the Russian challenge in the September battle was of historical greatness. Thus the Aus-Hung. high command displayed considerable will power, although they could only delay, not change, the outcome. And it's tragic that in the last days of August the k.u.k. northern armies were perhaps closer to success over Ivanov's western wing than they realized at the time.

In this connection we need to again mention that Conrad hoped to receive direct help - which didn't arrive - from the German Eastern army. It's certainly true that Hindenburg's first campaign in East Prussia was of assistance by tying down strong Russian forces. At Tannenberg the German commander had created an ideal example of a battle of destruction, which wasn't matched in any later phase of the war. But this action and its aftermath also demonstrated how difficult it is to completely annihilate an enemy, and how it was never enough during the World War to wipe out just part of a combatant state's force. This was the basis on which Falkenhayn developed his concepts, which came to a bitter end in the hell of Verdun. He believed the solution was to wear down the enemy. However, this idea was sharply disputed in the HQ of the Aus-Hung. supreme command and of Germany's generals in the East. The principal decisions of the allied commanders in this theater were still based on their will to gain a decisive victory, although as time passed implementation of strategy was hampered by shortage of resources. The battles of Lodz-Lowicz and of Limanowa-Lapanow in 1914 provided conspicuous evidence of the unbroken, single-minded search for a decisive triumph which also underlay planning in 1915. At the start of the war the Aus-Hung. leadership proposed that as the Russians' "steamroller" moved far to the west they could be cut off in a double envelopment from the Carpathians and from East Prussia, a concept which was revived in the second year of the conflict.

The 1915 campaigns

The Russians on the other hand decided to try their luck in yet another onslaught against the bastion of East Prussia. Perhaps they could gain in 1915 the goal that had eluded them in 1914 - to meet with their Western allies in Berlin! Meanwhile the Stavka grudgingly had to note the fact that their troops in the Carpathians were being drawn into heavy fighting against slowly-advancing allied columns. In February 1915 Hindenburg won a rather substantial, although dearly-bought and indecisive,

triumph in the second battle of the Masurian Lakes. This led to one of the fateful decisions of the war - the Russians abandoned for good their offensive plans against Germany and concentrated all their strength on the Carpathian front, where Przemysl finally fell into their hands. When Conrad initiated the attack in the Carpathians, it's certain that he regarded the relief of this fortress as only one of the potential fruits of victory. But to an increasing extent Przemysl became a test of honor for the entire k.u.k. armed forces, a sentiment to which the high command itself were by no means immune. In the entire Carpathian campaign, at least from the end of February, the k.u.k. AOK concentrated as if hypnotized upon this fortress, which was running out of provisions. They paid for this basic error (of sending entire armies to relieve a city despite extremely unfavorable geographical and meteorological conditions) during the very dramatic course of the Easter Battle. In the hour of Austria-Hungary's greatest need its allies committed a few divisions to this action when it reached its height, a welcome repayment for the help which the k.u.k. Army had rendered in 1914 by sacrificing their most effective and irreplaceable forces for the common cause.

The unfortunate course of the winter campaign in the Carpathians also played a part in the decision of the Italians at the start of March to seek their fortune at the side of the foes of their erstwhile allies. At Easter, while battle raged in the Carpathians and the first spring winds blew over the icy mountain heights, there could no longer be any doubt that soon a new opponent would fall upon the Central Powers with fresh forces. Meanwhile bad news arrived from the Dardanelles, where the Western Powers had landed units. And the Russians, though also exhausted, were still at the gates of Hungary.

The events leading up to the offensive at Gorlice have already been examined in detail in Volume II, and more recent research hasn't added any new perspective. We just need to note that Conrad and Hindenburg-Ludendorff were still pursuing the strategy of seeking a decisive victory. Falkenhayn, who'd only reluctantly provided his Eastern commanders with reinforcements in late fall of 1914 and at the start of 1915, no longer opposed shifting the main effort to the East. Preparations for the new campaign were complete before the first shots were fired on the Isonzo front.

Thus the new enemy's appearance in the field didn't occur until after Gorlice. The Central Powers' commanders now faced another new and difficult decision - especially since at the same time

the situation at the Dardanelles seemed to be deteriorating. Motivated by his great anger against Italy, Conrad proposed a new campaign of annihilation; he wanted to regard Russia temporarily as a secondary theater, while Aus-Hung. and German forces combined to mount a counterattack from the mountain outlets against the Italians as the latter thrust toward Laibach. But Falkenhayn felt that for the moment the Turkish front was more important; he wanted to employ any available divisions for an offensive against Serbia, and he refused to commit the necessary German forces to the Italian theater. Thus the AOK decided at the last minute to oppose the Italians on the Isonzo and in the border mountains of Carinthia and Tyrol in a defensive campaign. Although as the war went on an increasing number of troops were drawn to the Southwestern front, the eleven defensive battles of the Isonzo will forever provide a shining example of how an Army operating on interior lines can guard a secondary position with a minimal force.

Meanwhile fighting continued to rage on the battlefields of the Northeast. After the recovery of Przemysl and Lemberg, the allies made use of a basic strategic tool, the pincers attack. Mackensen pivoted north to strike from eastern and central Galicia while Hindenburg thrust over the Narew (although he would have preferred to make a wider sweep). As described earlier in this work FM Conrad thus had the satisfaction of seeing the campaign develop along the lines he'd foreseen when he first implemented his pre-war plans during August 1914.

In a recently published work that we've already mentioned⁷⁴⁰, the argument has been forcefully made that at the start of the war the Central Powers should have made their main effort in the East rather than in France; with an envelopment offensive they could have won a decisive success against the Russian forces, which were deployed far to the west. But the summer campaign of 1915, which began under similar but even more favorable circumstances than the 1914 offensive, demonstrated the difficulties of winning an overwhelming victory in battle in the enormous expanse of Russian territory. Hindenburg was unable to win a full triumph even in the smaller "Cannae" which he'd planned on the limited battlefield around Vilna in September. It would have been much harder to win the great "Cannae" over the entire Russian force in Poland and Volhynia which was the boldest dream of imaginative commanders! It's true that as the Russians withdrew from the middle Vistula they suffered enormous losses in men and equipment, which played a major part in causing the revolution which exploded two years later. But they proved, as earlier in

740Wetzell, pp. 31 ff.

their history, to be masterful in retreat. Badly beaten and bleeding from a thousand wounds, by no means had they been destroyed. When they reached the longitude of Pinsk they were no longer endangered by their opponents' pincers attack.

And at the same time another hope was proven to be illusory. Based on the lessons of military geography, the Central Powers had believed that the Russian armies were now permanently divided into two segments - individually easier to deal with - by the zone of forests and swamps along the Pripyat. However, when the Aus-Hung. 4th Army carried out their unsuccessful thrust toward Rovno in September 1915 they learned that in good weather the Pripyat Marshes were by no means as impassable as had been theorized. Within a few weeks of the First Battle of Luck both sides had established north-south fronts running through the entire area of the swamps and manned by substantial forces; although they did have problems with the water-logged terrain, they were still able to carry out noteworthy maneuvers. Both here (on the Stokhod) and in east Galician the Russians proved amply that they by no means considered the war to be lost. Thus a campaign that had greatly exceeded the hopes of the Central Powers still didn't come to a fully satisfactory conclusion. Like France in 1914, Russia in 1915 couldn't be driven completely from the battlefield. The Central Powers still weren't anywhere near solving the problem the basic problem of the war, and time was working against them.

With a few exceptions that only prove the rule, it's possible to annihilate most or all of an enemy force with a wide-ranging envelopment that leads if possible to complete encirclement; preferably one arm of the pincers should be able to push the defenders back against a coast or a neutral border. It is much more difficult to annihilate the enemy if the latter holds a continuous front that is reliably anchored on both wings. In that case it's necessary to penetrate deeply into the network of defending positions, after which it's possible to encircle parts of the front that have remained static. The Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes (in February 1915) proved the feasibility of this type of maneuver. But such victories never could destroy the Russian Army in its entirety. And thus the proud victories of the Central Powers were insufficient to force one of the opposing Great Powers to leave the war.

Meanwhile the allied coalition, which now became the Quadruple Alliance with the adherence of Bulgaria, had another chance to fully destroy an opposing army - in the fall campaign of 1915 against Serbia. But the Central Powers failed to make sufficient

use of their flanking position in Bosnia and Dalmatia. The Austro-Hungarian group on the Drina was too weak to thrust against the Serbian flank; their offensive through Montenegro (carried out against the will of Falkenhayn) took place after the remnants of the Serbian Army had fled through the Albanian mountains to the safety of the coast. Thus in summer 1916 the rebuilt Serbian units were able to enter the Entente's front near Salonika.

During the entire war only one enemy was really driven completely out of the war - tiny Montenegro, which permanently disappeared from the enemy coalition at the start of 1916. We mention this episode, which in itself was a ridiculously small triumph, to illustrate the difficulty of the entire task which confronted the Central Powers' commanders.

The Entente attempted to help their mortally-imperilled allies in the Balkans with a mighty battle in the West (the first that can truly be called a "battle of materiel"), two Italian attacks on the Isonzo, and thrusts by the Russians. The most powerful Russian attack, which led to the New Year's Battle in East Galicia and Bukovina, took place already too late to save Serbia, but none of the offensives actually provided any help. But one of the Entente's counter-measures had ultimately fateful consequences for the Quadruple Alliance - behind the crumbling Serbian front the Franco-British Army of the Orient created a new bulwark covering Salonika. The significance of this development is persuasively explained by the Swiss historian Hermann Stegemann⁷⁴¹:

"The campaign also ended as a half-completed project. And this wasn't due to a mistaken diversion of force⁷⁴² and to enemy counter-attacks as in the West, or to the immensity of the battlefield and the resiliency of the opposing armies as in the East, but caused by a deliberate decision....Falkenhayn, who wished to move on quickly to other plans and a resumption of the strategic offensive in the West, was content with winning a corridor through the Balkans. To avoid providing an advantage to Venizelos in the internal political struggle in Greece, Emperor Wilhelm II wanted Mackensen to halt on the Greek border. And thus Germany failed to follow the correct military course, which would have helped both to solve the problems in the Balkans and to win the wider war."

741Stegemann (Stuttgart, 1919), Vol. III, p. 492

742Here Stegemann is referring to the two corps which Germany sent from Belgium to East Prussia at the start of the war (Vol. I, p. 335).

And thus the Balkan offensive ended, in part in an attempt to save the King of Greece and his country's neutrality (which were doomed anyway). If Falkenhayn had instead permitted the Bulgarians to push ahead to Salonika in mid-December 1915, Romania's position *vis a vis* the Central Powers would have been considerably weakened; perhaps that country would never have joined the Entente. But the only further offensive was Conrad's campaign through the land of the Black Mountain and northern Albania. The threats from Salonika and from the other side of the Transylvanian Alps remained in existence.

2. The crisis of the Central Powers (in 1916)

At the start of 1916, the third year of the war, both coalitions still faced the same problems as when it began. The Entente needed to carry out a simultaneous general offensive, which would now include the Italians and the Army of the Orient - and perhaps even the Romanians as well. But in preliminary discussions it became clear that such a large-scale assault couldn't take place until the middle of the year due to the need to rebuild the Russian Army. Thus for half a year the Central Powers would retain the initiative which they'd seized in the fighting of 1915. And the allied HQ at Teschen and Pless would obviously have to exploit this advantage as much as possible.

Renewal of the offensive against Russia was certainly an option, especially in the south where it would also be possible to settle the question of Romania. But the allied commanders were all too conscious of the fronts where they'd stayed on the defensive during 1915. With the exception of a spring offensive toward Salonika, for which the Germans reluctantly made some preparations and then abandoned, the Central Powers were turning their attention toward the west. Here the Italians' front was undoubtedly the weaker. Even if Conrad's hopes that Italy could be completely defeated were exaggerated, at this time greater success could be achieved in Venetia than in France since the Italian position which jutted forward to the Isonzo could be threatened from the flank and rear. If a severe defeat could be inflicted on the Italians, the advantage at the very least would be to force the Entente to transfer troops from France and thus weaken the Franco-British lines.

This work has already thoroughly described how the fateful separate operations of Verdun and Asiago developed. Falkenhayn decided to wear down his opponents with an offensive, which however failed to achieve its immediate operational objective -

the fortress of Verdun on the Meuse. This will forever remain one of military history's most controversial plans. And the offensive from the south Tyrolean bastion, despite brilliant individual successes by the best regiments of the k.u.k. Army, took place under an unlucky star. The attackers had already reached the last mountain chain when the Russian attack along the Eastern front led to a catastrophe. A few weeks later the Western Powers began their mighty onslaught along the Somme, and the Italians entered Görz. That which the Central Powers had been able to prevent in 1914 and 1915 - a general offensive on all the Entente fronts - had become a bitter reality! The Aus-Hung. Army, and even their German allies, suffered a severe moral crisis which was the most serious of the war (except for the final collapse). Only by exerting their last ounce of strength were the allies able to fend off the unprecedented, stubborn offensives from the west, east and southwest.

Now in the southeast Romania also entered the conflict, although fortunately already too late. Responding to the emergency, the Central Powers and their allies united for a common effort against the new foe. And thus the year 1916, which had featured so many disappointments and losses, ended with a quite conspicuous success - victory over the Romanians, whose capital of Bucharest was occupied by Mackensen's troops on 6 December. As in 1915, when the Imperial German forces marched through the Banat with its Swabian villages, in 1916 they at least had the satisfaction of fighting in an area where Germans had been settled for centuries - Transylvania. As in the days of Prince Eugene, combined forces from central Europe were engaged at the doors of the Orient.

3. The beleaguered fortress (in 1917)

The victorious campaign in Romania had restored the military balance on a makeshift basis. But by the end of 1916 the Central Powers could see the hand-writing on the wall - they were running out of time. And so they were compelled on 12 December 1916 to issue a peace proposal; this initiative, approved by Emperor and King Franz Joseph who meanwhile had passed away, was the first major effort to end the war. Afterwards for more than a year there were diplomatic contacts between the two coalitions, adding to the complexities of developing military strategy. But the timid diplomatic moves and talk of peace was never sufficient to deaden the roar of battle, since the positions of the two sides were so rigid; this was particularly true of the Entente, because of the binding treaties between its members. At the same time

economic warfare intensified when Germany unleashed an unrestricted submarine campaign. And ideological warfare also became increasingly important. This was an area where the Imperial powers were quite ineffective; they failed to take advantage of the limited options at their disposal (as, above all, in the declaration regarding Belgium).

As we stated earlier in this work, the military situation of the Quadruple Alliance in 1917 resembled that of a besieged fortress; the garrison were pinning their hopes of breaking out on the submarine campaign. Although it's pretty certain that North America eventually would have entered the war even if there had been no submarines, their entry probably would have been delayed for many more months if the campaign hadn't started. At least on the psychological front, the impact of the first revolution in Russia - which so greatly weakened that country - was offset when the United States joined the Entente coalition. Wilson's declaration of war on Germany undoubtedly helped the Entente to overcome the severe crisis of spring 1917. In Volume VI we've described how the Central Powers failed to take advantage of their opponents' moment of weakness. Perhaps this was the last opportunity for our side to win a favorable decision by force of arms.

On the other side, all of the Entente's plans for a renewed general offensive came to nothing. The attack by France and England, delayed at first by Hindenburg's voluntary retreat, was defeated in strenuous actions by the German Army's new elastic defensive tactics. Only afterwards did the Italians emerge from their trenches for the Tenth Battle of the Isonzo. And even later the brown waves of Russian troops struck for the last time in eastern Galicia; inspired this time by the demagogue Kerensky, they advanced at a time when the Central Powers were already prepared for a counter-thrust. The Russians' southern wing was driven back behind the pre-war border of their country, which now was wracked by revolutionary fever; in the north they lost Riga and the islands in Moon Sound. Meanwhile the Romanian Army, pushed back into Moldavia but rearmed by the Entente, were able to hold their ground.

But these victories of the Central Powers were only sorties from their besieged fortress. Even the enormously successful campaign from the Isonzo to the Piave in fall 1917 fell into this category, although it did relieve the Aus-Hung. Southwestern front from the pressure they'd felt during the eleventh Isonzo battle while costing the Italians considerable casualties, equipment and territory. This campaign, which was a fine example

of inter-allied cooperation, might perhaps have ended with the destruction of the besieging lines with an advance up the Po to the Maritime Alps - but we will leave this issue open to other authors and individuals interested in alternative histories.

Meanwhile in the West, for the first time the British were forced in the summer to throw the full weight of their military strength into action during the summer. But the progress which they made in the Flanders battle - in fighting amidst bogs, swamps and shell craters - was inconsequential compared to their casualties. The tank battle at Cambrai also ended favorably for the Germans. The latter action was for the enemy primarily a test of their new armored units, which the Germans had declined to develop for themselves. Overall, the course of these battles confirmed the decision by the Western Powers that summer to await a decision after the arrival of the Americans. As previously, the destruction of "German militarism" was the battle cry which rallied the enemy on both sides of the Atlantic.

After the first substantial successes of the unrestricted submarine campaign, as the months went by it became clear that the leaders within the Central Powers' camp who'd opposed this initiative - Emperor Charles above all - had been correct. As in so many other situations, use of this new weapon merely prompted the enemy to develop counter-weapons and new tactics. The defenders of the enormous fortress held by the Quadruple Alliance had been misled when they hoped to find relief on the high seas!

The Central Powers also anticipated some relief from the call for peace which was issued by the Bolsheviks who came to power in the October revolution. But the actual benefit was much less than expected. To secure the lands taken from Russia required considerable manpower which was badly needed, at least as a labor force, in the West. And even front-line combat units were tied down in garrisons in Ukraine, as far distant as the Sea of Azov. Thus the Central Powers were never completely freed from their military burdens in the East.

4. The year of decision (1918)

In 1918 it would be necessary to win a decision in the West before the intervention of the Americans (whose strength was consistently underestimated by the Germans). All available forces would be needed for this effort. Although it wasn't feasible to deploy Turks or Bulgarians on the Western front, Aus-Hung. units might have been used - as was suggested to the OHL

primarily by German General Staff officers who'd taken part in the victorious offensive to the Piave. Proponents of this idea met resistance at the court in Vienna, but if the Germans had vigorously insisted they probably would have prevailed. However, Germany's self-confident military leaders felt they didn't need any direct assistance from allies in the Western battles. They stated that they'd be content if the Aus-Hung. Army conducted a separate offensive against Italy to tie down the enemy or perhaps even force France and England to send more troops over the Maritime Alps.

It was only after the failure of the June offensive in Venetia that the German OHL, functioning as the overall allied supreme command, returned to the idea that they had so light-heartedly dismissed in the winter. They demanded that their allies should furnish troops for the French theater of operations, where the situation was becoming increasingly unfavorable. But this attempt to return to joint allied operations wasn't to be blessed with success as had been the case in 1916. On 18 July the leader of the Quadruple Alliance, Germany, also suffered a decisive turn in fortune in the woods of Villers-Cotterets. In September the alliance's outer positions in Asia and the Balkans fell; loss of the latter front eliminated the Bulgarian Army (at the exact point where Falkenhayn had halted them in December 1915), and immediately menaced the Central Powers' primary defenses. In the last week of October the Franco-British forces, reinforced by fresh American armies, were pushing the Germans back to the border step by step. At this time the Italian Army, reinforced by one British and one French corps, finally came out of their trenches to attack. Their Aus-Hung. opponents were already fatally weakened by hunger and internal revolution, although in several instances they still displayed surprising resilience. A few days after the elimination of the k.u.k. armed forces the glorious but battered German Army also surrendered. Time had decided the contest against the Central Powers and their allies!

Although the final decision occurred on the battlefield, it was merely the outcome of a primarily political and economic development. The Central Powers finally had to succumb, but not because the enemy had braver troops or better generals. In the painful twilight of his life, Conrad von Hötzendorf wrote that "neither the Central Powers nor the Entente had any extraordinarily brilliant leader."⁷⁴³ But none of the generals of the enemy coalition ever developed plans to match those which led to the victorious battles of Tannenberg, Lodz, Limanowa-Lapanow, Gorlice, Hermannstadt, and Flitsch-Tolmein. Considered overall,

743Conrad, Vol. IV, p. 260

the soldiers of the Quadruple Alliance displayed courage and a spirit of self-sacrifice which was never surpassed and often not equaled by their opponents. The spirit and soldierly virtues of the German Army were evident in fall 1918 as they retreated under enormous enemy pressure, and in the Habsburg Army as they fought their last battle in the mountains between the Brenta and the Piave. The war was decided not by a spiritual ideal, but by the brute force of superior numbers and arms. The Central Powers were defeated by larger enemy forces, by hunger, and by economic need. Such was their tragedy, but also their consolation. And this is no reflection on the soldierly accomplishments and sacrifices by their opponents on the other side of the barbed wire, which are certainly worthy of respect.⁷⁴⁴ Anyone who belittles the achievements of our opponents diminishes our own glory.

Bearing all these facts in mind, and reviewing the course of the war once last time, we can identify the years 1914 and 1915 as the period in which purely military action was more important than the slowly-intensifying economic and ideological conflicts. In 1916 the military and non-military aspects of the war were equally important. Perhaps in either of these periods there was one or more points at which a great genius could have won victory for the Central Powers; this genius would have needed to overcome the enemy's physical and material advantages by exploiting his own side's spiritual and psychological advantages. Our review has indicated how difficult such an achievement would have been. In 1917 the chances for the Central Powers to achieve military victory noticeably lessened. Even the apparently-justified hopes generated by the German Army's "Great Battle in France" in spring 1918 proved to be illusory. Although the Western Powers weren't strong enough to oppose their opponents' onslaught with a counter-thrust, their forces sufficed to allow them to wait for the Americans. This was evident during the critical final days of March. Destiny could no longer be averted. The incomparably heroic fight of the Quadruple Alliance was doomed to an undeserved, tragic ending.

744The casualties of the warring armies are summarized - to the extent possible given the widely-varying statistics - in an appendix. The numbers of fatal casualties per one citizen were as follows - 2000 in the United States of North America, 107 in Russia, 79 in Italy, 66 in England, 50 in Austria-Hungary, 35 in Germany, 28 in France and 11 in Serbia. (Riebicke, "Was brauchte der Krieg?" [Berlin, 1936], p. 100)

5. Austria-Hungary's armed forces in their last struggle

The World War of 1914-18 proved to be the last stand of the Habsburg armed forces. For more than three centuries professional armies had waged war to defend the ancient Monarchy, but now an army based on universal conscription entered the lists; Austria-Hungary's peoples in arms were its last defenders. The bloody conflict took an unfortunate turn, and resulted in the collapse of both the Army and the realm. But this tragic fact shouldn't overshadow their accomplishments. The Habsburgs' soldiers didn't always have good luck in their last battles, and a bitter fate decreed that at the end the glorious standards were allowed to sink from the exhausted hands of their bearers. But the truth, proven thousands of times, is that in general the war was carried on with the greatest honor, maintaining a tradition that was as proud as or prouder than any other army's.

At the war's outset the Army immediately was engaged with opponents worthy of respect, whose ranks contained troops with recent combat experience. The duty of our forces in the south, with barely sufficient numbers, was to neutralize the gallant Serbs in a campaign of unparalleled difficulty. In the north the k.u.k. soldiers displayed their willingness to die in a gigantic diversionary operation which served to shift the weight of the Russian millions away from the back door to Germany. To win this goal, the Army paid with the blood of its best officers and men. In late autumn of 1914 Austria-Hungary's armed forces fought with such determination in the direct defense of Germany's eastern border that Falkenhayn characterized their performance as "self-sacrifice." In true comradeship with Hindenburg's warriors they defended Western culture in battles that will remain glorious forever. Thereafter they continued to fight willingly - in the Carpathians during the winter, then once more on the battlefields of Galicia, Poland and Volhynia and finally in the Balkans again. Sometimes confronted with tasks beyond their strength, the men always fought with distinction. The k.u.k. Army were engaged on the Isonzo and in the mountains of Carinthia and Tyrol, on the Piave and among the Sieben Gemeinde. Whether among woods or fields of stone, whether in ice storms or tropic heat, and even (as often happened) when defending insufficiently prepared positions, they demonstrated that their bravery was second to none. Even when the Monarchy itself began to crack apart from deep fissures, the traditional cohesion of the Army continued to demonstrate its astounding power. Its will to exist even survived after the state was already dissolving. In the end the peoples of the Monarchy - among them the Germans who had been its bulwark - abandoned the glorious old standards. And even so the

mortally-wounded armed forces struck some final blows before expiring.

On a map the deeds of the Imperial Army in the centuries prior to the World War can be traced "over all of central Europe and far beyond. The trail leads in the west to Paris and Calais, and in the south to Madrid and Sicily. In the east the Imperial standards in our forefathers' day had already been carried to the mouth of the Danube and later (in 1812) to the edge of the great Pripyat swamps. In the north the regiments reached Stralsund and the Danish Belt. The Navy fought heroic actions as far afield as Port Said and Acre in Palestine. In its last tragic war, Austria-Hungary's armed forces - in true brotherhood with their German allies - once more defended the outer borders of a large part of this area. Just before the end they held positions in the lagoons near Venice, on the Sea of Azov, in the Argonne Forest, and in front of the gates of Valona. Their batteries were firing near Damascus. Stationed almost everywhere on enemy soil, the armed forces met their undeserved end on All-Souls' Day of 1918, a few days before the great catastrophe also engulfed the German Army."⁷⁴⁵

The glorious Army of the Danube Monarchy, which sank to its death in November 1918 amidst the thunder of a battle that had long been hopeless, had during much of its history also been the Army of the German Emperor. Half of the 400 years of its existence were filled with bloody actions; for 100 years there were wars with France in defense of the Rhine and of the bastion of upper Italy. The Turkish wars maintained the areas of German settlement in the east. And finally the World War, due to the close alliance between the two empires and armies, was fought as much for the existence of Germany as of the Danube Monarchy. Thus many German traditions perished along with the old Austrian Army.⁷⁴⁶

The Habsburg army, whose traditions reached back to the time of Wallenstein and even to that of the last knights, has ceased to exist. It was not only an extraordinarily effective instrument of war, but also the product of historically important cultural factors that are gone beyond recall. We have now completed our narrative of its last heroic battles. For all their simplicity these volumes are intended to be a monument, perhaps more

745Glaise-Horstenau, in Linnebach's "Deutscher Heeresgeschichte" (Hamburg, 1936), p. 360

746TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The next paragraph is an extended tribute to the strictly German-speaking soldiers of the Habsburg Monarchy, omitted here.

impressive than any product of iron or stone.

X. APPENDICES

Appendix # 1

Major troop movements by rail during 1918 (see Beilagen 12 and 24 of the original text).

Months shown are those when the movements were initiated. German units are shown in *italics*.

Besides the specific data shown, between Jan and June 1918 a total of 1739 trains were used for smaller formations; the total from July to October was 1318 trains; these movements were part of

- . the ongoing dismantlement of the Eastern front,
- . the transfer of batteries to receive new weapons, and
- . (through mid-year) troop movements connected to the reorganization of the k.u.k. Army (creation of new IR, etc.)

JANUARY 1918

- . Movement to or behind the Russian front:
 - . 15 ID (actually started on 28 Dec 1917) - From Tarnopol to Kovel (30 trains)
 - . XII Corps HQ (and directly assigned small units) - From Molczadz to Kopyczynce (31 trains)
 - . XXII Corps HQ - From Grywiatki to Sokal (5 trains)
- . Movement to or behind the Italian front:
 - . 9 CD - From Körösmezö to Conegliano (28 trains)
 - . Archduke Joseph's Army Group HQ - From Klausenburg to Vittorio (3 trains)
 - . 70 Hon ID - From Hejjasfalva to Portogruaro (37 trains)
 - . 31 ID - From Nepolokoutz to Conegliano (54 trains)
 - . 1 CD - From Ditro to Codroipo (28 trains)
 - . VI Corps HQ - From Czikszentsimon to Pergine (3 trains)
 - . XXVI Corps HQ - From Neu Sadagora to Primolano (3 trains)
 - . 42 Hon ID - From Nepo-Koutz to Matarello (55 trains)
 - . 26 Sch Div - From Powursk to Matarello (41 trains)
- . Movement from Russia to various German fronts
 - . 223 ID - From Potutory to Krymno (30 trains)
 - . 33 Res ID - From Zloczow to Krymno (37 trains)
 - . HQ of Süd Army (and directly assigned small units) - From Czortkow to Krymno (15 trains)
 - . 86 ID - From Lemberg to Krymno (36 trains)
 - . 10 Ersatz ID - From Dunajow to Krymno (38 trains)
- . Movement from Italy to various German fronts:
 - . 5 ID (started on 23 Dec 1917) - From Lavis to Kufstein (59 trains)
 - . 26 ID - From Prvacina to Salzburg (59 trains)

- . HQ of 14th Army - From Prvacina to Salzburg (19 trains)
- . Alpenkorps - From Prvacina to Salzburg (80 trains)
- . 200 ID - From St Luzia to Passau (68 trains)
- . Movement involving Assistenz (interior) service: A number of small formations to Bohemia, Moravia, Poland, Lower Austria and Hungary (39 trains)

FEBRUARY 1918

- . Movements to or behind the Russian front:
 - . 21 Sch Div - From Trent to Zloczow (20 trains)
 - . 106 Lst ID - From Toblach to Lublin (22 trains)
- . Movements to or behind the Italian front:
 - . 1 FA Bde - From Zablocze to Lavis (15 trains)
 - . 27 ID - From Ozydow to Trent (48 trains)
 - . 38 Hon ID - From Zaleszczyki to Matarello (56 trains)
- . Movement from Russia to various German fronts
 - . 224 ID - From Iwaniczy to Krymno (30 trains)
 - . 1 LW ID - From Kamien to Krymno (30 trains)
 - . 197 ID - From Zloczow to Krymno (40 trains)
 - . 241 ID - From Zloczow to Krymno (30 trains)
- . Movement from Italy to Germany: Jaeger Div - From Prvacina to Salzburg (49 trains)
- . Movement involving Assistenz (interior) service: Infantry of the Edelweiss ID from south Tyrol - IR # 14 to Vienna, # 59 to Felixdorf, # 107 to Prague, # 114 to Prerau (total was 13 trains)

MARCH 1918

- . Movements to and in occupied Ukraine⁷⁴⁷: 5 Hon CD - From Dorna Watra to Rybnica (23 trains)
- . Movements to or behind the Italian front:
 - . 46 Sch Div - From Radziechow to Pordenone (53 trains)
 - . 56 FA Bde - From Bubnow to Matarello (11 trains)
 - . XIII Corps HQ - From Zastawna to Aquaviva (4 trains)
 - . 32 ID - From Sokal to Mezzo-Corona (51 trains)
- . Movement to the Western front: Heavy artillery and labor companies - From Cracow to German border at Oderberg and from Innsbruck to German border at Kufstein (71 trains)
- . Movement from Russia to various German fronts:
 - . 237 ID - From Pukow to Krymno (27 trains)
 - . 6 Res ID - From Zloczow to Krymno (31 trains)
 - . 232 ID - From Pukow to Krymno (31 trains)
 - . 10 LW ID - From Iwaniczy to Krymno (24 trains)
 - . 14 Cav Bde - From Kamien to Krymno (9 trains)

⁷⁴⁷For units which crossed from the standard to Russian gauge lines the number of trains was actually double what is shown here, since they had to transfer during the journey to trains built to travel on the Russian/Ukrainian lines.

- . . Bavarian Ersatz ID - From Zloczow to Krymno (38 trains)
- . Movement from Romania to various German fronts:
 - . 76 Res ID - From Verciorova to Bodenbach (38 trains)
 - . 109 ID - From Riu Vadului to Oderberg (36 trains)
- . Movement from Italy to Germany
 - . 117 ID - From St Luzia to Salzburg (48 trains)
 - . Württemberg Mtn Arty Bn and MG detachments - From St Luzia to Salzburg (10 trains)
- . Movements involving Assistenz (interior) service:
 - . Infantry of 51 Hon ID - From Felsöborgo to Kevevara (18 trains)
 - . Infantry of 40 Hon ID - From Hadikfalva to Croatia, north Bosnia and Fiume (23 trains)
 - . Infantry of 39 Hon ID - From Kronstadt to Zombor (31 trains)
 - . Infantry of 7 ID - From Madefalva to Graz (29 trains)

APRIL 1918

- . Movements to and in occupied Ukraine: 34 ID - From Czernowitz to Odessa (12 trains)
- . Movements to or behind the Italian front:
 - . 8 CD - From Kronstadt to Passian (28 trains)
 - . 28 Lst Inf Bde - From Czikszentsimon to Sacile (9 trains)
 - . 64 Hon FA Bde - From Zabolafüresztelep to Casarsa (12 trains)
 - . 3 CD - From Kezdi-Vasarhely to Pordenone (22 trains)
 - . Parts of 7 ID - From Maros-Vasarhely to Casarsa (8 trains)
 - . 5 ID - From Neu Sadagora to Conegliano (42 trains)
 - . 51 Hon ID - From Miskolcz to Sacile (40 trains)
 - . 10 CD - From Czikszentdomokos to Sacile (29 trains)
 - . 6 CD - From Neu Sadagora to Matarello (30 trains)
 - . 16 ID - From Zablatow to St Michele (34 trains)
 - . 18 FA Bde - From Nagyszilos to Lavis (9 trains)
 - . 40 Hon FA Bde - From Zagreb to Matarello (19 trains)
 - . 39 Hon FA Bde - From Zombor to Lavis (27 trains)
 - . 74 Hon ID - From Radautz to Neumarkt in Tyrol (29 trains)
 - . 12 Reit Sch Div - From Lubitow to Toblach (28 trains), then after a brief delay from Toblach to Pianzano (29 trains)
- . Movement from Romania to various German fronts:
 - . 216 ID - From Verciorova to Bodenbach (36 trains)
 - . 115 ID - From Riu Vadului to Oderberg (37 trains)
 - . 12 Bavarian ID - From Riu Vadului to Bodenbach (44 trains)
- . Movements involving Assistenz (interior) service:
 - . Infantry of 25 ID - From Zablocze to Ostrau in Moravia (14 trains)

- . Infantry of 21 Sch Div - From Ozydow to Przemysl (21 trains)
- . 45 Sch Div - From Iwaniczy to Nyiregyhaza (36 trains)

MAY 1918

- . Movements to and in occupied Ukraine: 15 ID - From Hejjasfalva to Ekaterinoslav (27 trains)
- . Movements to and behind the Italian front:
 - . 36 ID - From Neu Sadagora to Pianzano (45 trains)
 - . 12 FA Bde - From Felsöborgo to San Stino di Livenza (11 trains)
 - . 11 Hon CD - From Czernowitz to Cordignano (20 trains)
 - . 37 Hon FA Bde - From Gyergyoszentmiklos to Sacile (13 trains)
 - . 4 "K" FA Bde - From Neu Sadagora to Codroipo (7 trains)
 - . 53 ID - From Sepsi-Szt.-György to Sacile (28 trains)
 - . 47 FA Bde - From Madefalva to Annone (9 trains)
 - . 52 FA Bde - From Riu Vadului to Persen (14 trains)
 - . 60 FA Bde - From Riu Vadului to Borgo (11 trains)
 - . 15 FA Bde - From Neu Sadagora to Gringno (12 trains)
 - . 25 FA Bde - From Krasne to Calliano (7 trains)
 - . Edelweiss ID - From Vienna and Budweis to Trent (24 trains)
 - . 2 FA Bde - From Ustilug to Calliano
 - . Heavy artillery batteries from the Western front - Entered Austria at Kufstein (to Trent) and Salzburg (to Udine) (47 trains)

JUNE 1918

- . Movement to and in occupied Ukraine: 155 Hon FA Bde - From Gyergyoszentmiklos to Proskurow (7 trains)
- . Movements to and in occupied Romania:
 - . 216 Hon Inf Bde - From Gymesközoplok to Caracalu (19 trains)
 - . 143 Inf Bde - From Marosheviz to Cotesti (7 trains)
- . Movement to the Italian front: Orientkorps - From Belgrade to Portogruaro (10 trains)
- . Movement from Romania to Germany: 9th Army HQ plus Etappen Command # 15 - From Riu Vadului to Oderberg
- . Movement involving Assistenz (interior) service): Infantry of 38 Hon ID - From Matarello to Budapest (10 trains)

JULY 1918

- . Movement to the Eastern borders: 1 CD - From Portogruaro to Rzeszow (22 trains)
- . Movement into Ukraine: 4 CD - From Drohobycz to Podwolocyska (23 trains)

- . Movement from Ukraine to Romania: 72 FA Bde - To Riu Vadului (12 trains)
- . Movements to the coast (units then sent by sea to reinforce Albania):
 - . 47 FA Bde - From Pravisdomini to Fiume (11 trains)
 - . Orientkorps - From Pramaggiore to Fiume (8 trains)
- . Movements to the Italian front:
 - . 34 ID - From Ukraine to Casarsa (65 trains)
 - . 2 ID - From Rogozno to Portogruaro (27 trains)
 - . 7 ID - From Vienna and Graz to Pravisdomini (25 trains)
 - . 39 Hon ID - From Budapest to Borgo (31 trains)
 - . 25 ID - From Ozydow (etc.) to Sacile (46 trains)
 - . 40 Hon ID - From Zagreb to Costa (28 trains)
- . Movements to the Western front:
 - . 35 ID - From Cordignano, left Austria at Salzburg (71 trains)
 - . 1 ID - From Castelbello, left Austria at Salzburg (31 trains)
 - . XVIII Corps HQ, miscellaneous artillery, and 15,000 POW as laborers - From Persen, left Austria at Kufstein (25 trains)
 - . 1 FA Bde - From Bruck-Fusch, left Austria at Kufstein (25 trains)
- . Movement involving interior (Assistenz) service: Infantry of 32 ID - From Cordignano to Vienna, Prague and Graz
- . Movement to rebuild in interior: 1 FA Bde - From Primolano to Kundl & Bruck-Fusch (15 trains)

AUGUST 1918

- . Movement into Ukraine: 187 Lst Inf Bde - From Czernowitz to Lipkany (6 trains)
- . Movement within occupied Volhynia: (allied) 1st Ukrainian Sich Div - From Vladimir Volynsky to Kovel (5 trains)
- . Movements to the Italian front:
 - . 37 Hon ID - From Kronstadt to Pordenone (40 trains)
 - . 21 Sch Div - From Lemberg to Cordignano (38 trains)
 - . 43 Sch Div - From Bukovina and Bessarabia to Porden (27 trains)
 - . 38 Hon ID - From Slavisch Brod to Roncegno (30 trains)

SEPTEMBER 1918

- . Movements to and along the Romanian border:
 - . 1 CD - From Zbaraz to Madefalva (22 trains)
 - . 216 Hon Inf Bde - From Riu Vadului to Sepsi Szt. György (25 trains)
 - . 1 "K" FA Bde - From Udine to Csikszereda (5 trains)
- . Movements to new Balkan front
 - . 9 ID - From Udine to Vranje (57 trains)

- . Alpenkorps - From Bodenbach to Belgrade and Kevevara (84 trains)
- . LIII Corps HQ and 219 ID - From Oderberg to Belgrade (58 trains)
- . Movement to the coast (units then sent by sea to reinforce Albania): 9 CD - From Udine to Fiume (17 trains)
- . Movements to the Western front:
 - . 106 Lst ID (with parts of 106 FA Bde) - From Lublin, left Austria at Kufstein (33 trains)
 - . 37 Hon ID - From Sacile, left Austria at Salzburg (40 trains)
- . Movements to rebuild in the interior:
 - . 37 FA Bde - From Sacile to Brixlegg (15 trains)
 - . Parts of 106 FA Bde - From Innsbruck to Brixlegg (7 trains)

OCTOBER 1918

- . Movement from Ukraine to Bukovina: Ukrainian Legion - To Czernowitz (4 trains)
- . Movement within occupied Volhynia and Poland: 224 ID - From Brody & Kovel to Sosnowice (45 trains)
- . Movements to new Balkan front:
 - . 217 ID - From Crimea initially by sea, then in 26 trains from Braila and Varna to Pirot and Palanka
 - . 30 ID - From Odessa initially by sea, then in 58 trains from Braila to Belgrade
 - . 4 "K" FA Bde - From Udine to Indija and Orsova (7 trains)
 - . 4 CD - From Yusovka (by Ekaterinoslav) to Szabadka and Indija (24 trains)
 - . XI Corps HQ - From Mariupol to Budapest and Ujvidek (4 trains)
 - . 59 ID - From Alexandrovsk (by Ekaterinoslav) to Brcko (42 trains)
 - . 48 FA Bde - From Udine to Brod in Bosnia (12 trains)
 - . 32 ID - From Vienna, Graz and Prague to Krivaja (23 trains)
 - . 10 CD - From Pergine to Brcko (16 trains)
 - . 155 Hon ID - From Proskurow as far as Wallachia (12 trains; movement incomplete)
 - . 15 ID - From Pawlograd (by Ekaterinoslav); movement incomplete; 9 trains reached Hungary, the first of which got to Szeged but was diverted to Budapest where the others also wound up
 - . 27 ID - Movement was only initiated (3 trains left Trent and got as far as Budapest)
 - . 38 Hon ID - Movement was only initiated (1 train left Trent and got as far as Budapest)

- . Movements behind the Italian front:
 - . 43 FA Bde - From Mezocorona & Lavis to Sacile (12 trains)
 - . 36 ID - From Branzoll to Pordenone (19 trains; movement incomplete, and last train was halted at Tarvis)
- . Movement to the Western front: 37 FA Bde - From Brixlegg (9 trains)

Appendix # 2 - Text of the armistice and peace treatiesA. The Peace Treaty with Ukraine⁷⁴⁸

Concluded at Brest-Litovsk on 9 February 1918

Treaty of Peace between, on the one side, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey and, on the other side, the People's Republic of Ukraine

Since during the course of the current World War the Ukrainian people have declared their independence and expressed a wish to restore peace between their republic and the powers that have been at war with Russia, the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey are concluding a peace treaty with the government of the People's Republic of Ukraine. They want this to be the first step to a lasting world peace settlement that will be honorable to all parties. Thus not only will we put an end to the horrors of war but also restore friendly relations between peoples in the political, legal, economic and cultural areas. For this purpose the above-mentioned governments have empowered the following representatives:

- . For the Imperial German government - the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Imperial Privy Councillor Herr Richard von Kühlmann
- . For the common k.u.k. Austro-Hungarian government - the Minister of the Imperial and Royal House for Foreign Affairs, Privy Councillor to his k.u.k. Apostolic Majesty Ottokar Graf Czernin von und zu Chudenitz
- . For the Royal Bulgarian government - Minister President Dr. Vasil Radoslavov, Minister-Delegate Andrea Toshev, Minister-Delegate Ivan Stoyanovich, Military-Plenipotentiary Colonel Peter Nachev, and Dr Theodor Anastasov
- . For the Imperial Ottoman government - His Excellency the Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Nessimi, His Excellency Ibrahim Hakki Pasha, and General of Cavalry Ahmed Izzet Pasha
- . For the government of the People's Republic of Ukraine (representatives of the central Ukrainian "Rada") - Messrs. Alexander Severyuk, Mikola Lyubinsky and Mikola Levitsky.

These duly-authorized representatives assembled in Brest-Litovsk for the peace negotiations; after considering various proposals, they have agreed on the following terms.

748AOK, Secret Order # 1035 of 15 February 1918. Published in Niemeyer's "Die völkerrechtlichen Urkunden des Weltkrieges" ('Jahrbuch des Völkerrechts', Vol. VIII; Munich and Leipzig, 1922; pp. 1 ff.)

ARTICLE I

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey on the one side, and the people's government of Ukraine on the other, declare that the state of war between them is ended. The parties concluding this treaty are determined to live in the future in peace and friendship with each other.

ARTICLE II

1. The border between Austria-Hungary and the People's Republic of Ukraine shall be the same as that which existed between the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Russia before the outbreak of the current war in the areas where the two states were adjacent to each other.

2. Farther north the boundary of the Ukrainian People's Republic will run, in general, from Tarnograd along the line Bilgoraj - Szcezebrzszyn - Krasnostaw - Pugaszow - Radin - Meshireche - Sarnaky - Mielnik - Wysoko-Litowsk - Kamenets-Litowsk - Pruschany - Wygonowskoyesce. The details of this border will be determined by a joint commission based on the ethnic situation, taking into consideration the wishes of the local populations.

3. In any case in which the Ukrainian people's republic later establishes a common border with another member of the Quadruple Alliance, special agreements will be made.

ARTICLE III

Evacuation of occupied areas will occur immediately after ratification of this peace treaty. The way in which the evacuation is carried out, and how the formerly-occupied territories are handed over, will be determined by plenipotentiaries of the parties involved.

ARTICLE IV

Diplomatic and consular relations between the parties adhering to this treaty will commence immediately after it is ratified. Specific arrangements will be made so that consuls will be exchanged by both sides to the greatest possible extent.

ARTICLE V

The parties adhering to this treaty all renounce any demand for compensation for the costs of the war. This covers their government's expenses for waging the struggle and the price of repairing any damage which the parties or their citizens caused in the course of military operations (including requisitions in enemy territory).

ARTICLE VI

Prisoners of war from both sides are to be sent home, except for those who may not wish to be repatriated and who have received permission to stay in the country where they were held. Any issues arising from this Article will be resolved in individual treaties with the People's Republic of Ukraine, as envisioned in Article VIII (below).

ARTICLE VII

Economic relations between the parties adhering to this treaty will be established as follows:

1. The various parties pledge to immediately restore economic relations and to exchange goods according to the terms in this section. By 31 July of this year the two sides will exchange excess supplies of their most important agricultural and industrial products to address ongoing needs as follows:

a. A commission will be established to decide the types and amounts of products to be exchanged; it will contain an equal number of representatives from the two sides and will start operating immediately after this treaty is signed.

b. Another commission will be established to agree upon the value of the products to be exchanged; it will also contain an equal number of representatives from the two sides.

c. Prices will be expressed in gold on the following basis:

- . 1000 German gold marks = 462 gold "karbovanyek" of the Ukrainian People's Republic = 462 gold rubles of the former Russian Empire (1 ruble = 1/15 Imperial)

- . 1000 Austrian and Hungarian gold crowns = 398 "karbovanyek" plus 78 groschen (in gold) of the former Russian empire (1 ruble = 1/15 Imperial)

d. The actual exchange of goods subject to approval of the commission described in point "a" will be carried out under regulation by central offices set up or controlled by the contracting states.

Exchange of products which aren't subject to approval of the commission will take place in free trade according to the terms of the provisional trade treaty in the following section (2).

2. Unless covered under section 1, economic relations between the parties to this treaty shall be governed by this section (2) on a provisional basis until conclusion of a final trade treaty, or for a period of at least six months after conclusion of peace between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey on the one side and the European states with which they are currently at war, plus the United States of America and Japan. [The remainder of this section states how earlier trade treaties concluded with the Russian Empire were still valid and to what extent they were being altered.]

3. The expiration date of the measures in section 2,

regarding economic relations between Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire on one side and the People's Republic of Ukraine on the other, can be extended by mutual agreement of the parties. If the events leading to expiration - as set out in section 2 - don't occur before 30 June 1919 the parties to the treaty can continue trade relations on the same basis for another six months.

4. [This section addresses tariff issues]
5. [This section addresses trade with neutral states]

ARTICLE VIII

Several issues will be addressed in individual treaties with the People's Republic of Ukraine -

- . restoration of official and private legal relations,
- . exchange of prisoners of war and civilian internees,
- . amnesty questions, and
- . disposition of merchant ships seized by both sides.

These treaties will be considered to be an integral part of the overall peace treaty and will become effective at the same time.

ARTICLE IX

The agreements concluded in this peace treaty make up an undividable whole.

ARTICLE X

The definitive texts of this treaty are:

- . for issues concerning Germany and Ukraine, the German and Ukrainian versions,
- . for issues concerning Austria-Hungary and Ukraine, the German, Hungarian and Ukrainian versions,
- . for issues concerning Bulgaria and Ukraine, the Bulgarian and Ukrainian versions, and
- . for issues concerning Turkey and Ukraine the Turkish and Ukrainian versions.

CONCLUSION

The current treaty must be ratified. The ratification agreements should be exchanged in Vienna as soon as possible. Unless otherwise indicated, terms of the treaty become effective upon ratification. The plenipotentiaries are signing and affixing their seals to this document, which was prepared in five copies at Brest-Litovsk on 9 February 1918.

[Followed by the signatures of the delegates]

B. The Peace Treaty with Soviet Russia⁷⁴⁹

Concluded at Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918

Treaty of Peace between, on the one side, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, and Russia on the other side

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey on the one side, and Russia on the other, were determined to put an end to the state of war and to finish peace negotiations as quickly as possible. For this purpose they named the following individuals as their plenipotentiary-representatives:

- . For the Imperial German government - the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Imperial Privy Councillor Herr Richard von Kühlmann; Imperial delegate and plenipotentiary minister Dr. von Rosenberg; Royal Prussian Major General Hoffmann (Chief of the General Staff of the Eastern Command); and Naval Captain Horn.
- . For the common k.u.k. Austro-Hungarian government - the Minister of the Imperial and Royal House for Foreign Affairs, Privy Councillor to His k.u.k. Apostolic Majesty Ottokar Graf Czernin von und zu Chudenitz; and special plenipotentiary ambassador of His k.u.k. Apostolic Majesty Privy Councillor Herr Kajetan Mery von Kapos-Mere.
- . For the Royal Bulgarian government - the royal special envoy and plenipotentiary minister to Vienna Andrea Toshev; Colonel of the General Staff and Royal Bulgarian military plenipotentiary to His Majesty the German Emperor, and aide-de-camp to His Majesty the King of Bulgaria Peter Ganchev; and first secretary of the Royal Bulgarian Legation Dr. Theodor Anastasov.
- . For the Imperial Ottoman government - His Excellency Ibrahim Hakki Pasha (former Grand Vizier, plenipotentiary representative of His Majesty the Sultan in Berlin); and His Excellency Zeki Pasha (General of Cavalry, aide-de-camp to His Majesty the Sultan and military plenipotentiary of His Majesty the Sultan to His Majesty the German Emperor).
- . For the Russian Federal Soviet Republic - Gregory Yakovlevich Sokolnikov (representing the Central Executive Committee of the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies); Lev Mikhailovich Karachan (also representing the Central Executive Committee of the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies); George Vasilevich Chicherin (representing the People's Commissar for External Affairs); and Gregory Ivanovich Petrovsky (People's Commissar for Internal Affairs).

749AOK, Secret Order # 1477 of 22 April 1918. In Niemeyer, Vol. VIII, pp. 15 ff.

These plenipotentiaries, assembled in Brest-Litovsk for the peace negotiations, are exercising their delegated authority to agree upon the following terms.

ARTICLE I

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey - on the one side - and Russia on the other declare that the state of war between them is ended. They are determined henceforth to live in peace and friendship with each other.

ARTICLE II

The parties adhering to this treaty will refrain from any agitation or propaganda directed against the government or any civil or military authorities on the other side. For Russia this obligation extends to the territories occupied by the members of the Quadruple Alliance.

ARTICLE III

Territories west of the line separating the members of the Alliance and Russia are no longer under the authority of the Russian state; this line is indicated on an accompanying map which is an integral part of the treaty. The precise course of the line will be determined by a joint German-Russian commission. The territories in question do not inherit any obligations to Russia stemming from the time when they belonged to that country. Russia will not interfere with the internal development of these territories. Germany and Austria-Hungary intend to determine the future fate of these territories in agreement with their populations.

ARTICLE IV

As soon as a general peace and Russian demobilization are complete, Germany is prepared to evacuate the area east of the line mentioned in Article III, except insofar as indicated otherwise in Article VI. Russia will do everything in its power to quickly evacuate the provinces of eastern Anatolia and to ensure their orderly return to Turkey. Russian troops will evacuate the districts of Ardahan, Kars and Batum without delay. Russia will not interfere with the new domestic and international legal status of these districts but will allow the local populations to re-organize in agreement with neighboring states (especially Turkey).

ARTICLE V

Russia will immediately demobilize its army, including the new units created by the current government. It will either sail its warships into Russian ports where they will remain until the

conclusion of general peace, or disarm them. Warships of the powers still at war with the Quadruple Alliance based on Russian territory will be treated the same as Russian warships. The [submarine] blockade of the Arctic Ocean will remain in effect until the conclusion of general peace. Mines will be immediately removed from the Baltic Sea and also from the waters of the Black Sea still controlled by Russia. Traffic of merchant ships in these naval areas will immediately resume on an unrestricted basis. Mixed commissions will be established to work out details, and in particular the designation of safe routes for ship traffic. These routes will be kept free of floating mines on a permanent basis.

ARTICLE VI

Russia agrees to immediately conclude peace with the People's Republic of Ukraine and to recognize the peace treaty concluded between this state and the Quadruple Alliance. Ukrainian territory will be immediately evacuated by Russian troops and Red Guards. Russia will stop any agitation or propaganda which has been directed against the government or officials of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

Estonia and Livonia will be evacuated without delay by Russian troops and Red Guards. The eastern border of Estonia will run, in general, along the Narva River. The eastern border of Livonia will run, in general, through Lakes Peipus and Pskov to the southwestern corner of the latter, then over Lake Luban toward Liwenhof on the Dvina. Germany will have authority to police Estonia and Livonia until security can be guaranteed by local authorities and new governments are established. Russia will immediately release any arrested or detained citizens of Estonia and Livonia and guarantees that all such individuals will be returned safely home.

Finland and the Aaland Islands will be evacuated as soon as possible by Russian troops and Red Guards; Finnish harbors will be evacuated by the Russian navy and its vessels. As long as the ice prevents the departure of the warships to Russian harbors, only weak crews will be maintained on these ships. Russia will refrain from agitation or propaganda against the government or officials of Finland.

The fortifications on the Aaland Islands will be demolished as soon as possible. Germany, Finland, Russia and Sweden will negotiate separately regarding the permanent demilitarization of these Islands and the passage of shipping through the area. Germany wishes that other states adjacent to the Baltic should join these discussions.

ARTICLE VII

Since Persia and Afghanistan are independent states, the parties adhering to this treaty promise to respect their political and economic freedom and their territorial integrity.

ARTICLE VIII

Prisoners of war held by both sides will be sent home. Questions arising from this Article will be resolved by individual treaties, as envisioned in Article XI.

ARTICLE IX

The parties adhering to this treaty all renounce any demand for compensation for the costs of the war. This covers their government's expenses for waging the struggle and the price of repairing any damage which the parties or their citizens caused in the course of military operations (including requisitions in enemy territory).

ARTICLE X

Diplomatic and consular relations between the parties adhering to this treaty will commence immediately after it is ratified. Specific arrangements will be made so that consuls will be exchanged by both sides to the greatest possible extent.

ARTICLE XI

Appendices # 2 through 5 of this document address economic relations between the members of the Quadruple Alliance and Russia: # 2 for Germany and Russia, # 3 for Austria-Hungary and Russia, # 4 for Bulgaria and Russia, # 5 for Turkey and Russia.
[The appendices are not included here.]

ARTICLE XII

Several issues will be addressed in individual treaties with Russia -

- . restoration of official and private legal relations,
- . exchange of prisoners of war and civilian internees,
- . amnesty questions, and
- . disposition of merchant ships seized by both sides.

These treaties will be considered to be an integral part of the overall peace treaty and will become effective at the same time.

ARTICLE XIII

The definitive texts of this treaty are:

- . for issues concerning Germany and Russia, the German and Russian versions,
- . for issues concerning Austria-Hungary and Russia, the German, Hungarian and Russian versions,
- . for issues concerning Bulgaria and Russia, the Bulgarian and

Russian versions, and

- . for issues concerning Turkey and Russia, the Turkish and Russian versions.

ARTICLE XIV

The current treaty must be ratified. The ratification agreements should be exchanged in Berlin as soon as possible. The Russian delegation pledges to complete the exchange, as desired by the members of the Quadruple Alliance, within two weeks. Unless otherwise indicated, terms of the treaty become effective upon ratification. The plenipotentiaries are signing and affixing their seals to this document, which was prepared in five copies at Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918.

[Followed by the signatures of the delegates]

C. The Preliminary Peace Treaty of Buftea, 5 March 1918⁷⁵⁰

The undersigned delegates have a common desire to put an end to the state of war between - on one side - Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, and Romania on the other, and to restore peace. The plenipotentiary delegates, all duly accredited, are:

- . For Germany - the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Imperial Privy Councillor Herr Richard von Kühlmann
- . For Austria-Hungary - Minister of the Imperial and Royal House for Foreign Affairs, Privy Councillor to his k.u.k. Apostolic Majesty Ottokar Graf Czernin von und zu Chudenitz
- . For Bulgaria - Vice-President of the Sobranje Dr. Momshilov
- . For Turkey - His Excellency Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha
- . For Romania - Herr C. Argentoianu.

The armistice concluded at Focsani on 9 December 1917 expired on 2 March and its terms are no longer valid effective at noon on 5 March 1918. Therefore a new armistice, to last for fourteen days, is in effect beginning at midnight on 5 March 1918; it can be terminated by either side with three days' notice.

The undersigned delegates are in complete agreement that within this time period a final peace treaty will be concluded based on the following basic points:

750AOK, Secret Order # 1068. Niemeyer, Vol. VIII, pp. 703 ff.

1. Romania cedes Dobruja, as far as the Danube, to the allied powers.
 2. The members of the Quadruple Alliance guarantee that Romanian shipping can pass through Constantza to the Black Sea.
 3. Romania agrees in principle with the Austro-Hungarian demands for rectification of the border between the two states.
 4. Economic measures will be undertaken to address current problems.
 5. The Romanian government is obliged to demobilize at least eight divisions of their Army as soon as possible. The demobilization will be supervised jointly by the HQ of Mackensen's Army Group and of the Romanian high command. As soon as peace is restored between Russia and Romania the other parts of the Romanian Army will be demobilized except those needed to provide security on the Russian-Romanian border.
 6. Romanian troops will immediately evacuate the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.
 7. The Romanian government is obliged to provide all available technical assistance for the railroad transport of troops of the allied powers through Moldavia and Bessarabia to Odessa.
 8. Romania is obliged to immediately discharge from its service any officers still attached from states at war with the Quadruple Alliance; these officers are guaranteed free passage by the members of the Quadruple Alliance.
 9. This treaty is effective immediately. In witness thereof the plenipotentiaries are signing and affixing their seals to this document, which was prepared in five copies at Buftea on 5 March 1918.
- [Followed by the signatures of the delegates]*

D. The Peace Treaty with Romania⁷⁵¹
 Concluded at Bucharest, 7 May 1918

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey - on the one side - and Romania on the other wish to put an end to the state of war between them and to restore friendly relations between their peoples in the political, legal and economic areas. Therefore they are converting the preliminary peace ratified in Buftea on 5 March 1918 into a final peace treaty. For this purpose duly accredited plenipotentiary-representatives of these governments have come together:

751 AOK, Secret Order # 1607 of 30 May 1918. Niemeyer, Vol. VIII,
 pp. 57 ff.

. For the Imperial German government - the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Imperial Privy Councillor Herr Richard von Kühlmann; Imperial Privy Councillor Herr Paul von Koerner; the Director of the Foreign Department, Imperial Privy Councillor Dr. Johannes Kriege; Royal Prussian Major General Emil Hell (Chief of Staff to the HQ of von Mackensen's Army Group); and Imperial Sea Captain Hans Bene.

. For the common k.u.k. Austro-Hungarian government - the Minister of the Imperial and Royal House for Foreign Affairs, Privy Councillor to His k.u.k. Apostolic Majesty Stephan Baron Burian von Rajecz.

. For the Royal Bulgarian government - the Royal Minister-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Vasil Radoslavov; the Royal Finance Minister Herr Dimitri Tonchev; the Royal Major General Peter Tantilov; Herr Ivan Kostov (a member of the National Assembly); and Dr. Lubomir Miletich (a professor at the University of Sofia).

. For the Imperial Ottoman government - the Imperial Foreign Minister Ahmed Nessimy Bey; Imperial Cavalry General Ahmed Izzet Pasha; the Under-Secretary of the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs Rechad Hikmed Bey.

. For the Royal Romanian government - the Royal Prime Minister Herr Alexandru Marghiloman; the Royal Foreign Minister Herr Constantin C. Arion; the Royal plenipotentiary-minister Herr Ioan N. Papiniu; and the special plenipotentiary-minister Herr Mihail N. Burghela.

The delegates have agreed on the terms which follow.

CHAPTER ONE - RESTORATION OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

ARTICLE I

Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey - on one hand - and Romania on the other declare that the state of war between them has ended. The parties to this treaty are determined to henceforth live together in peace and friendship.

ARTICLE II

Diplomatic and consular relations between the parties adhering to this treaty will commence immediately after it is ratified. Additional arrangements will be made for the assignment of consuls by both sides.

CHAPTER TWO - DEMOBILIZATION OF THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES

ARTICLE III

The demobilization of the Romanian Army that is now in progress

will continue immediately after the signature of this peace treaty, in accordance with the stipulations in Articles IV to VII.

ARTICLE IV

The overall military offices, higher command structure and military bureaucracy will continue to exist as envisioned in the last peacetime budget. The 11th to 15th Divisions will continue to demobilize as directed in the [preliminary] Focsani treaty of 8 March 1918.

Among the 1st to 10th Divisions, the two infantry divisions now stationed in Bessarabia - along with the Vanatori battalions attached from the dissolved Vanatori divisions - will be maintained at their wartime strength as will the Romanian Army's two cavalry divisions as long as there is still danger to Romania's borders as a result of the military operations of the allied powers in Ukraine.

The remaining eight infantry divisions will stay in Moldavia, with their staffs and commanders, at a reduced peacetime strength. They will each contain 4 infantry regiments (of 3 battalions), 2 cavalry regiments (of 4 squadrons), 2 field artillery regiments (of 7 batteries), and 1 pioneer battalion plus the necessary technical troops and supply trains (the precise size of which will be decided later). The total infantry strength of these divisions shall not exceed 20,000 men, and the cavalry 3200. The entire personnel of the Romanian Army's artillery branch - including those assigned to the divisions still mobilized - shall not exceed 9000 men.

When the divisions in Bessarabia are finally demobilized they will be reduced to the same lower peacetime status as the eight divisions in Moldavia. All other Romanian units - which won't be maintained in peacetime - shall be dissolved.

The terms of service for draftees shall remain the same as in peace. Reservists, including the enlisted men of the Calarasi regiments, cannot take part in maneuvers until the conclusion of general peace.

ARTICLE V

As for the arms and equipment of Romanian units that are being reduced or dissolved, the guns, machine guns, hand arms, horses, vehicles and ammunition will be kept in storage in occupied Romanian territory, under the supervision of the command of the allied powers, until the conclusion of general peace. The arms depots will be guarded and maintained by Romanian troops under supervision of the allied command. The ammunition supply of the Romanian Army in Moldavia is restricted to 250 rounds for each rifle, 2500 for each machine gun and 150 for each gun.

The Romanian Army has the right, in agreement with the allied command, to exchange worn out arms with new ones from the depots in the occupied territories and to draw ammunition from these depots to replace what they use up.

The divisions still mobilized in Bessarabia can maintain ammunition supplies at authorized wartime levels.

ARTICLE VI

Until the allies evacuate the occupied Romanian territories, the demobilized Romanian units shall remain in Moldavia. The exception is the offices and men required to guard and maintain the weapons and equipment stored under the provisions in Article V above. The demobilized enlisted personnel and reserve officers can return to their homes in the occupied territories. Active and formerly active officers may only return to these areas with the permission of the command of the allied forces.

ARTICLE VII

A general staff officer of the allied powers, and his staff, shall be assigned as a liaison to the Romanian commander-in-chief in Moldavia, while a Romanian general staff officer and his staff shall be assigned as a liaison to the command of the allied forces in the occupied Romanian territories.

ARTICLE VIII

Until the situation in Bessarabia is clarified, the Romanian naval forces (maritime and riverine) shall retain all their manpower and weaponry (except for the personnel specified in Article IX). Afterwards the Navy will be reduced to its peacetime strength.

Exempted from demobilization will be vessels needed on the rivers and the Black Sea to protect merchant shipping and to create mine-free corridors. Immediately after this treaty is signed the necessary river forces will be placed in operation according to special arrangements. The corresponding forces on the high seas shall come under the authority of the Black Sea Nautical-Technical Commission; a Romanian naval officer shall be assigned to establish contact with this Commission.

ARTICLE IX

All personnel of the Army and Navy who in peacetime were employed in harbors or in the merchant marine shall be the first to be discharged during demobilization so they can return to work in their professions.

CHAPTER THREE - CESSION OF TERRITORY

ARTICLE X

Romania's cession of Dobruja, as envisioned in Point # 1 of the preliminary peace treaty, shall be effectuated according to the following stipulations.

. A - Romania is returning to Bulgaria the territory which it received after the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1913, and altering the border in favor of the latter; thus the new Bulgarian frontier in Dobruja, traced on the accompanying map, shall run as follows:

[The original text describes the border in detail; it is omitted in this English translation.]

The accompanying map is an integral part of the peace treaty. As soon as the treaty is signed a commission consisting of representatives of the allied powers shall trace and mark the new boundary line in Dobruja on the spot.

The boundary in the Danube between Romania and the lands ceded to Bulgaria shall follow the river bed. A detailed determination of the course of the river bed shall be made by the two states immediately after the treaty is signed, and it will be marked in fall 1918 when the water is at its lowest level.

. B - Romania is ceding to the allied powers the portion of Dobruja lying north of the line specified in Part A and extending to the Danube between the bend in the river and the Black Sea at St George's Arm. The boundary in the Danube between Romania and the lands ceded to the allied powers shall follow the river bed. A detailed determination of the course of the river bed shall be made by the two parties immediately after the treaty is signed, and it will be marked in fall 1918 when the water is at its lowest level.

The allied powers will ensure that Romania has a secure passage for its merchant shipping through Cernavoda-Konstanza to the Black Sea.

ARTICLE XI

Romania agrees to modify its border in favor of Austria-Hungary. The new frontier, traced on the accompanying map, shall run as follows:

[The original text describes the border in detail; it is omitted in this English translation.]

The accompanying map is an integral part of the peace treaty. As soon as the treaty is signed two joint committees - each containing an equal number of representatives of the two states - shall trace and mark the new boundary line on the spot.

ARTICLE XII

State property in the areas ceded by Romania are being

transferred, without suffering any damage and without legal constraints, to the countries receiving the territory; civil laws pertaining to this property are to be preserved. Neither Romania nor the new owners of the territory assume any responsibilities based on the transfer.

After the treaty is signed Romania will dismiss military officers and enlisted men who stem from the transferred territories and will arrange for their return home.

The countries receiving territory from Romania will make detailed arrangements with the latter to address disputes concerning:

1. The citizenship of the inhabitants of the ceded areas and their right to emigrate if they so desire;
2. The assets of communities divided by the new borders;
3. The archives and court and administrative documents (including census records);
4. The establishment of the new borders;
5. The transfer of lands to new local district control; and
6. The impact of the boundary changes upon other international treaties.

CHAPTER FOUR - WAR-RELATED DAMAGE

ARTICLE XIII

The parties adhering to this treaty all renounce any claim for compensation for the costs of the war, *i.e.* the expenses their governments incurred for carrying on the struggle. Separate arrangements will be made to settle issues of property damaged in the fighting.

CHAPTER FIVE - EVACUATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

ARTICLE XIV

Except for the areas specified in Chapter Three ("Cession of Territory"), the forces of the allied powers will - at a point to be determined later - evacuate the occupied Romanian territory. Until this happens, the strength of the occupying army, excluding formations involved in economic activity, shall not exceed six divisions.

ARTICLE XV

Until this treaty is ratified, the current occupation administration will remain in existence with the same authority as at present. But as soon as the treaty is signed the Romanian government shall nominate officials to participate in the administration's functions.

ARTICLE XVI

As soon as the treaty is ratified Romanian officials shall again assume responsibility for civil administration in the occupied territories as regulated in Articles XVII to XXIII.

ARTICLE XVII

As the Romanian government desires, until the occupied territories are evacuated each of their ministries shall attach an official to the occupation authority to facilitate the transfer of civilian administration to their government. The Romanian officials shall comply with the instructions from the occupational authority which are designed to ensure the security of the occupied territories and of the troops and installations of the allies.

Until further notice the communications networks - and in particular the railroads and postal and telegraph systems - shall remain subject to military administration, operating in agreements to be concluded with the officials and population of Romania. Additional arrangements will be made regarding the role of the military command in regulating currency issues and the activities of the Romanian National Bank and of the central

reserves of the peoples' banks.

ARTICLE XVIII

Romanian courts shall once more have full jurisdiction within the occupied territories, with two exceptions:

- . Legal authority over members of the occupying army - in criminal as well as in civil cases - remains solely within the purview of the allied powers, as does police authority over such persons.
- . Suits filed against the occupying army will be judged by their military courts. This is also true for suits against regulations issued by the occupying authorities, to the extent that these remain in effect according to Article XXII. Finally, this applies to litigation involving orders issued by the courts of the occupying authority prior to ratification of the peace treaty until such litigation is settled.

ARTICLE XIX

The commander of the occupying authority will make the necessary arrangements with the Romanian government regarding traffic between the occupied and non-occupied zones. Among other points, it should be noted that emigration into the occupied territory will in general be permitted only if the Romanian government demonstrates that it is necessary to facilitate the import of specific categories of food from Moldavia or Bessarabia.

ARTICLE XX

After this peace treaty is ratified, the occupying army will no longer requisition money or goods, with two exceptions:

- . The commander of the occupying forces still has the right to requisition grain, legumes, wool, cattle and meat harvested or produced in 1918 - as well as wood, oil and petroleum. He also may issue the necessary orders to ensure that such products are obtained and delivered. Care will be taken that this is an orderly process, which will take into account the needs of Romania's own population; for this purpose more specific arrangements will be made between the commander and the Romanian government.
- . The Romanian government recognizes that the commander may requisition items to meet the needs of the occupying army, including special delivery of products which Romania is otherwise required to provide.

ARTICLE XXI

After this peace treaty is ratified, Romania will pay for the maintenance of the occupying army, including the costs of the requisition process. The allied powers themselves will pay for

items not necessary for the sustenance of the occupying army.

ARTICLE XXII

Special agreements will be concluded regarding details of the transfer of power to the civil authorities and the issuance of regulations by the occupation HQ. No actions of the occupying officials while carrying out their duties can become subjects of a criminal or civil lawsuit, unless with the permission of the commander of the occupying army. The duties themselves cannot be contested in a suit or any other legal action.

ARTICLE XXIII

At the end of the occupation Romania will compensate the allied powers for the costs they incur as part of their official activities in the occupied areas, including those for industrial operations. Until the occupation ends, industrial operations will remain subject to military authority. Their production goals will take into account the needs of Romania's own population.

CHAPTER SIX - REGULATION OF TRAFFIC ON THE DANUBE

[This chapter, containing Articles XXIV to XXVI, is being omitted from the translation since it contains mainly technical details about river regulation and the costs thereof. The most important point is contained in Article XXIV - "Romania guarantees that vessels of the other parties to this treaty will have free passage along the Romanian part of the Danube, including its harbors."]

CHAPTER SEVEN - EQUALITY FOR RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS IN ROMANIA⁷⁵²

ARTICLE XXVII

In Romania the Roman Catholic, Greek Uniate, Bulgarian Orthodox, Protestant, Islamic and Judaic confessions will have the same legal and official protection, and the same freedom, as the Romanian Orthodox Church. Religious communities can be established on a local basis; the government will not interfere

752 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This rather strange Article was aimed at the anti-Semitic policies of Romania, which treated its Jewish inhabitants (with about 1000 exceptions) as "foreigners" rather than citizens. Unfortunately for the Central Powers, its insertion in the treaty further inflamed Romanian opinion against them, since they were accused of being part of a Jewish conspiracy against the Kingdom. (Hitchins, "Romania 1866-1947" [London, 1994], pp. 165-167. Torrey, "Romania and World War I" [Oxford, 1999], pp. 344-45.)

with them or their schools (which will be considered private schools) unless they are a danger to state security or to maintenance of order. In all state-run or private schools the students are obliged to take part in religious activities only to the extent approved by instructors of their own religion.

ARTICLE XXVIII

The religious affiliation of Romanian citizens will not affect their standing with the government, or their political or legal rights. And residents of Romania who hitherto have been considered "stateless", including Jews regarded as foreigners, now will receive citizenship. For this purpose Romania will issue legislation by the time this treaty is ratified. The legislation will specify that individuals who took part in the war effort - whether on active or auxiliary military service - as well as those born in and still resident in the country (if their parents were also born in Romania) are recognized as full citizens. The granting of Romanian citizenship will extend to the spouses, widows and minor children of such individuals.

CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUDING PROVISIONS

ARTICLE XXIX

Economic relations between the allied powers and Romania shall be regulated in individual treaties, which however will be considered integral parts of this peace treaty and - unless otherwise stipulated - become effective at the same date. Individual agreements shall also address the re-establishment of official and private legal relations, compensation for military and civil damage, the exchange of prisoners of war and civilian internees, the issuance of amnesties, and the disposition of ships or other vehicles which have fallen into the hands of the opposing side.

ARTICLE XXX

The definitive texts of this treaty are:

- . for issues concerning Germany and Romania, the German and Romanian versions,
- . for issues concerning Austria-Hungary and Romania, the German, Hungarian and Romanian versions,
- . for issues concerning Bulgaria and Romania, the Bulgarian and Romanian versions, and
- . for issues concerning Turkey and Romania, the Turkish and Romanian versions.

ARTICLE XXXI

This treaty needs to be ratified. The ratification agreements

shall be exchanged in Vienna as soon as possible. Unless otherwise stipulated, the provisions of the treaty will become effective upon its ratification. Unless otherwise indicated, terms of the treaty become effective upon ratification. The plenipotentiaries are signing and affixing their seals to this document, which was prepared in five copies at Bucharest on 7 May 1918.

[Followed by the signatures of the delegates]

E. The Armistice Treaty with the Allied and Associated Powers at the Villa Giusti near Padua, 3 November 1918⁷⁵³

Protocol of the armistice conditions between the allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary

I - MILITARY CONDITIONS

(Accompanied by an additional protocol concerning implementation, and a map)

1. Immediate cessation of hostilities on land, at sea and in the air.

2. Complete demobilization of the Aus-Hung. Army and the immediate withdrawal of units deployed on the front between the North Sea and Switzerland. Aus-Hung. military forces on Aus-Hung. territory (behind the borders indicated in section # 3) can consist of no more than 20 divisions, at the strength authorized prior to the war. Half of the entire divisional and corps artillery plus their supporting equipment is to be gathered at points yet to be determined so that it can be handed over to the allies and to the United States of America; this process will begin with artillery still in the areas to be evacuated by the Aus-Hung. Army.

3. Evacuation of the entire area which Austria-Hungary has occupied since the war began, and retreat of the Aus-Hung. forces (within a stipulated period of time) behind a line to run as follows:

From Piz Umbrail to a point north of the Stilfserjoch; then along the ridge of the Rhaetian Alps to the sources of the Adige and Eisack, across the Reschen and Brenner Mountains, and up to the heights along the Oetz and Ziller Alpine valleys. From here the line will bend south across the Toblach mountain to reach the present border along the Carnic Alps; it will follow the border to Mt Tarvis, after which it will run along the watershed of the Julian Alps through the Predil Pass, Mt Mangart, and the Tricorno [Terglou] and along the watershed of the Podberdo, Podlaniscam and Idria Passes. From this point the line will

753AOK, Secret Order # 2091 of 8 November 1918. TRANSLATOR's NOTE: The authors included both the original (French) text of the treaty (consisting of two protocols), followed by a German translation. Since I have no command of French, I have rendered the German version here into English (thus, unfortunately, providing a translation of a translation).

veer southeast toward the Schneeberg (so that the Sava basin and its tributaries shall lie outside it). From the Schneeberg the line will descend to the coast in such fashion that Castua, Mattuglia and Volosca shall be within the area to be evacuated; then it will follow the present administrative boundaries of the province of Dalmatia. Here before the line reaches the coast at Cape Planka it will include in the area to be evacuated Lisarica and Tridania in the north, and in the south the territory as far as the heights that mark the watershed of all the valleys and streams that flow to Sebenico (such as the Cicola, Kerka and Butisnica and their tributaries). Also to be evacuated are all islands north and west of Dalmatia - from Premuda, Selve, Ulbo, Scherda, Maon, Pago and Puntadura in the north to Meleda in the south, and including Sant' Andrea, Busi, Lissa, Lesina, Tercola, Curzola, Cazza and Lagosta with the smaller islets around them. Outside the line will be only the islands of Gross and Klein Zirona, Bua, Solta and Brazza.

All of the evacuated areas will be occupied by the forces of the allies and of the United States of America. All of the enemy's military and railroad equipment currently in the evacuated areas will remain in place. All of this material (including coal and other supplies) will be handed over to the allies and to the United States under additional orders to be provided on each of the fronts by the high command of the allied forces. Enemy forces shall not destroy, plunder or requisition any goods in the area to be occupied prior to the arrival of the forces of the associated powers.

4. Freedom of movement for the armies of the associated powers on all necessary roads, railroads and river lines within Aus-Hung. territory. Occupation of all strategic points in Austria-Hungary by the armies of the associated powers at times when judged necessary by these powers to carry out military operations or to maintain order. The right of the armies to requisition goods, without compensation, in all areas where they are stationed.

5. Evacuation within 15 days by German troops of not only the fronts in Italy and in the Balkans, but also of all Aus-Hung. territory. Internment of all German troops who haven't left Aus-Hung. territory within this period.

6. Provisionally, the evacuated Aus-Hung. territories will be administered by the local authorities under the control of the

allied and associated troops.

7. Immediate repatriation (without reciprocity) of all prisoners of war or interned citizens of the allies, following specific instructions to be issued by the HQ of the armies of the allied forces at the fronts.

8. Care of troops who can't be transported due to illness or wounds is the responsibility of Aus-Hung. personnel, for which purpose the necessary equipment will remain in place.

II - MARITIME CONDITIONS

I. Immediate cessation of hostilities at sea and provision of precise data regarding the location and movement of all Aus-Hung. ships. Neutral states are notified that the military and civilian vessels of the allied and associated powers may sail freely in all territorial waters, while issues of neutrality remain unresolved.

II. Delivery to the allies and to the United States of America of 15 Aus-Hung. submarines, constructed between 1910 and 1918, and of all German submarines which are now in Aus-Hung. waters or later reach these waters. Complete disarmament and demobilization of all other Aus-Hung. submarines, which will remain under supervision by the allies and by the United States.

III. Delivery to the allies and to the United States of America of 3 battleships, 3 light cruisers, 9 destroyers, 12 torpedo boats, 1 minelayer, and 6 Danube monitors along with their full armament and equipment. All other surface forces (including river vessels) are to assemble in Aus-Hung. harbors to be designated by the allies and by the United States of America; here they will be completely disarmed, demobilized, and placed under supervision by the allies and by the United States of America.

IV. Freedom of passage for all military and merchant vessels of the allied and associated powers in the Adriatic (including Aus-Hung. territorial waters) and on the Danube and its tributaries. The allied and associated powers have the right to remove all mine fields and to destroy any barriers to movement by sea as they see fit. To secure free shipping on the Danube, the allies and the United States of America may occupy or demolish any fortifications or defensive works.

V. Maintenance of the blockade by the allied and associated

powers in its current state; Aus-Hung. ships which take to sea will be treated as privateers unless exceptions are made by a commission which will be established by the allies and by the United States of America.

VI. All naval air forces to be brought together and placed in reserve at Aus-Hung. harbors to be designated by the allies and by the United States of America.

VII. Evacuation of the entire Italian coast and of all harbors which Austria-Hungary occupies outside of its national territory; all vessels and installations are to be left behind, along with armaments and navigational equipment.

VIII. Occupation of all ground and naval fortifications (including on the islands) erected to defend Pola, along with the wharves and arsenal, by the allies and by the United States of America.

IX. Release of all merchant ships of the allied and associated powers now held by Austria-Hungary.

X. Prohibition against the destruction of ships or equipment prior to their being abandoned, handed over or returned.

XI. Release by Austria-Hungary of all prisoners of war from the naval or merchant services of the allied and associated powers, without reciprocity.

This text is authenticated in writing by the words inscribed on the first page.⁷⁵⁴

The undersigned, duly authorized, plenipotentiaries declare that they agree upon these terms.

3 November 1918

Representing the high command
of the Aus-Hung. Army....
GdI Viktor Weber,
Edler von Webenau

[Followed by six other signatures]

Representing the high command
of the Italian Army....
Tenente Generale
Pietro Badoglio

⁷⁵⁴This refers to the fact that in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the treaty the representatives wrote the copy number, followed by the names of General Badoglio and of GdI von Weber.

Implementation Protocol

(containing details regarding the conditions of the armistice between the allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary and how the conditions are to be carried out)

I - MILITARY CONDITIONS

1. Hostilities on land, at sea and in the air on all of Austria-Hungary's fronts will terminate 24 hours after the armistice is signed, i.e. at 3:00 PM (central European time) on 4 November. Prior to this point in time the Italian and associated troops may continue to advance over the line they have reached presently. The Italian and associated troops will not advance any further than the line which they reach by this time.

Austro-Hungarian troops and troops of states allied with Austria-Hungary must withdraw to a distance of at least 3 km (as the crow flies) from the line reached by troops from the allied and associated countries. Inhabitants of the three kilometer zone between the two sides can obtain their necessary food from either their own national army or from the armies of the associated powers.

2. All Aus-Hung. troops behind the line reached by Italian forces by the time hostilities cease must be considered prisoners of war.

3. To implement Articles 2 and 3 of the armistice conditions, dealing with the artillery, armaments and equipment which are to be brought together at designated points or left behind in the occupied territories, the Italian plenipotentiaries representing the allied and associated powers are stating the following terms which must be followed:

a. Any item which can serve a military purpose, or any part of an item which can serve such purpose, must be delivered to the allied and associated powers. The Aus-Hung. Army and the German troops may take with them from the evacuated areas only the personal equipment and arms of each soldier, plus the officers' horses, the supply trains and enough horses to transport each unit's food, cooking equipment, officers' baggage, and medical supplies. This provision applies to all branches and services of the armies.

b. The Aus-Hung. Army and the German troops are to leave behind in the evacuated areas all of their artillery and its equipment. Accounting is necessary to determine the total amount of divisional and corps guns possessed by Austria-

Hungary at the moment when hostilities cease, since half of them are to be retained by the associated powers while the other half will eventually be returned to the Austro-Hungarian Army. This accounting will be carried out later. All artillery not assigned organically to specific divisions or corps must be handed over without exception; thus it won't be necessary to account for each gun.

c. The surrender of the divisional and corps artillery on the Italian front will take place at the following points - Trent, Bozen, Pieve di Cadore, Stazione per la Carnia, Tolmein, Görz and Trieste. The commanders of the allied and associated armies will establish special commissions on Austria-Hungary's various other fronts; accompanied by the necessary escorts, they will proceed to points which they deem to be the most appropriate to implement the terms outlined above.

4. It is determined that the references to Mounts Toblach and Tarvis (in Article 3 of the armistice treaty) pertain to the mountain groups which dominate, respectively, the Toblach saddle and Tarvis basin as indicated on the more detailed map at the scale 1:500,000.

5. The withdrawal of the Aus-Hung. troops and those allied to Austria-Hungary behind the line described in Article 3 of the armistice treaty is to be completed on the Italian front in a period of 15 days, to commence with the day on which hostilities end. On the fifth day the Aus-Hung. troops or the allies of Austria-Hungary on the Italian front must be behind an intermediate line: Tonale - Noce - Lavis - Avisio - Pordoi - Livinalongo - Falzarego - Pieve di Cadore - Colle Mauria - Alto Tagliamento - Fella - Raccollano - Selle Nevea - Isonzo. Furthermore they must have completed their withdrawal from the area of Dalmatia, as required by Article 3 of the treaty. Any Aus-Hung. forces on land or sea, and any troops allied to Austria-Hungary, who haven't retreated from the designated area within 15 days are to be considered prisoners of war.

6. Payment for goods requisitioned by the armies of the allied and associated powers in Aus-Hung. territory will be made under the rules established in the first paragraph of page 227 of the "Servicio in guerra parte II edizione 1915", the current regulations of the Italian Army.

7. Article 4 of the armistice treaty between the allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary refers to the railroads and

how they are to be used by the allied and associated powers. Here we are specifying that the transport of troops, military equipment and supplies of these powers on the Aus-Hung. railroad network outside the areas evacuated according to the armistice provisions will be entrusted to the officials of the Aus-Hung. railroad authority. However, they will be supervised by special commissions named by the allied and associated powers, and by military commanders placed in charge of the stations as needed. The Aus-Hung. officials will give priority to the above-indicated transports and will be held responsible for their security.

8. In areas which must be evacuated at the point when hostilities end, all mines on roads and railroads should be removed or rendered inoperable, along with minefields and any other obstacles to travel by road or rail.

9. Within 8 days of the termination of hostilities, the Italian prisoners of war and interned Italian civilians in Austro-Hungarian custody will no longer be required to perform any work, with the exception of individuals already employed on agricultural labor prior to the day the armistice is signed. In any event, they must be released as soon as demanded by the high command of the Italian armies.

10. Austria-Hungary is responsible for the security and provisions⁷⁵⁵ of the various commissions of the allied governments which will receive the military equipment and oversee implementation of the terms, whether the commissions are operating in the evacuated areas or in others part of Austria-Hungary's territory.

II - MARITIME PROVISIONS

1. The hour at which hostilities will terminate at sea is identical to that at which they will terminate on land. At the same hour the Aus-Hung. government must notify the Italian and associated governments - by a radio transmission from Pola to Venice - where all the Aus-Hung. vessels are located and the destinations of those at sea.

2. All the vessels which are to be delivered to the allied and associated powers per articles II and III of the maritime terms must arrive at Venice between 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM on 6 November (taking pilots on board when they are within 14 miles of the coast). This doesn't apply to the Danube monitors, which will proceed to harbors designated by the high command of the

755The costs of provisions will be refunded.

associated forces on the Balkan front according to conditions which that command finds necessary.

3. The following ships are to sail to Venice:

- . *Tegetthof, Prinz Eugen, Ferdinand Max, Saida, Novara, Helgoland,*
- . Nine destroyers of the most-recently constructed *Tatra* type (800 ton minimum),
- . Twelve torpedo boats of the [*name not filled in*] type (200 ton minimum), and the minelayer *Chamäleon*, and
- . Fifteen submarines constructed between 1910 and 1918 plus all German submarines that are found or will be found within Aus-Hung. territorial waters.

Any deliberate damage to the ships to be handed over, or any sabotage on board, will be regarded by the associated government as a major violation of the current armistice.

The flotilla on Lake Garda is to be surrendered to the associated powers at the Riva harbor.

All vessels not surrendered to the associated powers must assemble in the harbors of Bucari and Spalato within 48 hours of the time at which hostilities cease.

4. Regarding the removal of all minefields and destruction of all barriers, the government of Austria-Hungary pledges on its honor that within 48 hours of the end of hostilities they will release to the commanders of the naval base at Venice and of the naval forces at Brindisi their plans of the minefields and barriers at the harbors of Pola, Cattaro and Fiume. Within 96 hours from the same point in time they will release the plans of the minefields and barriers in the Mediterranean, and in the Italian rivers and lakes; furthermore they will release whatever information they've received from the German government regarding German minefields and barriers. Within the same 96 hour period they will also issue a similar report to the commander of the allied forces on the Balkan front regarding the Danube River and the Black Sea.

5. The return of merchant shipping which belongs to the associated powers must be completed within 96 hours of the end of hostilities according to the conditions laid down by each of the associated powers, which have been brought to the attention of the Aus-Hung. government. The associated powers pledge to create the commission mentioned in Article V of the armistice treaty and to provide the Aus-Hung. government with details of how and where the commission will operate.

6. The harbor mentioned in Article VI of the armistice

treaty is Spalato.

7. The evacuation specified in Article VII of the armistice treaty requires troops in the affected harbors to pull back behind the line specified in the armistice within the stated time frame. No damage may be done to any of the permanent installations of the harbors, whether on land or on water. Additional Aus-Hung. vessels may be brought in to use the canal routes through the lagoons during the evacuation.

8. The occupation mentioned in Article VIII of the armistice treaty will take place within 48 hours of the termination of hostilities. Aus-Hung. officials are responsible for the safety of the ships which will take possession of Pola and the nearby islands, and for the safety of personnel assigned to other places to be occupied under the armistice. The Aus-Hung. government will provide pilots for the ships of the associated nations once they are within 12 miles of Pola and ensure the pilots are capable of following the safest route into the harbor.

9. Any harm to the persons or property of the associated powers will be regarded as a very serious breach of the current armistice.

The undersigned duly authorized plenipotentiaries declare that they agree to the conditions listed here.

3 November 1918

Appendix # 3 -

Chronological summary of the campaigns and most important battles of 1918. (Beilage 39 in the original)

- . 14 January - Actions at Capo Sile (41 Hon ID)
- . 14-16 January - Actions on Mounts Pertica and Asolone (I Corps and Goiginger's group)
- . 28-29 January - Loss of Mt di Val Bella, the Col Rosso and the Col d'Echelle (Kletter's group)
- . Early February to early July - Occupation of the former Turkish territories of Batum, Kars and Ardahan (3rd Turkish Army, later Halil Pasha's Army Group)
- . 9 February - Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Ukraine
- . 18 February to 3 March - Offensive toward Lake Peipus and the upper Dvina (*Army Detachment D*)
- . 18 February to 4 March - Liberation of Latvia and Estonia (8th Army)
- . 18 February to 21 June - Actions to support Ukraine (*Army Group Linsingen which became Army Group Eichhorn*)
- . 19 February - Actions near Jericho (7th Turkish Army)
- . 25 February to 19 May - Occupation of Ukraine and the Donets area (2nd Army and parts of 7th Army)
- . 3 March - Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia
- . 5 March - Preliminary treaty of Buftea with Romania
- . 9-12 March - Actions on the Jordan River (7th Turkish Army)
- . 12-14 March - Capture of Odessa (30 k.u.k. ID and Col. Vogel's German group)
- . 13 March - Demolition of the Italian Pasubio position (Kaiser Jaeger Division)
- . 21 March to 6 April - Battle between Arras and Amiens, part of the "Great Battle in France" (2nd, 17th and 18th Armies)
- . 21 March to 9 April - Actions on the Oise-Aisne Canal, part of the "Great Battle in France" (*parts of 7th Army*)
- . 22-25 March - Street fighting in Nikolaiev (*parts of 217 ID and parts of k.u.k. 59 ID*)
- . 26-31 March - First Battle of the Jordan (4th and 7th Turkish Armies)
- . Late March to early May - Actions in Iraq (6th Turkish Army)
- . 3 April to 16 December - Operations in Finland (Finns assisted by the *Baltic Sea Division*)
- . 3 April - Capture of Ekaterinoslav
- . 5 April - Capture of Cherson (11 ID)
- . 9-18 April - Battle of Armentieres (6th Army)
- . 10-29 April - Battle of Kemmel Hill (4th Army)
- . 20-23 April - Actions at Wolnowacha (59 ID)
- . 23 April - Actions on the upper Devoli in Albania (Group I/XIX)
- . 24-26 April - Battle in front of Amiens (2nd Army)

- . 30 April and 1 May - Capture of Sebastopol (*Eichhorn's Army Group*)
- . 30 April to 5 May - Second Battle of the Jordan (4th and 7th Turkish Armies)
- . 8 May - Capture of Rostov
- . 10-13 May - Actions around Mt Corno (Kaiser Jaeger Div)
- . 15-17 May - Actions on the Kelizoni Brook and on the Cafa Martis (Group I/XIX)
- . 16 May - Dissolution of 2nd Army and creation of the "Army of the East"
- . 23 May - Actions on the Zugna Torta (56 Sch Div)
- . 25-28 May - Actions in the Tonale sector (Ellison's group)
- . 26-28 May - Actions near the mouth of the Piave (1 CD)
- . 27 May to 13 June - Battle of Soissons-Reims (1st and 7th Armies)
- . 9-13 June - Battle of Noyon (18th Army)
- . 10-14 June - Actions on the Kamia and Lenia Heights (Group I/XIX)
- . 15-25 June - The June Battle in Venetia
 - . 15-18 June - The battle on the plateau of the Sieben Gemeinde and in the Grappa area (11th Army)
 - . 15-25 June - The battle on the Piave (6th and Isonzo Armies)
- . 24 June to 15 July - Counterattacks of the 4th and 6th Italian Armies on the mountain front
- . 6 July to 26 Aug - The summer campaign in Albania
- . 6-13 July - Battle of Fjeri-Berat (part of Albanian summer campaign)
- . Second half of July - Actions in the Tonale sector, on the southern front of Tyro and on the Asiago plateau (10th and 11th Armies)
- . 13 and 14 July - Actions at Er-Risch (Turkish front)
- . 15-17 July - Offensive battle on the Marne and in Champagne (1st, 3rd and 7th Armies)
- . 18-25 July - Defensive battle between Soissons and Reims (in France)
- . 24 July to 26 Aug - Counter-offensive of Armeegruppe Albania (part of Albanian summer campaign)
- . 26 July to 3 August - Mobile defensive battle between the Marne and the Vesle (1st, 7th and 9th Armies)
- . August - Local fighting on the western and southern fronts of Tyrol and on the Asiago plateau (10th and 11th Armies)
- . August - Artillery actions along the entire Piave front (6th and Isonzo Armies)
- . 5 Aug to 6 Sept - Fighting in front of the Ypres-La Bassee front (6th Army); it also involved 4th Army for 28 Aug to 4 Sept
- . 8-20 Aug - Defensive battle between the Somme and the Avre (2nd

Army)

- . 8 Aug to 3 Sept - Defensive battle between the Somme and the Oise (18th Army)
- . 17 Aug to 4 Sept - Defensive battle between the Oise and the Aisne (9th Army)
- . 21 Aug to 2 Sept - Defensive battle between the Scarpe and the Somme (17th Army)
- . September - Local actions on Tyrol's western and southern front, on the Asiago plateau, and in the Grappa sector (6th, 10th and 11th Armies)
- . September - Local actions along the entire Piave front (Isonzo Army)
- . 3-26 Sept - Actions in front of the Siegfried position (17th Army); also involved 2nd Army for 3-7 Sept
- . 4-27 Sept - Actions in front of and in the Siegfried position (7th Army throughout; 18th and 19th Armies until 18 Sept)
- . 7 Sept to 14 Oct - Actions on the Armentieres-Lens front (6th Army)
- . 12-14 Sept - Actions at St Mihiel (*Army Detachment C*)
- . 15-17 September - Breakthrough battle on the Dobropolje (1st Bulgarian Army and 11th German Army)
- . 17-29 Sept - Retreat actions in Macedonia and Serbia (1st and 2nd Bulgarian Armies; 11th German Army)
- . 18-30 Sept - Battle of Palestine (4th, 7th and 8th Turkish Armies)
- . 26 Sept to 11 Oct - Defensive battle in Champagne and on the Meuse (5th Army throughout; 1st and 3rd Armies until 9 Oct)
- . 27 Sept to 8 Oct - Defensive battle between Cambrai and St Quentin (17th Army)
- . 28 Sept to 17 Oct - Defensive battle in Flanders (4th Army)
- . 29 Sept - Armistice between Bulgaria and the Entente
- . 1 Oct to 3 Nov - Retreat of Armeegruppe Albania to the Bocche di Cattaro
- . Early October - Creation of Armeegruppe Belluno in the area between the Brenta and the Piave
- . Early October - Creation of Kövess' Army Group in the Balkans
- . 3-18 Oct - Retreat actions in Serbia and on the Danube (Kövess' Army Group, mainly 11th German Army)
- . 9 and 21 Oct - Severe artillery actions on the Asiago plateau (11th Army)
- . 9 Oct to 4 Nov - Actions in front of and in the Hermann position (2nd Army throughout; 17th Army for 9-23 Oct; 18th Army for 10 Oct to 4 Nov; 6th Army for 20 Oct to 4 Nov)
- . 10 Oct to 4 Nov - Actions on the Hunding-Brunhild front (7th and 1st Armies); also involved 3rd Army until 17 Oct
- . 18-23 Oct - Battle of Vouziers (3rd Army)
- . 24 Oct to 2 Nov - The last battle on the Southwestern front

- . 24-28 Oct - Actions on the Asiago plateau (11th Army)
- . 24-28 Oct - Defensive battle in the Grappa sector (Armee-gruppe Belluno)
 - . 24-28 Oct - Third Battle of the Piave (Isonzo Army)
- . 24 Oct to 4 Nov - Battle of Valenciennes (17th Army)
- . 29 Oct to 2 Nov - The last battle on the Southwestern front is broken off; general retreat at all parts of the front
- . 30 Oct - 6th Turkish Army surrenders at Mosul
- . 31 Oct - Armistice between Turkey and the Entente
- . 1-4 Nov - Actions between the Aisne and the Meuse (3rd Army)
- . 3-4 Nov - Armistice of Villa Giusti between Austria-Hungary and the Entente
 - . Started at 3:00 AM on 3 Nov by Aus-Hung. reckoning
 - . Started at 3:00 PM on 4 Nov by Italian reckoning
- . 4 Nov - Austro-Hungarians start to evacuate Ukraine
- . 10 Nov - Germans start to evacuate Wallachia
- . 11 Nov - Armistice of Compiègne between Germany and the Entente
- . 12 Nov - The German Western armies begin to go home
- . 12 Nov - German forces on the Danube start to withdraw through southern Hungary
- . 16 Nov - Germans start to evacuate Ukraine
- . 19 Nov - Germans start to evacuate Latvia and Estonia

Appendix # 4 -

Casualties of the armies during the World War

The casualties of Austria-Hungary were calculated by Lt Col. Dr. Franek. The other figures are drawn in part from the "Statistischen Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1924/25" and in part from Wicker's work "Der Weltkrieg in Zahlen (Was wir vom Weltkrieg nicht wissen)"; Berlin 1930, pp. 626 ff.

a) The Central Powers

- . Austria-Hungary fielded 8,000,000 soldiers. 1,016,200 were killed (12.7%) and 1,691,000 taken prisoner (21.1%) for a total of 2,707,200 permanent casualties. The figure for prisoners doesn't include men taken during the final collapse (12,000 officers and 425,000 men)⁷⁵⁶. Of the troops taken prisoner (including the latter category), 8000 officers and 470,000 men died in captivity.
- . Germany fielded 11,000,000 soldiers. 2,150,000 were killed (19.5%) and 1,000,000 taken prisoner (9.0%) for a total of 3,150,000 permanent casualties.
- . Turkey fielded 1,600,000 soldiers. 300,000 were killed (18.8%) and 300,000 taken prisoner (18.8%) for a total of 600,000 permanent casualties.
- . Bulgaria fielded 600,000 soldiers. 90,000 were killed (15.0%) and 150,00 taken prisoner (25.0%) for a total of 240,000 permanent casualties.
- . THUS IN TOTAL the Central Powers fielded 21,200,000 soldiers. 3,556,200 were killed (16.8%) and 3,141,000 taken prisoner (14.8%) for a total of 6,697,200 permanent casualties. If the figures for prisoners are adjusted to include men captured during the final collapse of the Aus-Hung. Monarchy they would total 3,577,000 and the grand total of permanent casualties would be 7,134,000.

b) The Entente

- . Russia fielded 14,000,000 soldiers. 2,250,000 were killed (16.0%) and 2,500,000 taken prisoner (17.9%) for a total of 4,750,000 permanent casualties.
- . France (including its colonies) fielded 9,000,000 soldiers. 1,900,000 were killed (21.1%) and 550,000 taken prisoner (6.4%) for a total of 2,450,000 permanent casualties.

756 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The reluctance of the authors to include prisoners taken by the Italians after the fighting had actually stopped (on 3 and 4 November) is understandable, since it can hardly be a credit to the Italians that they rounded up individuals who thought the war was already over. But even with this omission the percentage of Aus-Hung. soldiers taken prisoner is strikingly high.

- . Great Britain (including its dominions) fielded 7,000,000 soldiers. 944,000 were killed (13.5%) and 200,000 taken prisoner (3.1%) for a total of 1,144,000 permanent casualties.
- . Italy fielded 5,000,000 soldiers. 497,000 were killed (9.9%) and 500,000 taken prisoner (10.0%) for a total of 997,000 permanent casualties.
- . Serbia fielded 600,000 soldiers. 120,000 were killed (20.0%) and 200,000 taken prisoner (33.0%) for a total of 320,000 permanent casualties.
- . Romania fielded 600,000 soldiers. 80,000 were killed (13.3%) and 200,000 taken prisoner (33.0%) for a total of 280,000 permanent casualties.
- . Belgium fielded 480,000 soldiers. 70,000 were killed (14.6%) and 70,000 taken prisoner (14.6%) for a total of 140,000 permanent casualties.
- . Montenegro fielded 50,000 soldiers. 5,000 were killed (10.0%) and 30,000 taken prisoner (60.0%) for a total of 35,000 permanent casualties.
- . Greece fielded 200,000 soldiers. 4,000 were killed (2.0%) and 16,000 taken prisoner (8.0%) for a total of 20,000 permanent casualties.
- . Portugal fielded 40,000 soldiers. 3,000 were killed (7.5%) and 10,000 taken prisoner (25.0%) for a total of 13,000 permanent casualties.
- . The United States fielded 3,800,000 soldiers, of whom 2,000,000 reached Europe. 56,000 were killed (1.5%) and 10,000 taken prisoner (0.3%) for a total of 66,000 permanent casualties.
- . Japan fielded 30,000 soldiers (counting only those who served in eastern Asia). 1,000 were killed (3.3%) and none taken prisoner, for a total of 1,000 permanent casualties.
- . THUS IN TOTAL the Entente fielded 40,800,000 soldiers. 5,930,000 were killed (14.5%) and 4,286,000 taken prisoner (10.0%) for a total of 10,216,000 permanent casualties

c) Combined Totals

The powers fielded 62,000,000 soldiers. 9,486,200 were killed (15.3%) and 7,427,000 taken prisoner (12.0%) for a total of 16,913,200 permanent casualties.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Counting casualties simply for a single campaign is an imprecise and controversial process, so the total count for an entire war is naturally never nailed down to satisfy all researchers. At the time this translation was finished one of the most recent attempts to do so was in Ellis' "World War I Databook" (London, 1993), pp. 269-270. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he accepted the figures for Austria-Hungary presented here, and made only slight adjustment to the German figures. His

statistics for the Entente powers, however, vary considerably from this official history.