



Canadian soldiers going over the top – St. Pol, France, 1916 – Everett Historical

Lads, you're wanted! Over there,'

Shiver in the morning dew,

More poor devils like yourselves

Waiting to be killed by you.

— E.A. Mackintosh

Yvonne

*With blinded eyes I stared at the sky, this grey, endless sky of a crazy god,
who had made life and death for his amusement.*

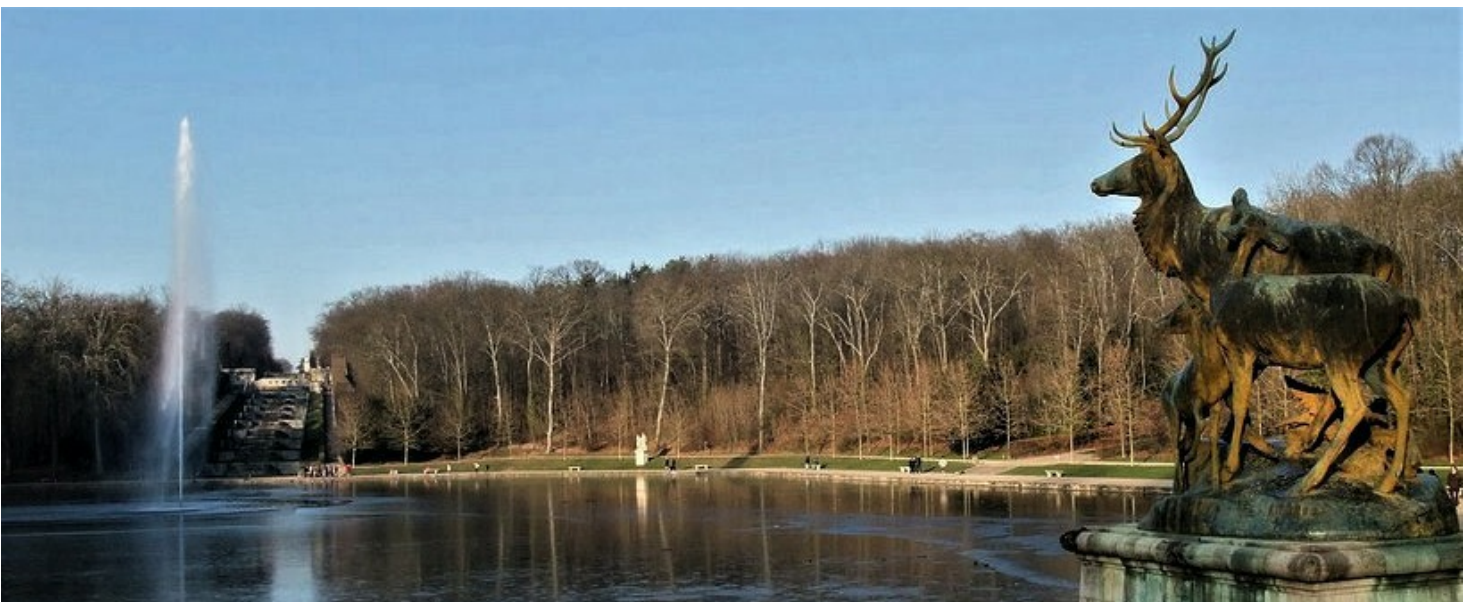
— Erich Maria Remarque

*It is useless to meet revenge with revenge;
it will heal nothing.*

— J.R.R. Tolkien

The Oslo gig had been canceled so Giovanni had returned early. Céline had been dying to come along on our outing in the park of Sceaux, so I'd told her she could come with us provided I'd have time alone with Giovanni.

“I’ll be discrete,” she promised. “I’ll take my basket and hunt for wild berries in the forest. I know a secret place where the berries grow.”



Parc de Sceaux – Maipo.net



Parc de Sceaux – Le Blog de Francine

We arrived quite early in the park of Sceaux, Céline taking us away from the canal to a private place on the edge of the park surrounded by bushes neglected by the landscapers. It was early in the spring and hardly anyone was around because of clouds threatening rain. If you want to avoid crowds of people, go out on stormy days. I'd prepared a picnic basket with *gratin de pommes de terre aux anchois*, crusty bread, Greek olives, and a thermos filled with a Vietnamese soup *Consommé de Canard Orientale*. To celebrate our reunion, Giovanni had delighted me by bringing a 1947 Gaston Huet, Vouvray, a Chenin blanc from Touraine, east of Tours in the Loire valley. While we ate, Céline told Giovanni the story of *La Folle de Chaillot*. She was fascinated by the imaginary dog which all of the ladies constantly talked about, but in reality, had died many years before. Céline concluded that the play was about the power of money to corrupt and having the courage to not miss out on happiness. As she'd promised, after our picnic lunch, Céline ran off like a woodland nymph to search for wild blackberries on the outskirts of the park.

As a little surprise, Giovanni had brought massage oil. He took off my blouse and bra and laid his hands on either side of my spine and began slowly stroking my back with flowing movements, the supple warmth of his hands relaxing and warming me.

“Giovanni, this is just what I've been needing.”

“This is called, *'effleurage,'*” he said. “You're very tense with knots here and here. On top of your teaching and mentoring your students, you're writing a book. You're driving yourself too hard.”

Even though the day was cool, his hands were making me melt. After a time of lightly skimming his fingers over my skin, he began kneading my waist, leaning his weight into me, sinking his thumbs deep into the muscles, sometimes in circular motions, his thumbs penetrating areas where my muscles and tendons attach to the bone, easing the tension accumulated during long hours at my typewriter.

“You are a dear, Giovanni.”

“I’ll be quiet. Just relax, I’m going to make you feel wonderful.”

“You’ve been away too long, I’d like to talk. There is so much to say and so little time to say it.”

“Did you get the course you wanted to teach on the Versailles Treaty?”

“Finally, it came through! In the next session I deliver a series of lectures on John Maynard Keynes and the unintended results of the Versailles Treaty.”

“What were the unintended results?”

“It’s very complicated.”

“The more complicated the better. Try it out on me. I’ve not heard your melodious voice for a long time.”

“First I’ll give you some background leading up to the war.”

“I’ve never really understood what caused the war in the first place.”

“The greatest factor was the growth of nationalism. European rivalry in the late 19th century was heightened by the competition for colonies and the raw resources necessary for the manufacture of finished goods. Military conquest had put most of Asia and Africa under European colonial rule. By 1900, the European powers had colonized 90% of Africa, 99% of Polynesia, 27% of the Americas and 50% of Asia. The number of people ruled under European colonialism was — Netherlands, 66 million, Belgium, 12 million; France, 65 million, and due to India, Great Britain, 470 million people. And the Austro Germans were in bitter competition with Russia for control of the Balkans.

“A Prussian military historian, General Friedrich von Bernhardi wrote a hugely popular book a few years before the war, *Deutschland und der Nächste Krieg — Germany and the Next War*. Von Bernhardi gave credit to Bismarck for recognizing the communality of Austro-German interests fifty years before. However, while



General Friedrich von Bernhardi
Prussian Military Historian – Wikimedia

Germans and Magyars were the primary nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the weakness of the Empire lay with the Slavs of the Balkans who were hostile to the German population.”

“The Russians are Slavs too. They’d have the advantage over the Austrians in the Balkans.”

“You’re right. The South Slavs were being encouraged by Russia to revolt against Germany. For centuries. Russia had tried to dominate the Balkans and the Black Sea. Britain considered the Mediterranean to be a British sphere of influence. Russia’s desire to gain access to the Mediterranean was a threat to its power. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a strange amalgamation of territories and ethnic groups. In the first place the Empire had the bizarre construction of a Dual Monarchy with two separate governments and one unified Imperial government. Consequently, it had an Austrian army, a Hungarian army and an Imperial army which was staffed with primarily Austrian officers who spoke only German.”

“The Empire had three separate armies?”

“Three armies with soldiers coming from a dozen nationalities, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians, Herzegovinians, and Bosnians, creating a language mélange where nobody could understand each other. Named after the Balkan Mountains, the Balkan Peninsula has been made up of nations of diverse ethnic

groups, Albanians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Aromanians, Bosniaks, Croats, Slovenes, Gorani, Montenegrins, Serbs, Macedonians, Greeks, and Turks.”

“Holy smokes! That’s a lot of different people.”

I laughed, “You’re beginning to talk like an American instead of an Italian. Where did you pick up, holy smokes?”

“A comic strip. I used to haunt a shop in Trastevere selling used American comics and at the age of twelve, fell in love with Wonder Woman.” Giovanni paused for a moment then said, “I can see that trying to keep the peace between that many ethnic groups would be the Achilles heel of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.”

“The Achilles heel was Serbia. In the decades leading up to the 1878 Congress of Berlin, Russia and the Balkans had been gripped by the Pan-Slavism movement with the objective of uniting all the Balkan Slavs under one rule. On the western frontier of Germany, France had not only increased her military strength to be equal to that of Germany but had completely outstripped Germany in colonial possessions by her North African Empire and was encouraging resistance in Alsace and Lorraine that Germany had conquered in the Franco-Prussian War. Von Bernhardi said that France’s policy opposed German interests everywhere and England had joined with the Franco-Russian Alliance to divide up spheres of influence in every corner of the globe. Von Bernhardi maintained that the English alliance with France was aimed at suppressing Germany by force of arms.”

“Germany was preparing for war because France was allied with England?”

“Europe was a web of alliances and counter-alliances. Fear was the ruler of the day. The reason for England’s fear of German power was due to the instability in the British Empire due to agitation for independence in India, Egypt, and South Africa. The other problem England faced was the growing power of Turkey and Islam. While England’s fleet was vastly superior to that of Germany’s, if England became embroiled in a great colonial war, the diffusion of her fleet in far corners of the world would leave her vulnerable to German attack.”

“Von Bernhardi believed that war was a biological necessity for mankind. He quoted Goethe, ‘To supplant or to be supplanted is the essence of life.’ The right of conquest is a right of man. Chapters in his

book *Germany and the Next War* were labeled, 'The Right to Make War' and 'The Duty to Make War.' The desire for peace, Bernhardi said, makes civilized nations anemic. Peace marks the decay of mankind's spirit. 'France must be so completely crushed that she can never cross our path again.' Like the ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, Von Bernhardi believed 'War is the father of all things.'"

"That's the same thing that Mussolini preached when he took power in Italy. 'War is to man what maternity is to woman.' Man was created by God to make wars of conquest."

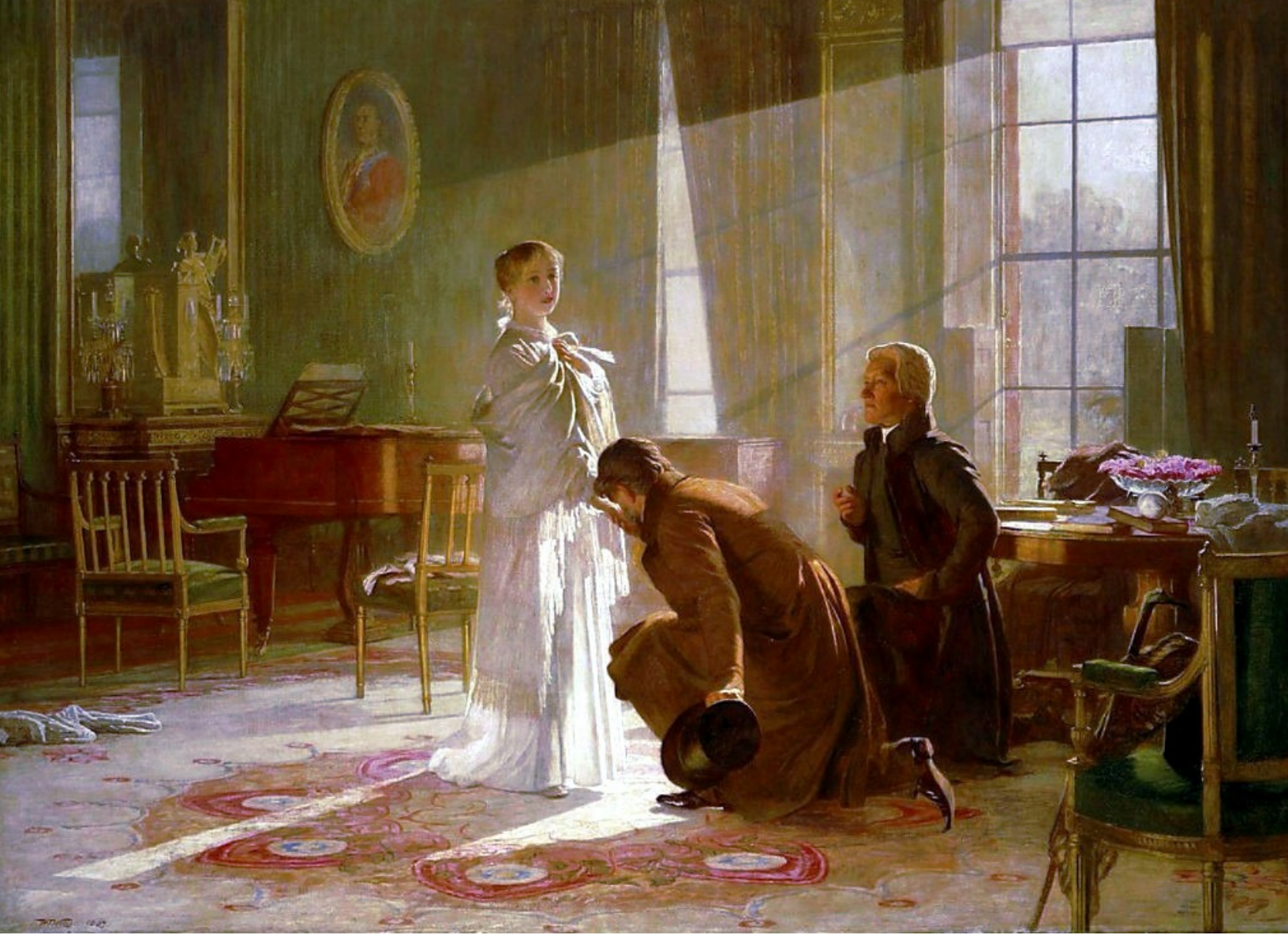
"The intense rivalry between the colonial powers contributed to a paranoia which led to a doubling of European military expenditures. Due to the interlocking alliances between the rivals, Europe was a broken system of governance, ready to explode as if each piece of the puzzle were attached to bombs primed to explode if only one piece was moved. It was like the game of pick-up-sticks except that all the sticks were dynamite with short fuses and all the players were holding a match. Once countries began building up their armies and navies for 'protection against the enemy,' it meant that sooner or later, the weapons of war would be used."

"You're saying war was inevitable. How sad is that?"

"The cataclysm was inevitable. French nationalists on the right wanted revenge against Germany for the 1870 Prussian occupation. Humiliated by their unpreparedness in the earlier Balkan wars, Russia was undergoing a modernization of the army which created fear in Germany. An arms race is a self-sustaining cycle. An increase of arms production in one nation provokes an increase of arms production in the opposing nation, in turn provoking an even greater increase by the first nation. In Austria and in Germany, the philosophy of social Darwinism gained prominence, a philosophy of 'survival of the fittest' that not only von Bernhardi advocated, but all of the German right-wing nationalists exploited in their cry for a war of conquest."

"Survival of the fittest was the same theme Mussolini used to seize power in Italy. He believed that the creators of the Roman Empire were a superior race. Empire was Italy's destiny."

"All of the European colonial powers," I said, "believed in their superiority to the people they conquered. They all were exceptional under God. Exceptionalism was king. Prime Minister Disraeli was promoting the glory and power of Britain's imperial destiny in Asia. He passed an Act proclaiming Victoria as Empress to grant her a rank equal to Tzar Alexander II of Russia."



Queen Victoria receives the news of her accession to the throne from Lord Conyngham and the Archbishop of Canterbury – Engraving after the painting by Henry Tanworth Wells, 1887, Buckingham Palace, public domain, Wikimedia

“Under Bismarck, Germany had risen to be one of the most powerful in Europe. The idea of a superior race had long been deeply entrenched in Germany. The Industrial Revolution in Germany had created the Krupp steel and armaments consortium. A superior university and research establishment had produced a German work force with technical and scientific knowledge without equal. When Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered the construction of battleships and submarines on an unprecedented scale, it began a race for supremacy on the seas between Britain’s Royal Navy and the German Imperial Navy. The German Army’s Chief of Staff, General von Moltke believed war was unavoidable. Unwilling to wait until the Russians had completed their buildup of armaments, von Moltke urged the Kaiser to launch an immediate attack. The British warned Germany that if Austria attacked in the Balkans and Germany attacked Belgium or France, Great Britain would declare war. An arms race alone can lead to war. Europe was a powder keg ready to blow.”



Krupp Industries Armored Turret Gun Factory, 1914 – Period Paper, public domain

“Couldn’t the League of Nations,” Giovanni said, “mediate between the nations and forge a compromise?”

“You’re forgetting there was no League of Nations before World War One. That came after the debacle. And when it did come, the League of Nations had no armed forces to oppose Hitler when the Reich took over the Sudetenland in 1938.” However, there was one man who was determined to stop the powder keg of World War One from blowing.”

“Who was that?”

“Jean Jaurès launched a powerful effort to stop the war. Jaurès, a professor of philosophy, wrote his doctorate thesis on Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.”

“A professor of philosophy believed he could stop the war?”

“Jaurès was no ordinary man. One of the founders of the French Socialist Party, Jaurès was both a philosopher and an agent for radical change. He believed the life of the working man was not going to improve

unless he was able to gain the right to vote. ‘Workers unite,’ was the cry of the Second International Workingmen’s Association formed in 1889 to wage war with the capitalist elite of the Gilded Era. When the coal miners of Carmaux went out on strike to demand the return of their union secretary, Calvignac, who’d been fired, Jaurès joined them as a spokesman. The owner of the coal mine of Carmaux, the Marquis de Solages, the master of a number of enterprises, iron mines, glass works, and timber forests, refused to give in. In a bitterly fought contest with the Marquis, Jaurès convinced the government to reinstate the union secretary. His success working with the workers of Carmaux set Jaurès on his path. As a candidate of the French Workers’ Party from Carmaux, he entered the Chamber of Deputies.”



Jean Jaurès opposed colonialism and fought for the rights of the workers – The Charnel-House, public domain

“Jean Jaurès,” Giovanni said, “was a champion of the working man.”

“His thesis for a doctorate in philosophy was on aspects of democratic socialism in the work of Martin Luther, Immanuel Kant, Johann Fichte, and Friedrich Hegel. When he lost an election to the Chamber of Deputies, using the archives of Paris as a source, he wrote *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, a Marxian interpretation of the Revolution.

“Because Jaures opposed colonialism and spoke against the invasion of Morocco, he was hated by the nationalists. It was a time of great change at the turn of the century for the Industrial Revolution had transformed the economies of Europe. The workers were beginning to organize political parties and go out on strike to achieve better working conditions from the factory owners. Great numbers of workers were no longer independent workers owning their own tools.”

“You’re saying that workers lost their independence and their power when they had to give up their trades to go to work for the big corporations.”

“You’re right. They’d become a laborer in the textile factories, mines, steel mills, docks, and wharves. Through the capitalist accumulation of profits gained from the value of the workers’ production, the owners were becoming richer and the workers poorer. Most of the workers were illiterate because they’d been child laborers who’d worked from age 12 instead of going to school. They owned no property and were denied the right to vote. For a few francs, they worked 16-hour days, six and seven days a week to survive. They were slaves. Families lived in one room, boxes and planks for furniture. Babies, children, parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, eating, sleeping, making love, falling ill, dying in one sweltering, freezing, leaky room.”



Vanished Parisian slums – Author, Charles Marville, Musée Carnavelet, public domain

“Papa would have loved Jaurès.”

“Jaurès had a voice like an organ and the energy of a Bessemer blast furnace. Known for his self-sacrifice and personal generosity, Jaurès gave his whole life to the future of socialism. Clémenceau, often his opponent, once said, ‘Do you know how to spot an article by Jaurès. It’s very simple. All the verbs are in the future tense.’ Jaurès was an idealist, but a pragmatic idealist. Along with Émile Zola, Jaurès was one of the most earnest defenders of Alfred Dreyfus who’d been falsely accused of treason for selling artillery secrets to the Germans. Jaurès began organizing worker’s strikes in France and Germany with the intention to force negotiation for peace. Jaurès foresaw that a war would destroy Europe. Common sense told him that. He asked, why couldn’t the heads of state, the political leaders, and captains of industry see the obvious, especially considering the technological advances in the weapons of war. But the leaders didn’t see it. Patriotism and the will to conquer had possessed the minds of the power elite.”

“It would make sense,” Giovanni said, “that the laboring class would realize that they’d be the first ones to suffer in any great war. As the foot soldiers, they would be the first to die.”

“Wars are not made by the people but by the political leaders in charge. National interests are not necessarily rational. Four years before the war broke out, Norman Angell published *The Great Illusion* to prove war was impossible. Angell said it was an illusion that nations gained by armed conquest and war. The economies of the nations had become so interwoven with England relying on Germany to buy its exports and Germany relying on England to buy its products, the interlocking financial ties proved the insanity of aggressive wars. Angell said with the development of massively destructive artillery, rockets, and poison gas — a war that would only create ruin and suffering through all of Europe. But no one listened to Angell.

“Before the Second World War, Angell published *The Great Illusion* a second time. He said if Britain, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries, would bind themselves together to oppose aggression in any form, then reasonable Germans would stop Hitler from leading Germany into a war it could not win — a war that would destroy Europe. Angell underestimated only one thing.”

“What was that?”

“Deeply held beliefs often vanquish reason. Hitler and Goebbels had enormous success in forming the minds of ‘reasonable Germans.’ Jean Renoir was inspired by Angell’s book, when he made one of the most

humane anti-war films, *La Grand Illusion*. Like Marcel Carné's and Jacques Prevert's *Les Enfants du Paradis*, I enjoy seeing Renoir's films many times."

"What's *The Grand Illusion* about?"

"Renoir's film portrays a friendship between Captain de Boeldieu, an aristocratic French prisoner played by Pierre Fresnay, and von Rauffenstein, the Prussian prison commander played by Erich von Stroheim.



La Grand Illusion directed by Jean Renoir – Designed by the author's friend Eugene Lourié – Wikimedia

I love the prisoner-of-war scene during the battle of Verdun. Just after the Germans had seized Fort Douaumont, the French prisoners-of war are staging a vaudeville performance when news comes that the French have taken the fort back from the Germans. Lieutenant Maréchal, a hero of the working class played by Jean Gabin, stops the show and the French prisoners begin singing 'La Marseillaise.'"

"Do the prisoners make it out alive?"



La Grand Illusion film poster – 50watts.com, fair use

“I don’t want to ruin the ending for you. Le Grand Rex is having a Jean Gabin retrospective this year. I’ll treat you to *La Grand Illusion*.”

Giovanni started massaging my feet, putting both thumbs on the ball of my foot and making little rotational movements.

“Oh, that’s so good, where did you learn that?”

“My mother massaged my feet from the time I was a baby. She said there are 7,000 nerve endings in each foot. All those nerves are why a foot massage is so good.”

“It’s heavenly.”

“Our feet,” Giovanni said, “have a complex, 26 ingeniously designed bones and ligaments. The phenomenal dexterity of our feet is made possible through 30 tiny muscles. I once heard of a girl who learned to fly a plane using only her feet.”

“Why would she fly a plane with her feet?”

“She was born with no arms.”

With one hand cupping my heel, and the other hand wrapped around my toes, Giovanni rotated my foot clockwise and in the opposite direction, then pressed his fist into the sole of my foot, twisting his fist back and forth as he pressed.

“Oh . . . you’re doing some good. Keep it up.”

“Giovanni continued working on my feet while I remained silent, feeling the tension ebbing from my body.”

After a time, I said, “Are you ready to hear why Jean Jaurès failed to stop a war that would destroy half of Europe?”

“I can’t understand why the leaders of the great powers couldn’t foresee what was going to happen. Tell me how the whole world lost its mind.”

Weather Forecast: Showers Tonight; Fair Monday Full Report on Page Three.	<h1>The Washington Times</h1> <p>NUMBER 8214. WASHINGTON, SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 28, 1914. PRICE ONE CENT.</p>	SUNDAY EVENING EDITION		
<h2>SERB STUDENT ASSASSINATES ARCHDUKE AND HIS DUCHESS</h2>				
CAPT. HOPKINS CHARGES LETTERS WERE STOLEN AS PART OF CONSPIRACY	NEWMAN TO FILE MOTION FOR NEW TRIAL WEDNESDAY	FALL VICTIMS TO ASSASSIN	SEVEN PASSENGERS FLY THROUGH AIR WITH LIEUT. PORTE	BOMB HURLED INTO CARRIAGE FAILS TO EXPLODE, USES PISTOL
Lawyer Intimates Cientifico Plot to Suppress Success of Carranza Revolution—Readily Admits Friendship for Enemies of Huerta.	Three Grounds for Setting Aside Verdict in Ouster Suit Are Alleged. A motion for a new trial of the suit against Newman will be filed with Justice Charles E. Hughes. The chief grounds on which Newman is charged are that he had an affair with the duchess of the victim, and that he had an affair with the victim's mother. The verdict was contrary to the evidence. The court acted in overruling defendant's motion for special instructions to the jury. The court acted in instructing the jury on the question of "intention" and		Trans-Atlantic Flight Plans Advanced by Almost Perfect Behavior of the Marvel. By LIEUT. JOHN CYRIL PORTE, U. S. N. Rapid and encouraging progress toward the completion of the Atlantic has been made. The trial of the new hydroplastic surface brought the air over the water in a twenty-mile wind-aid carrying a load of 1,000 pounds. It will require one only slight further alteration or extension of the effective gliding surface of the boat, to enable it to rise with the additional 200 to 300 pounds which it will carry across the Atlantic. The current seven men, 100 pounds of gasoline and two bags of mail. The men were not disappointed.	Fires Several Shots, All of Which Lodged in Vital Parts, and Francis Ferdinand of Austria and Sophie Chotek, His Morganatic Wife, Were Found to Have Been Killed Instantly.

Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne – Author, *The Washington Times*, public domain

“On the 28th of June 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb student assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Princip was a designated assassin, a member of Young Bosnia in Sarajevo, a youth movement supported by the secret military society, The Black Hand.”

“Who were The Black Hand?”

“The Black Hand was a Slavic irredentist group which believed the only way to overthrow the Austro-Hungarian Empire was by violence.”



Black Hand, Serbian Terrorist Secret Society led by Dragutin Dimitrijević, standing at right – Unknown author, Wikimedia

“What does irredentist mean?”

“Irredentism is taken from your language, Italian, *irredento*, which means ‘unredeemed.’ Irredentism was a term popular in Italy as you’ll recognize from the Risorgimento which overthrew the French and Austrians to unify Italy under one national rule. Irredentism is any popular nationalist movement dedicated to regaining an ethnic homeland, to reconquer usually by violence a territory in which your own ethnic group has a majority but is under the control of a foreign power. French irredentists would be those advocating the re-conquest of Alsace-Lorraine which was taken from France by the Germans after the Franco-Prussian War. You could say that French irredentism was one of the causes of World War One.”

“The Serbians wanted to take back what the Austro-Hungarian Empire had taken from them?”

“In Serbia’s case, the irredentists desired to unify under Serbian rule all the territories populated by ethnic Serbs including Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia, and parts of Bulgaria and Macedonia which were at that time under the control or influence of Turkey or Austria. It was the eruption of Pan-Slavism that General von Bernhard had predicted a few years before. The heart of the conflict was Bosnia which comprised many Serbs but was governed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Radical Serbians were determined to take it back. The Pan-Slavism of Serbia really got rolling with a regicide just after the beginning of the 20th century.”

“What was the regicide?”



Assassination of King Aleksandar Obrenović and Queen Draga, 1903 – Author, Le Petit Paris, public domain, Wikipedia

“In a 1903 coup d’état, 28 officers of the Serbian military broke into the Belgrade Royal Palace and assassinated King Aleksandar Obrenović and Queen Draga Mašin and simultaneously, the Serbian Prime Minister and Minister of War, overthrowing the Obrenović dynasty and restoring to the throne, Petar Karadordević from a rival dynasty. While the house of Obrenović had been allied with Austro-Hungary, the Karadordević dynasty was allied with Russia and France. The assassinations culminated in an orgy of violence, the officers stabbing the king and queen with swords, bayonets, and axes, disemboweling and mutilating their corpses until they were unrecognizable.

“Who were these blood thirsty assassins?”

“Their prime mover was Dragutin Dimitrijević, known as Apis, named after the powerful bull-god of ancient Egypt due to his powerful, muscular build. Obsessively dedicated to the Serbian cause, as secretive and ruthless as Stalin, Apis would later found the Black Hand which through its offshoot, Young Bosnia, set up the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire.”

“Can you tell me a little more about Pan-Slavism?”

“The goal of Pan-Slavism was to unite all the Balkan Slavs. It had gradually gained steam in the decades leading up to the 1878 Congress of Berlin,

“The Congress of Berlin, wasn’t that led by Bismarck?”

“Right you are. After Russia defeated the Ottoman Empire in the war of 1877-78, the Great Powers, Russia, Great Britain, France, Austro-Hungary, Italy, Germany, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and the Ottoman Empire met to determine the boundaries of the Balkan states. After defeating France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, Germany was the only great power who could mediate the Balkan crisis because it had no direct interest in the concord. The leader of the Congress of Berlin, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s plan was to stabilize the Balkans, reduce the territory of the Ottoman Empire and resist Russian gains in the Balkans. Serbia and Montenegro were given complete independence and Austria-Hungary was allowed to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. While it was hailed as a brilliant achievement of Bismarck’s peacemaking, it angered Russia which was intent on controlling the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.”

“Otto von Bismarck succeeded in blocking Russia from controlling the Balkans.”

“No one hated von Bismarck more than the Russian nationalists and Pan-Slavists. The resulting Treaty



The Congress of Berlin, 1878. Otto von Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, led a conference of the great powers, Russia, Great Britain, France, Austro-Hungary, Italy, and Germany, and the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan states, Greece, Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro to decide on the borders of the Balkan nations following the Russo-Turkish War. The signing of the Treaty of Berlin exacerbated the conflict between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire, leading to two more Balkan Wars and ultimately, the First World War. A master of multilateral diplomatic chess, Bismarck's *realpolitik* and a bureaucracy staffed by the Prussian Junker nobility allowed him to rule Germany with an iron hand earning him the sobriquet, the "Iron Chancellor." After his conquest of France in 1871, Bismarck's annexation of Alsace-Lorraine ignited French nationalism one of many roads leading to the First World War. Public domain, Wikipedia

of Berlin gave a harsh blow to Pan-Slavism, splitting the Slavs of the Balkans between the rule of Austro-Hungary and the weakening Ottoman Empire. My thesis in my current course is how the treaty of one war leads to a following war. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin set up a German-Slav antagonism which over the next thirty years would create the circumstances for war.

"Like Germany, Britain, and France, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a major power, the fourth largest producer of machinery in the world with an advanced railway infrastructure and an impressive army. While Austria harbored designs on extending its rule into the small Balkan states, the Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza was against expanding the empire into the Balkans because they already had too many Slavs within their borders. Tisza warned Austria that to declare war on Serbia would trigger a war with Russia and because of the interlocking alliances, draw all of Europe into War.



Henry Kissinger observed of Otto von Bismarck, “The man of ‘blood and iron” wrote prose of extraordinary directness and lucidity, comparable in distinctiveness to Churchill’s use of the English language.” Bismarck masterminded the unification of the Germanic states into the nation state of Germany, declared 18 January 1871 at the Palace of Versailles following France’s capitulation in the Franco-Prussian War - Quora.com, public domain

“Tisza had reason for his caution. When Austro-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, it enraged the Serbian patriots. Immediately, a group of Serbian ministers, officials, and generals held a meeting at City Hall in Belgrade to found the Black Hand, the irredentist secret society devoted to the liberation of Serbs living under the Austro-Hungarian occupation. The Black Hand was dedicated to supporting the underground resistance group in Bosnia called, *Mlada Bosna*, Young Bosnia, which set up cells of spies, saboteurs, and assassins within the occupied provinces of Slovenia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. The Black Hand became the driver of Serbian irredentism from the turn of the century up until the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Most of the members of the Black Hand, were Serbian Army officers who were secretly training terrorists and guerilla fighters organized into cells of less than six members who knew no other Black Hand operatives other than their superior handler. The leader of the conspirators who had assassinated King and Queen a decade earlier, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević, the one called Apis, led the Black Hand’s central committee in Belgrade, while the Serbian government pretended to have no hand in its operations even though



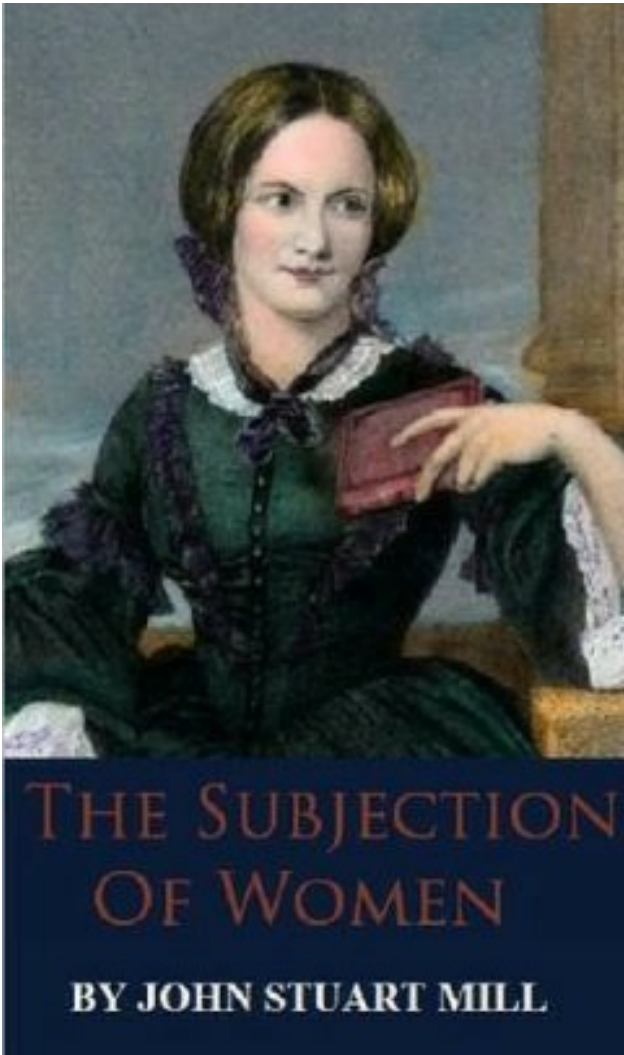
Young Bosnia, *Mlada Bosna*, set up cells of spies and assassins within Bosnia and Herzegovina – Young Bosnia, public domain, lse.ac.uk

the crown prince was one of its chief financial supporters. Since assassination was one of the Black Hand's chief modus operandi, to disagree with the Black Hand was dangerous, especially for Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić who the militants were pressing to be more aggressive in opposing Austro-Hungary. On the other side, balancing the fascistic Black Hand, was King Petar I Karadordević. His reign from 1903 to 1914 is remembered today by the Serbs as the Golden Age of Serbian Democracy.”

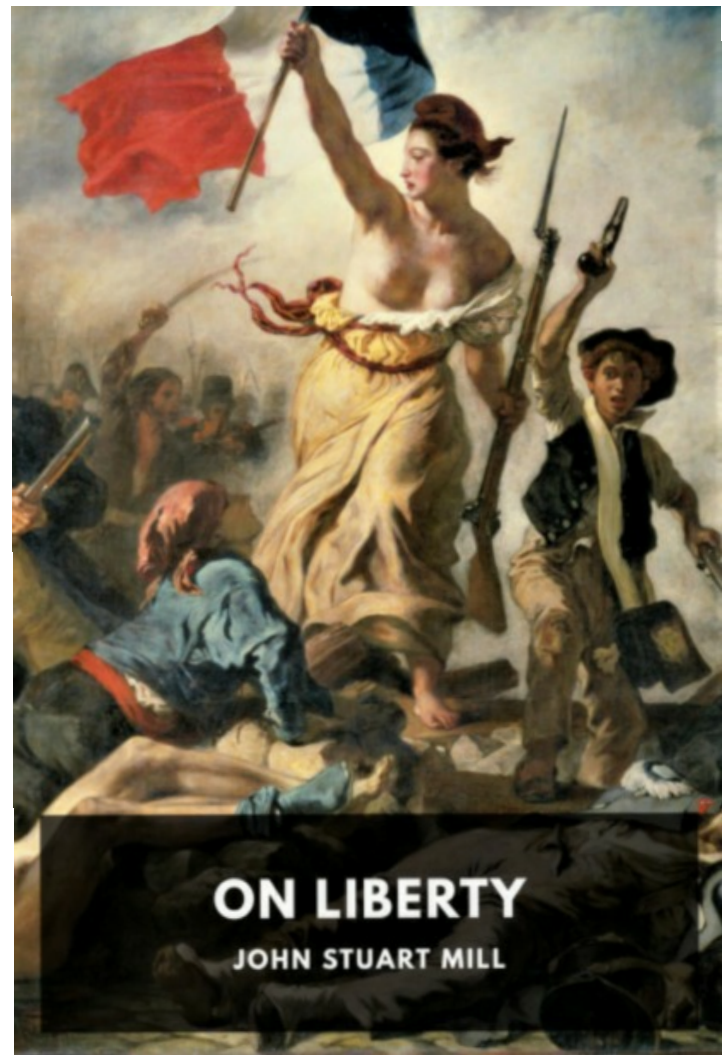
“Karadordević,” Giovanni said, “was elevated to power by a violent coup against the reigning king, how could anything democratic come out of that?”

“The violent opposition to King Aleksandar Obrenović had been due to his alliance with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Serbian nationalists supported Karadordević's alignment with Russia and France. Petar allowed a moderately free press, unrestricted political freedoms that envisioned a democratic Serbia unifying all Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Petar was different because he wasn't educated in Serbia. After school in Geneva, Petar got his military education at Saint-Cyr and École Supérieure de Guerre in Metz, fought with the French in the Franco-Prussian war, taken prisoner by the Germans and escaped by swimming across the Loire.

“Petar joined the Bosnia and Herzegovinian guerrilla fighters taking on the nomme de guerre of a 17th century Serbia freedom fighter. Due to his liberal education in Switzerland and France, Peter admired the ideas of John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*. Petar I remained a constitutional monarch who maintained democratic ideals in spite of the powerful influence of the Black Hand militants embedded in the Serbian Army whose power he hoped to contain.”



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“In Germany the socialists and the anarchists were the only ones to oppose the war. Franz Pfemfert, the editor of *Die Aktion*, an anarchist literary weekly in Berlin spoke out against the rising German demand for war. Europe’s insanity is incurable, he said. ‘What gives us the right to jabber about the progress of a civilization when it only shows our most wretched instincts? What gives us the right to proclaim murder as a duty of honor? Why is fanatical ignorance proclaimed as courage?’

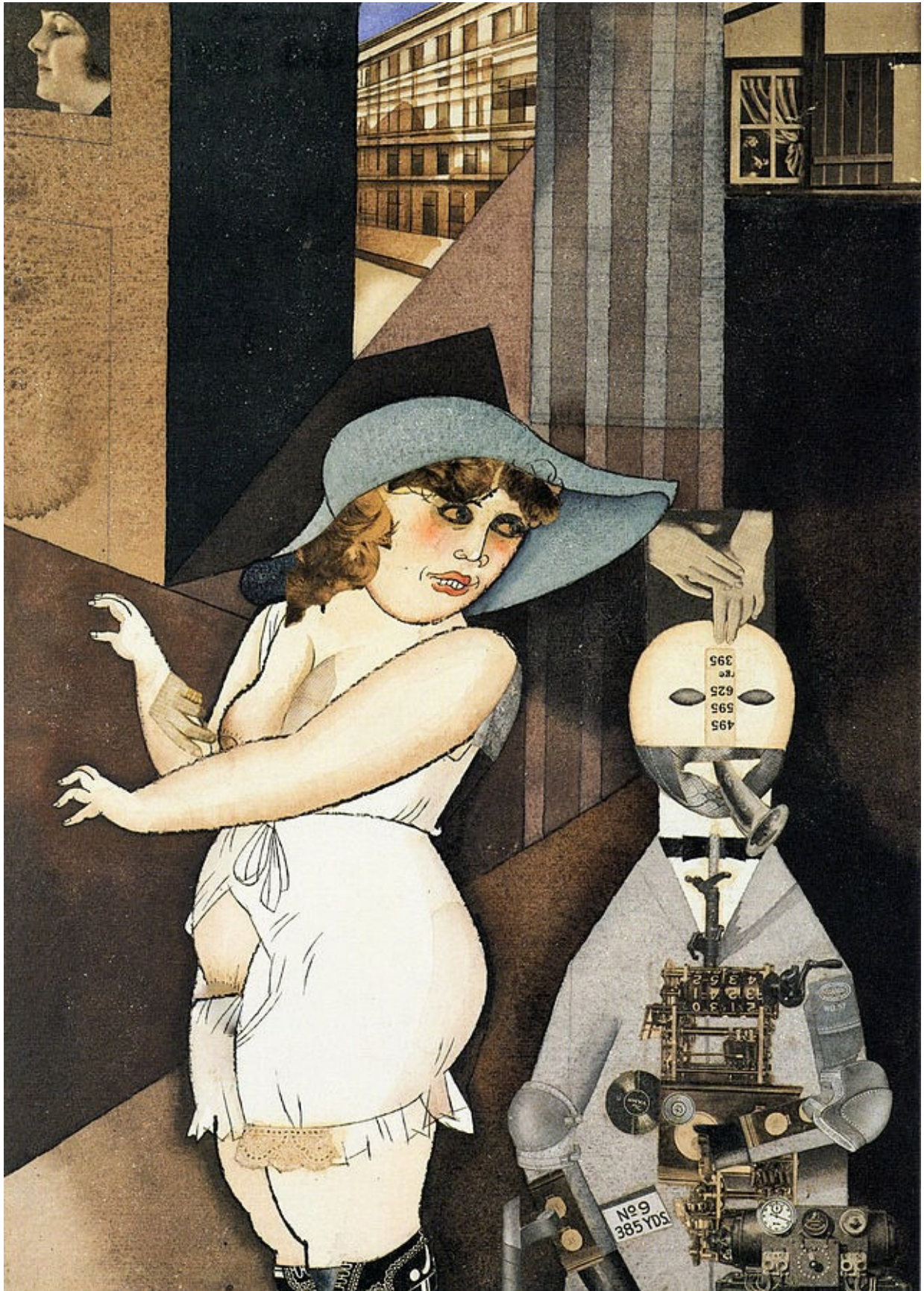
“Pfemfert’s *Die Aktion* championed the German Expressionists, George Grosz, Otto Dix, Franz Marc, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Oppenheimer, and Egon Schiele. Not only German artists, Pfemfert published foreign artists, Andre Gide, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Matisse. Pfemfert was censored for writing anti-war editorials by the German government. George Grosz made a lithograph of the Crucifixion showing Christ wearing a gas mask, which caused him to be denounced for blasphemy. The only ones speaking out against war were artists and left-wing intellectuals. But the people were no longer listening.”

“That’s the weakness of democracy,” Giovanni said. “I’ve seen it in Italy. People are so easily led by demagogues, especially when it comes to the appeal to patriotism.”

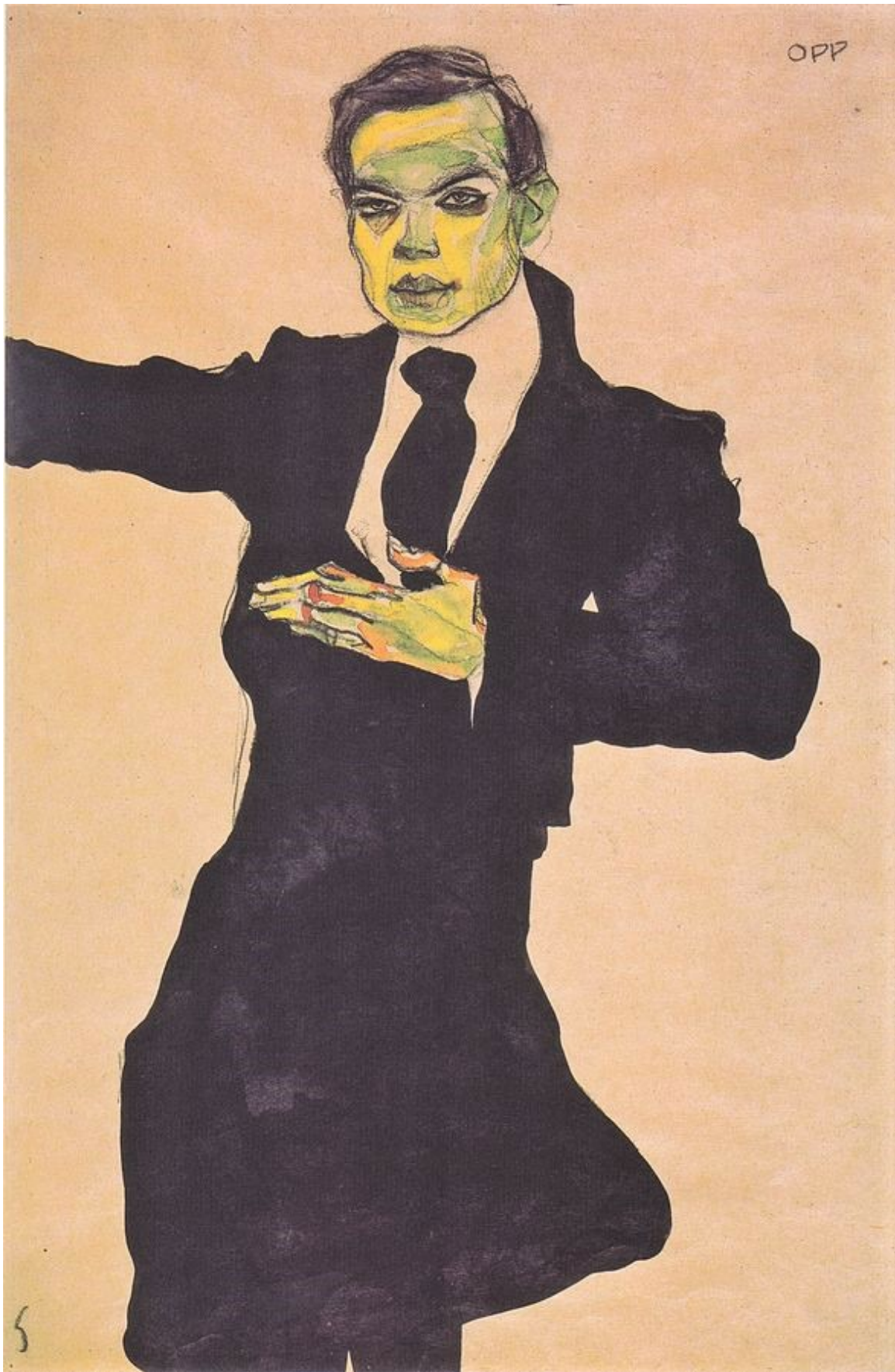
“Jean Jaurès was the idealist of the anti-war movement. In retrospect, it becomes clear that he was the realist and the nationalists were the fools. Jaurès said that since the power elites were blind to the insanity of a war that would engulf all of Europe, it was up to the workers to bring the world to its senses.



George Grosz drawing – History of Art, public domain



Daum marries her pedantic automaton George in May 1920, John Heartfield is very glad of it – Painting by George Grosz, Berlinische Galerie, public domain, University of Iowa, International Data Archive, Wikimedia



Max Oppenheimer, 1910 – Drawing by Egon Schiele, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria, public domain, Wikimedia



Fate of the animals, 1913 – Painting by Franz Marc, Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland, public domain, Wikimedia



Berlin Street Scene, 1913 – Painting by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Neue Galerie, Museum for German and Austrian Art, public domain, Wikimedia



Stormtroopers Advancing Under Gas, 1924 – Etching and aquatint by Otto Dix, Fair use, Wikimedia

“Unfortunately, the national passions of the people were becoming increasingly inflamed. In the Franco-Prussian War, France had lost Alsace-Lorraine. A nationalist on the right, Paul Déroulède, a poet, playwright and the founder of the League of Patriots, who wrote the patriotic *Chants du soldat*, called for revenge against Germany for taking Alsace-Lorraine. With the fervor of *revanchisme* running like a fever through France, it was difficult to overcome the people’s demand for revenge. The emotions in the press — the German patriots, the French patriots, the Austrian patriots, the Hungarian patriots, the Serbian patriots, the Russian patriots, millions and millions of patriots, clamored for war, the rat catcher Pied Piper of Hamelin playing his magic flute leading the children of Saxony on the Crusade to their death. German workers and French workers identified more with their nation than with each other. Loyalty to one’s country trumped loyalty to the brotherhood of workers. Over the cry of, ‘Workers unite!’ came the roar of ‘Countrymen unite!’”



Jean Jaurès, leader of the anti-war movement, World War One – The Charnel-House, public domain

“With hysterical nationalism sweeping through Europe,” Giovanni said, “Jaurès’ effort to arouse the workers to unite against the war, was like keeping a candle lit in a wind storm.”

“On the day of Germany’s ultimatum to Russia,” I said, “the candle blew out. While Jaurès was dining with friends at Le Croissant café at the corner of rue Montmartre and rue du Croissant, Raoul Villain, a right-wing nationalist, appeared at the open window, screaming, ‘Pacifist! Traitor!’ and shot Jaurès dead. Other than Jaurès, there wasn’t a single persuasive leader remaining to resist the march to war — a war that would exterminate a generation of the youngest and brightest.

“Upon hearing of Jaurès death, people were overcome with sorrow and wept in the streets. The coal miners of Carmaux stopped work saying, ‘They have cut down a mighty oak tree.’”

“The single bullet that killed Jean Jaurès,” Giovanni said, “was the end of the hope for peace.”

“The day before Jaurès’ death, Russia ordered the mobilization of its entire fleet and army. In response, the German embassy informed London on the 31st of July, that in response to the Russian mobilization, Berlin had declared a ‘State of Imminent Danger of War.’ If Russia didn’t immediately rescind its order of mobilization. Germany would mobilize, and that meant the end of peace. On the very day that Jaurès death was announced in the newspaper, August 1, 1914, Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia.”



Austro-Hungary declares war on Serbia – 1914 – Jim Martin Photo

“Austro-Hungary didn’t try to find a peaceful solution?”

“On 23 July 1914, the Austro-Hungarian government sent an ultimatum to the Serbian government—a list of demands including that all anti-Austrian propaganda in Serbia be suppressed and that Austria-Hungary be allowed to investigate the Serbian conspiracy of Young Bosnia.

“In his response to the demands, Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić two days later, accepted all the points of the ultimatum except allowing Austria to investigate the killing of the archduke. Knowing that an investigation would expose the Black Hand and the collaboration of Serbian military and government officials, Pašić had no choice but to refuse the demand. When Serbia failed to accede to an investigation into the assassination, the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia.”

“How did all the other countries enter the war?”

“It was a frenetic few days. Other than Jaurès, numerous officials in Britain, France, and Germany wanted to prevent the war. Churchill said that three-quarters of the cabinet were determined not to be drawn into a European war unless Britain was directly attacked and that was not considered likely. But the succeeding declarations of war were like flames jumping from tree to tree top in a forest fire, fireballs of contravening forces sweeping everything in its path on the road to war. Serbia’s powerful supporter Russia began mobilization on the Austrian border of Galicia. The British Foreign Office tried to convince Berlin, Paris and Rome to immediately convene an international convention aimed at settling the conflict peacefully. Kaiser Wilhelm II was open to British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey’s offer of French neutrality under guarantee of Great Britain. This was what the Kaiser was waiting for — the way for Germany to avoid a two-front war. Reportedly, the Kaiser ordered von Moltke to reverse the forces in the west to the Russian front, but the General refused. He countered that it would disrupt the carefully planned massive mobilization of troops and guns. But a deeper reason was that General von Moltke and the High German command had made the decision long before that they must make a preemptive strike while Germany was militarily stronger than France or Russia. Once Russia had completed their modernization of the army, Germany would be weaker than the French-Russian alliance. If Germany delayed in attacking, it would be too late to win a war.”

“And Austro-Hungary agreed?”

“Austro-Hungary viewed the assassination as an opportunity to defeat the Slavs that were hemming them in on all sides. When Russia failed to accept German’s request to halt its mobilization, von Moltke won the argument. Germany declared war on Russia. France ordered its mobilization the same day. Two days later, France and Germany declared war on each other. Once it was clear Germany was going to invade neutral Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany. The following day, the great powers flung themselves headlong into the Great War, oblivious of the carnage to come.”



German soldiers headed to the Western Front, August 1914 – Author, Oscar Tellman, German Federal Archives, public domain, Wikimedia

“I wonder,” Giovanni said, shaking his head gravely, “if only one of the countries had acted in an opposite way, maybe the apocalypse of World War One could’ve been avoided.”

“You’ve touched upon one of the philosophic debates between determinism and free will. What determines things to happen as they do? Is it the hand of God as some religions say? Are all events predetermined to occur, or are events happening by chance, by coincidence, by hazard, unforeseen actions uncontrolled by God that determine the course of history. It’s like the question, ‘If you hadn’t driven over the mountains in a rainstorm, would you still be alive?’ With so much contradictory data, rewritten, and even forged documents of state, it is nearly impossible to make things crystal clear. Historians will continue to argue their case. There is a great series of variables: what would have been the outcome if the Black Hand had not assassinated the archduke, or what if the driver of Franz Ferdinand had not made a wrong turn and his engine failed right in front of Gavrilo Princip, giving him a perfect shot, or if Austria had decided to recognize Serbia’s acceptance of seven of their eight demands, or if Russia had stopped their mobilization when Germany demanded it, or if Britain had made it clear that it stood in solidarity with the Anglo-French alliance if Germany attacked France, or if the German high command had not fantasized that Britain would remain neutral, or if Germany and Austria had not believed that it was mandatory to fight a war before Russia completed its massive buildup of armaments, or if France had not made the binding alliance with Russia, or if Churchill had not demanded the

immediate mobilization of the British fleet, or if opinion in France had not been enflamed to retake the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, or if Germany had realized that Britain would declare war if they violated the neutrality of Belgium.”

“I see your point. With the arms race and web of interlocking alliances, it’s possible that even without the assassination of the archduke, World War One would have taken place anyway.”

“With all of the variables in play, it’s impossible to judge. When I look at the dynamics leading up to 1914, the interconnecting web of power relations became a circular game of dominos falling one after the other after a frail boy assassinated Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo.”

“After the European powers declared war what happened then?”

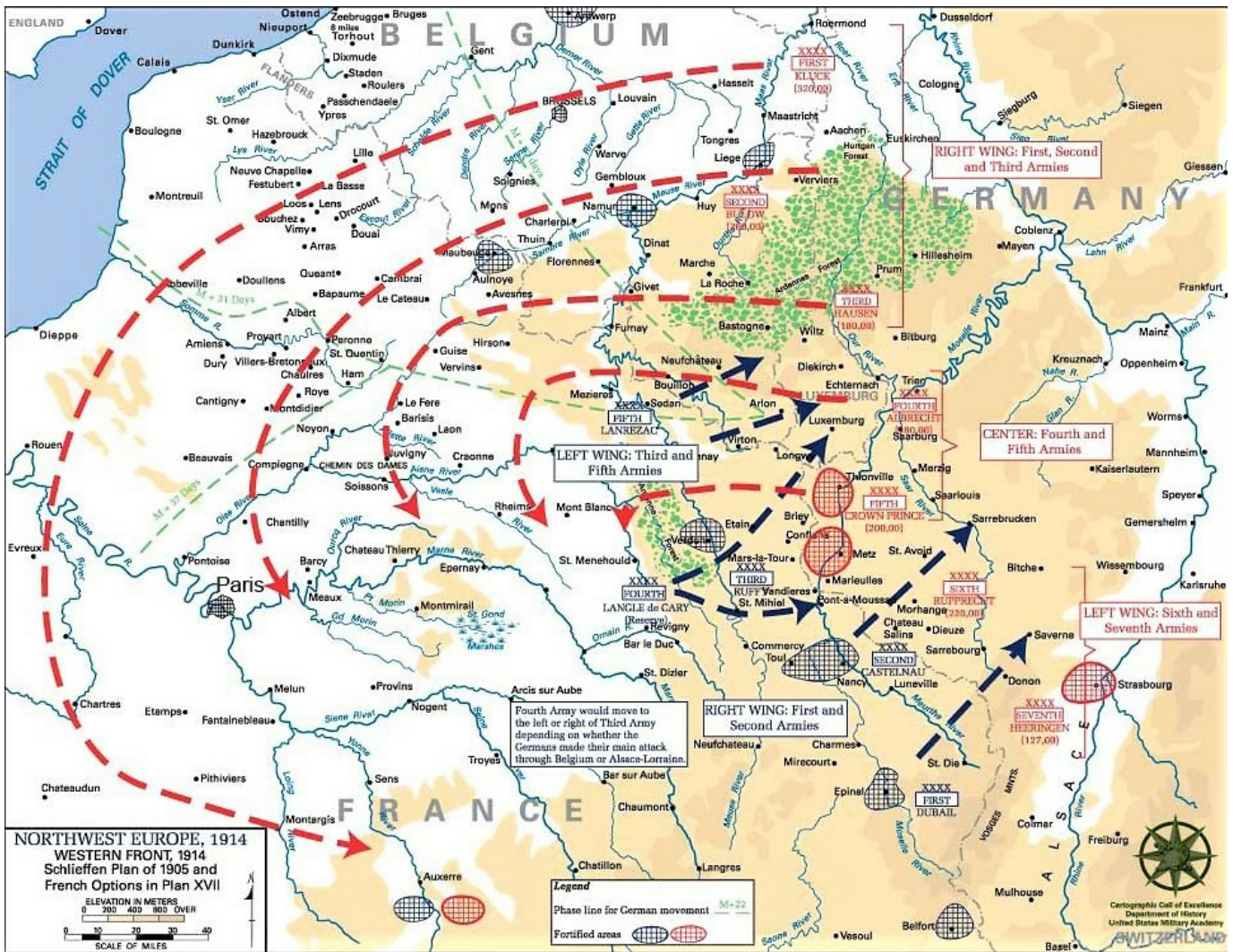
“Simultaneously to the Russian mobilization, Kaiser Wilhelm II mobilized the German Army to unleash the ‘Schlieffen Plan’ — an invasion of Belgium followed by an assault on France with a race to the sea to cut off the British forces from the French army”

“You once told me,” Giovanni said, “the Schlieffen Plan was used by the Germans in the Second World War.”

“They used the same plan in both wars, swiftly attack through the plains of Belgium then sweep in a great circle to attack the French forces from the flanks. It was a perfect plan, that is, it was perfect only if the Germans could sweep quickly through Belgium before the French could respond. The Germans decided upon the flanking attack of the Schlieffen Plan because the Eastern frontier of France had been heavily fortified after the Franco-Prussia war of 1870. The plan created by Count von Schlieffen and chief of staff, von Moltke the Younger, was to concentrate their attack in the West, to quickly annihilate the French then rush the troops by rail to the East to defeat the unprepared Russians before they could fully mobilize. Convinced that Britain would not honor their treaty obligation to defend Belgium, the Germans took the gamble of attacking through less fortified Belgium despite its declaration of neutrality.”

“I can see what a risk the Germans were taking.”

“In war,” I replied, “a plan that is dependent upon on a strategy of swift defeat is only as good as the first encounter. Count von Schlieffen’s plan had a noble ancestor — Hannibal’s destruction of the Roman Army at the Battle of Cannae in the first century before Christ.”



German Command's Schlieffen Plan to attack France, and French Plan XVII, 1914 – Author, Tinodela, The Department of History at the United States Military Academy, public domain, Wikimedia

“How would this Battle of Cannae plan work?”

“After charging through Belgium, the German war machine would wheel around Paris in a circular route to envelop the French army from the North and the West before they could fully mobilize their forces. The goal would be to trap the French Army in a giant pincer movement and deliver the final blow in an envelopment battle.”

“The Germans were certainly optimists.”

“The Schlieffen Plan depended upon surprise and speed. The speed — 42 days to bring down France — was its strength and its weakness. Kaiser Wilhelm II told his troops, ‘You will be home before the leaves have fallen from the trees.’ There was no plan B. But as warfare invariably delivers the unexpected, there was a big surprise right from the first.”

Giovanni stopped working on my feet.

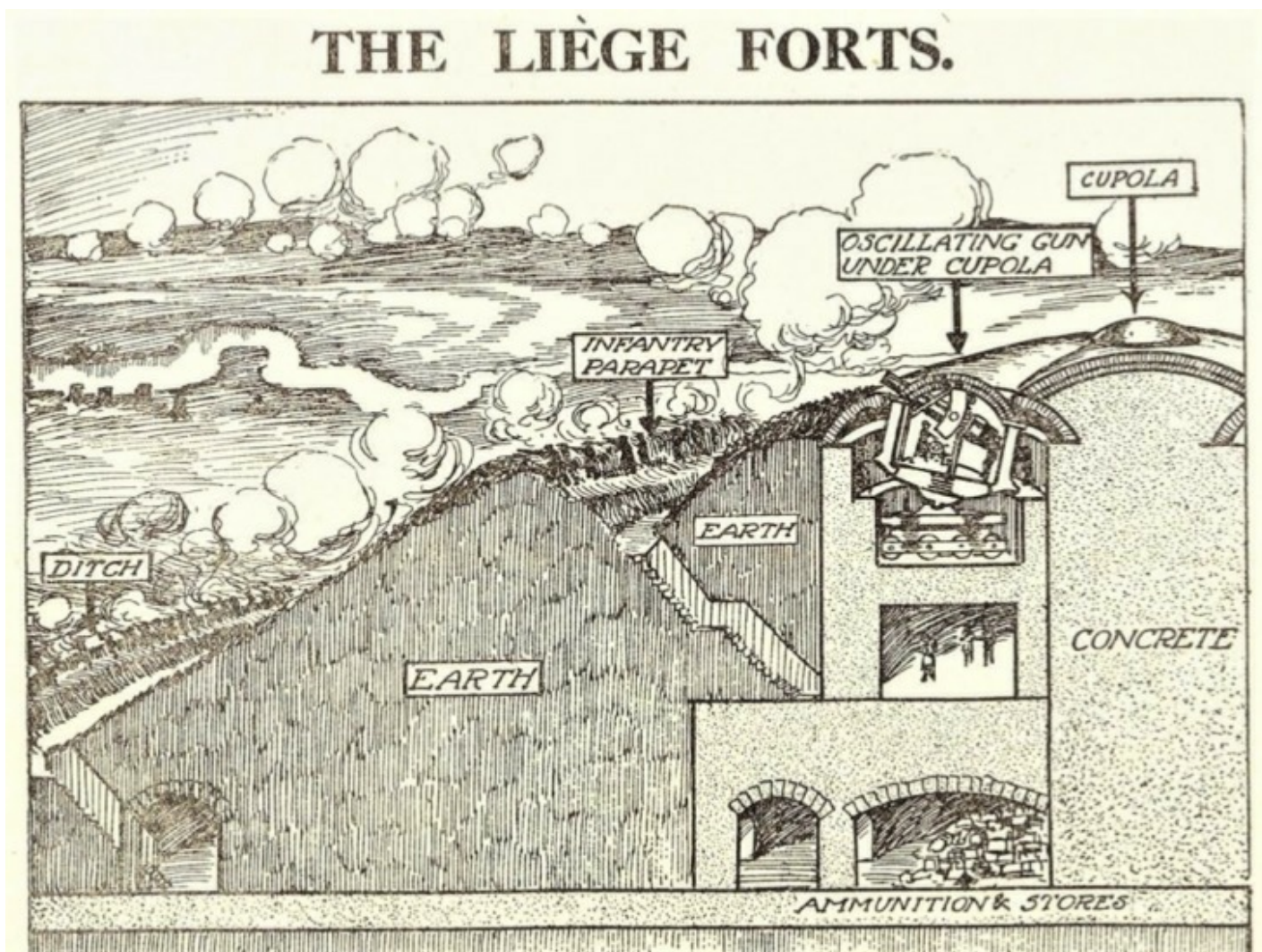
“Oh, don’t stop, my love. Could you do the other foot once more?”

“You have beautiful feet.”

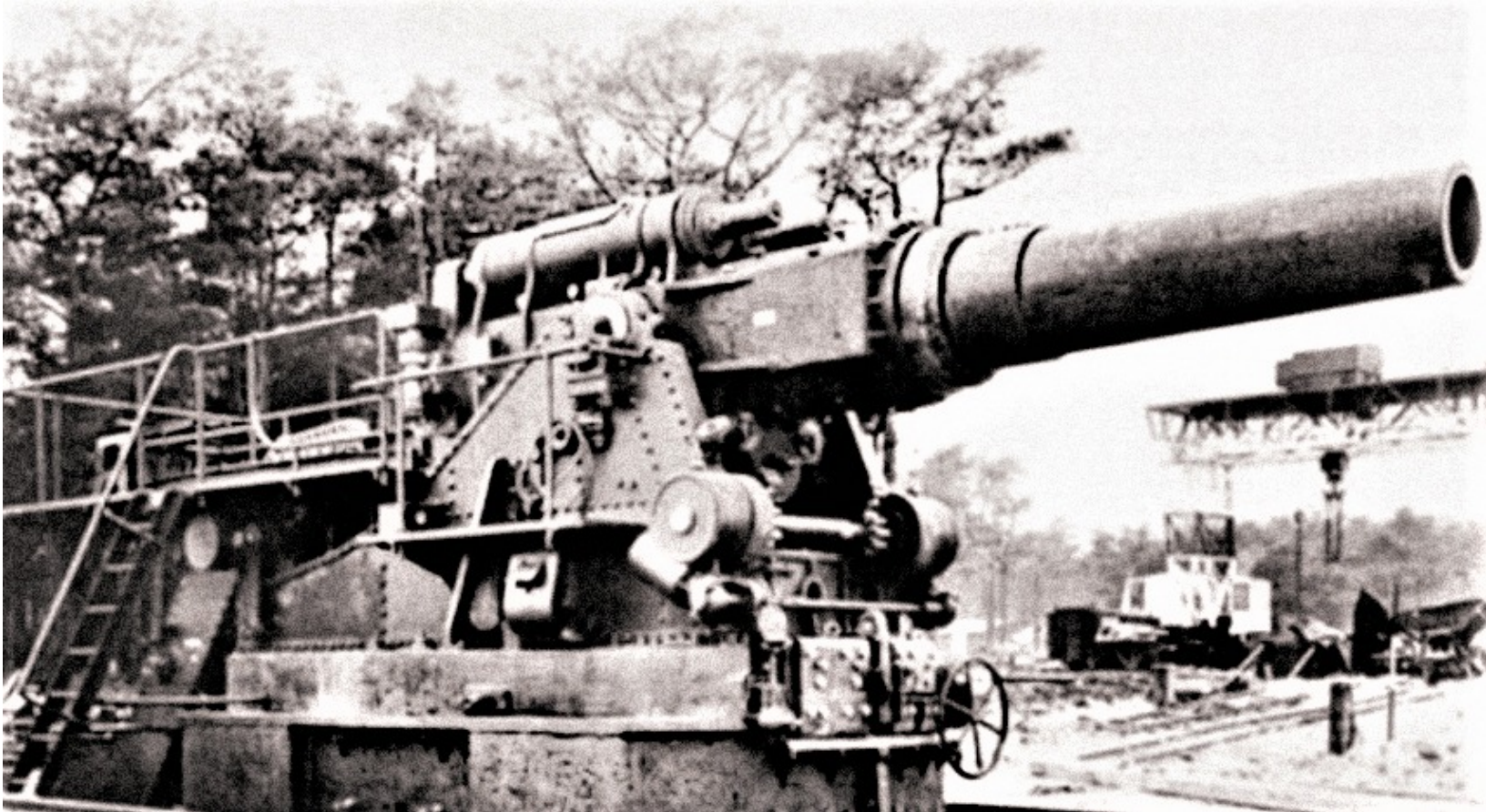
“Thank you.”

“I love your feet. What was the big surprise?”

“A fierce Belgian resistance. The German high command had not seriously considered that six ill-equipped divisions of the Belgians would be crazy enough to oppose thirty-four divisions of Germans. General Otto von Emmich’s forces reached the forts of Liège to discover that the bridges over the Meuse had been destroyed and their artillery shells could not penetrate the concrete subterranean emplacements of the forts encircling Liege.



Fortifications of Liège, Belgium, 1914 – Weapons and Warfare, public domain



Big Bertha howitzer demolished Belgium Forts – worldwar.com, public domain

“The Germans had been told that the Belgians were ‘chocolate soldiers,’ but when they assaulted the forts, charging up steep slopes, the machine guns of the chocolate soldiers mowed them down, leaving a wall of dead and dying stacked a meter high, the Germans still coming shoulder to shoulder, line after line, slaughtered by the incessant fire of the Belgian guns to the disbelief of the German command and the astonished admiration of Britain and France.

“The German High Command was confronted with a Belgian resistance which they hadn’t factored into the Schlieffen plan. Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, who’d won the great victory over the French and the capture of Emperor Napoleon III at Sedan in the Franco-Prussian war, had said fifty years before — ‘no plan survives contact with the enemy.’ When the Belgians refused to surrender the forts, Ludendorff ordered to the front the 420 mm siege cannons that the Krupp consortium had secretly developed since 1909 which fired in a high angle arc onto the tops of fortifications, a gun twenty-four feet long weighing many tons, dismantled into segments, each one pulled by a locomotive. Spur tracks had to be laid to carry the gun to its emplacement where a deep excavation of earth was filled with steel and concrete to withstand the force of the massive recoil. Even when broken down into segments, the Krupp siege gun was so gigantic that when they moved it there was nothing but trouble.

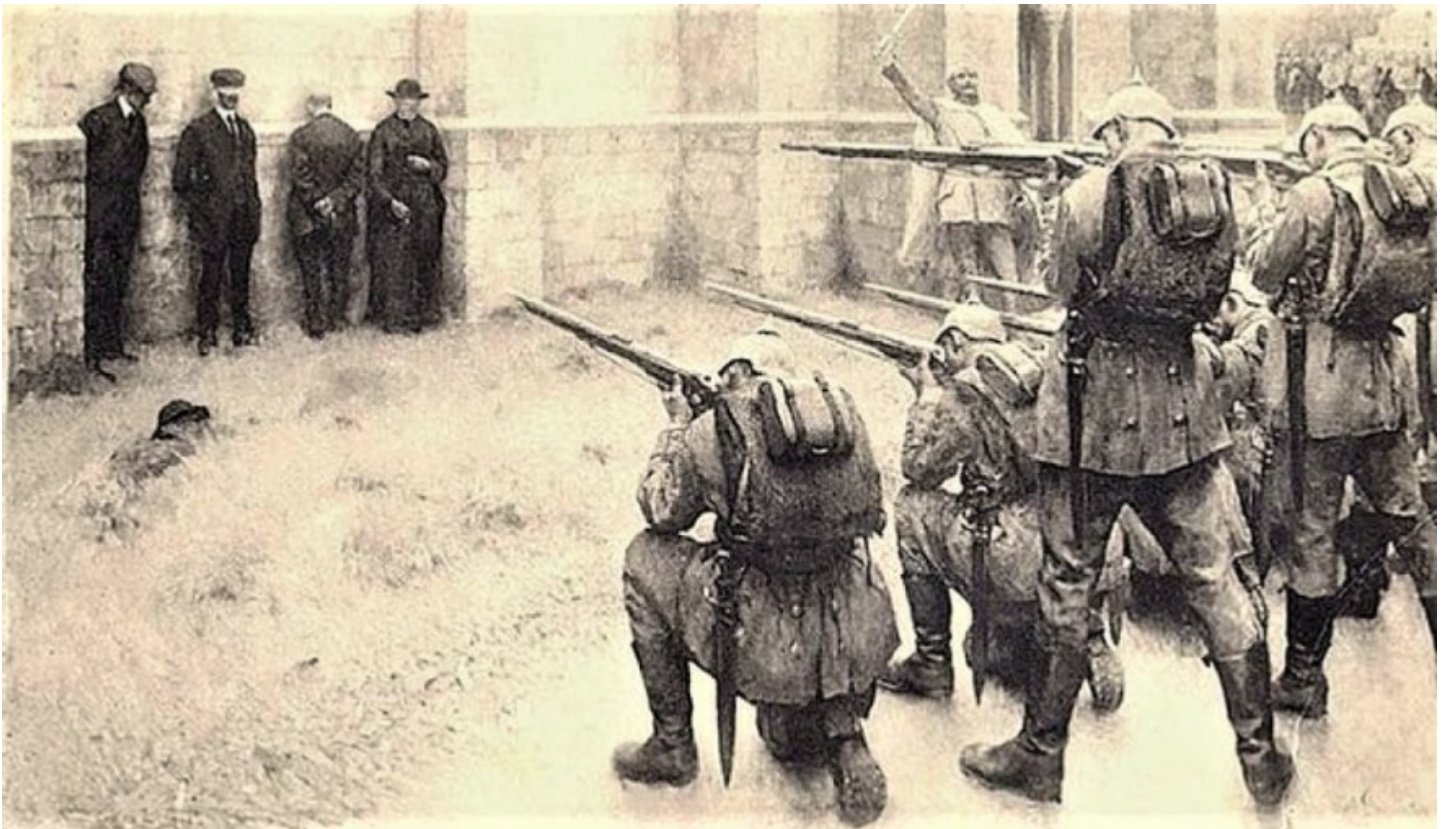
“When there were only a few miles from being in range, the Belgians blew up the railroad tunnel, which the Germans were unable to clear, making it necessary to unload the gun, disassemble, and haul by 36 horses in sections, with axles breaking, motors failing, chains snapping, through roads snarled by wagons and troops. To travel a score of miles, it took several days to get within range of Fort Pontisse which had refused to surrender. The more portable Austrian Skoda 305s were brought up to fire on the other surviving Belgian forts. When fired, the explosion of the Krupp mortar was so enormous that the gun had to be fired electrically from 300 meters distant, the shell rising in a parabolic arc 4,000 feet high, traveling 7 miles, crashing through steel and concrete. Within twenty-four hours, Fort Pontisse suffered forty-five shells which fell relentlessly one after the other, crushing underground bunkers, fire and gas filling the chambers, the few still living hysterical with fear. The remaining Liège fort was destroyed by a shell striking the ordnance magazine, blowing up the fort from inside. General Leman was captured and sent to a prison in Germany, and General von Emmich and General Ludendorff were awarded Germany’s highest medal, the blue, white, and gold cross.”

“Did Belgian resistance groups wage guerilla warfare behind the lines?”



Liège Fortress Destroyed by Big Bertha Siege Guns – www.rtbf.be, public domain

“Belgium troops and franc-tireurs irregulars blew up railroads and bridges, cut off the shipment of troop supplies, ammunition, food, and medicine. The citizens blocked roads, cut telephone and telegraph wires, forcing the Germans to fight their way from town to town taking heavy casualties. In accordance with the philosophy of Roman Emperor Caligula, *‘Let them hate us as long as they fear us,’* General von Kluck ordered reprisals — murder the civilians and priests, burn their homes, deport the survivors to Germany to bring in the harvest. Infuriated by the sniping of francs-tireurs and the sabotage of railways, the Military Governor of Belgium, Baron von de Goltz ordered all the villages burnt within a radius of several kilometers to terrorize the resisters. All villages near where railway and telegraph lines were sabotaged, von de Goltz declared, *‘were to be punished without pity whether they are guilty or not. We will take hostages. At the first case of destruction of railway, telegraph, or telephone, they will immediately be executed. It is the stern necessity of war that the punishment for hostile will fall not only on the guilty but on the innocent as well.’*



Germans executing civilians at Liège, Belgium – Author, Evariste Carpentier, Collection de l'Administration communale de Blégny, public domain, Wikipedia

“The German troops killed the Belgians at random, shooting the mayors, and raping women. When General von Bulow’s troops met resistance in Andenne, he commanded 200 people to be shot and the town to be burned to ashes. Von Bulow put up notices that ten hostages would be shot if a single civilian fired on a

German. When a guerilla shot a soldier, according to von Bulow's word, hostages were taken from every household and executed. When the people of Dinant sabotaged the reconstruction of damaged bridges, von Hausen's Army took 600 prisoners, lined the women and men up in the town square, the execution squads firing fusillade after fusillade until everyone was dead. The troops pillaged and burned Dinant leaving it charred and desolate. The result, General von Hausen declared, was due to the Belgian government policy of inciting civilians to attack the Germans in violation of international law. The deaths were the fault of the Belgians, not the Germans. Many Belgians fled to The Netherlands which was neutral, but the German's built a high voltage electric fence called the *Wire of Death* to seal the Dutch-Belgian border. Several thousand Belgian civilians died trying to escape German terror."

"The Germans," Giovanni said, releasing my left foot and moving to the right, "had no concerns about committing war crimes against civilians?"



Library of Louvain, Belgium – University Histories, public domain

"The Prussians conceived of a 'theory of terror,' *Kriegsbrauch*, the destruction of the total material and intellectual resources of the enemy. One of the worst examples of the German policy of total war against civilians was the burning of Louvain. Since the houses were of brick and stone, the fire didn't spread quickly enough, so the soldiers went from house to house with their torches until the entire town was in ashes including the ancient Library of Louvain, thousands of medieval manuscripts destroyed, a tragedy which outraged the world. It was one of the atrocities leading to the condemnation of *Kriegsbrauch*. The burning of the Library of



Library of Louvain, Belgium, burned by the Germans, 1914 – Dingelien Goete

Louvain was one of the reasons that the Allies demanded the War Guilt clause of the Treaty of Versailles imposing harsh reparations on Germany after the war.”

“So, Hitler’s mass killings,” Giovanni said, “of civilians in Eastern Europe, Russia, and France, was a repeat of the German policy of *Kriegsbrauch* during the First World War?”

“In the Second World War, the Wehrmacht had the same policy as in the First World War. Whenever German soldiers were killed by the resistance, they’d execute a great number of civilian hostages. In the beginning weeks of World War One, France and Britain realized that after the Rape of Belgium, there could be no negotiated peace with an enemy who used a strategy of terror. From that moment on, there could be no goal for the Allies but total victory. Although the German advance was slowed by the English and French armies, they were overwhelmed by the Germans during the Battle of the Frontiers. If it hadn’t been for the stiff resistance of the retreating French and English and the fierce defiance of the guerilla fighters of Belgium, the war would have been all over.”

“What was happening on the Eastern Front?”

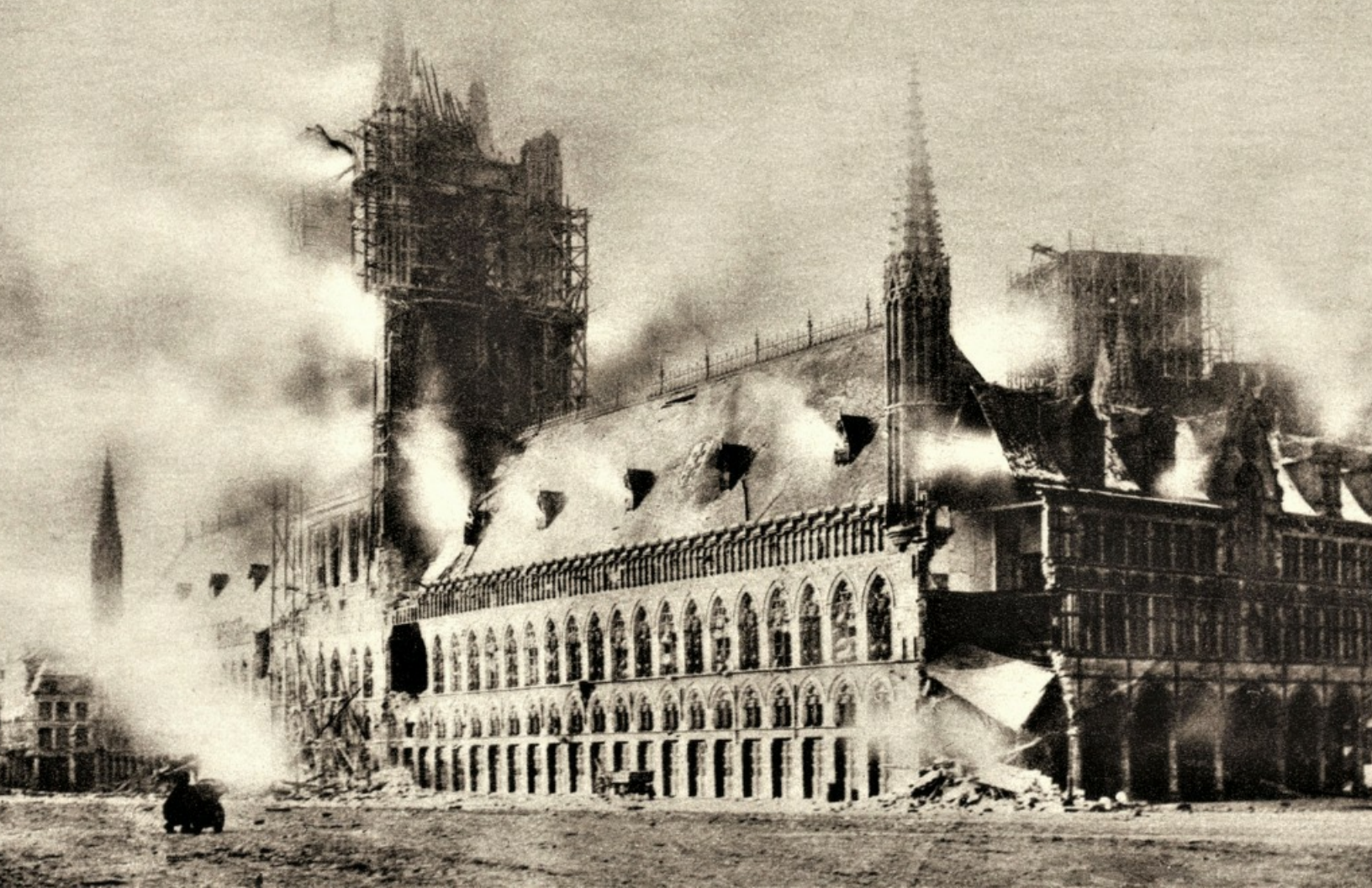


Aftermath of the burning of the Medieval Cloth Hall of Ypres by the Germans – History Today



Howitzers of 135th Siege Battery – National Army Museum

Three-quarters of all the wounds suffered during the Great War were due to artillery shells. Propelled at extreme speed, shards of metal exploding overhead raked the landscape tearing bodies apart. A man's body could disintegrate in a direct hit. In *La Peur*, published in Paris, 1930, Gabriel Chevallier, describes on page 54, the fear experienced by the soldiers in the trenches: The shells rained on us hard and fast; they were aimed closely at us and never fell at a distance beyond some fifty meters from us. Some fell so close that their impact covered us with earth and we breathed in their fumes. The men who had been laughing earlier were now no more than trapped game, animals who had lost all dignity and whose frame acted only on instinct. I saw my comrades, livid with crazed eyes, jostle each other and huddle together so as not to be hit alone; I saw them being jerked about like puppets by the spasms of fright, embracing the soil, digging their faces into it. . . . Our nerves shriveled, and our guts burned; more than one of us thought himself wounded, and felt to his bones the horrible slash that his flesh feared so much we thought it was real." – encyclopedia 1914-1918, online.net/article/weapons



Germans Burned the Medieval Cloth Hall of Ypres – History Today

“After running into a hornet’s nest in Belgium, the second dilemma was that the Russians didn’t follow the Schlieffen Plan that had predicted that the unprepared Russians would be slow to mobilize their forces. After a quick defeat of France, Germany planned to shift their troops by railway to the East to destroy the Russians, but it didn’t work out that way. The Russians attacked quickly forcing the Germans to ship their reserve forces from France across Germany by rail which took some pressure off the overwhelmed French and British armies. But the respite didn’t last long. Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff’s divisions succeeded in delivering a stunning blow against the hastily assembled Russian Army in the Battle of Tannenberg and General Alexander Samsonov committed suicide for failing Mother Russia. While the Russians had been clamoring for war against Germany, there was one Russian who spoke against it.”

“Who was the lone voice of protest?”

“Oddly enough it was a holy mystic and religious seer, Grigori Rasputin, advisor to the Tsar. Rasputin foresaw what was coming if the war went on — the destruction of the Romanov regime.”



Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna, St. Petersburg, Russia, 1914 – Author, Boasson and Egler, public domain, Wikimedia



Imperial Family of Russia, St. Petersburg, 1913 – Author, Boasson and Egler, U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia. Tsesarevich Alexei sit in front, left to right, Grand Duchess Maria, Tsarina Alexandra, Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana, Tsar Nicholas II, and Grand Duchess Anastasia.



Grigori Rasputin – Russian Mystic, Healer, Prophet, and Religious Charlatan, 1913 - Daily Mail.

“Wasn’t Rasputin,” Giovanni asked, “the monk who preyed upon the Empress and was murdered by the nobility?”

“It’s difficult to know the truth about Rasputin because he was so reviled by the Russian aristocracy. His many enemies never tired of telling lurid stories about him. More has been written on Rasputin than on any other figure in Russian history. A mysterious figure at the time of the fall of the Romanovs, Rasputin has become a legend inspiring a hundred books. The holy man wielded great influence over the Empress consort, Alexandra Feodorovna, convincing her that by prayer he could intercede with God and save the life of her hemophiliac son, Tsarevich Alexi, heir to the Romanov throne. Rasputin had a vision that the war with Germany would destroy Nicholas II’s regime and urged the Tsar to end the war, advice which alienated the Grand Duke and fed the suspicion that Rasputin was a German agent. Mysticism and the occult had become an obsession among the Russian aristocracy, but they turned against Rasputin not only because he was a peasant who had gained influence over the royal family, but because of his sexual obsession for young women. After his prayers for the hemophiliac heir, Rasputin headed straight to the brothels of Saint Petersburg.”



Empress of Russia, Alexandra Feodorovna with her children, nurse, and Rasputin, 1908 - Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia



Rasputin and admirers, 1914 – Author Karl Bulla, public domain, Wikimedia



Caricature of Rasputin and the Tsarina and Tsar of Russia, 1916 – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia

“Didn’t a Russian aristocrat assassinate Rasputin?”

“Prince Felix Yusupov II killed Rasputin. A handsome young aesthete who’d studied at Oxford University, Prince Yusupov believed Rasputin was a religious charlatan whose influence over the Tsarina had made him a threat to the Russian Empire. The prince who occasionally dressed in women’s clothing, was a descendant of a 14th century Tartar, a descendant of Genghis Khan’s Golden Horde, founder of the Crimean Khanate. Upon his conversion from Islam to Orthodox Christianity in the 17th century, the Tatar was ennobled by Tsar Feodor I with the title of Prince.



Count Felix Sumarokov-Elston, later Prince Felix Yusupov, 1903 – Portrait by Valentin Serov, Russia Museum, public domain, Wikimedia



Prince Felix Yusupov, costume ball, Oxford University, 1910 – Unknown author, public domain

“His descendant, Prince Yusupov invited Rasputin to his palace where he served him liqueurs while playing on his guitar gypsy ballads which Rasputin loved. After serenading Rasputin, Yuspov laid down his guitar and with the other assassins, stabbed, beat, and shot the holy man, hauled him out of the palace, and flung Rasputin’s mangled body into the Malaya Nevka River.”



Basement of the Yusupov Palace where Grigori Rasputin was murdered by Prince Felix Yusupov, St. Petersburg, 1917 – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia

“I’ve heard that Rasputin was nearly impossible to kill. He was some kind of religious zombie.”

I laughed, “Well that is one of the grotesque stories told about the mysterious monk with the burning eyes. Historians have uncovered evidence that England was part of Yusupov’s plot. English intelligence reports show that the government was deeply worried by Rasputin’s efforts to convince the Tsar to withdraw from World War One. The Allies feared that the failure of Russia to attack Germany would be devastating for England and France, allowing the Germans to transfer troops from the Eastern Front back to the West giving them great superiority in numbers.”

“So England had to have Rasputin taken out?”

“It’s not a proven fact, but England and France had much to lose if Rasputin had convinced the Tsar to withdraw from the war.

“If the Russians hadn’t tied down millions of Germans in the East, the French quite likely would’ve never prevailed in the Battle of the Marne, the battle which saved Paris.”

“How did they save Paris?”

“With the Germans crossing over into France, the government was in a state of panic. In that time, the state of communications didn’t allow direct contact with the retreating armies. Rumor and fear led President Poincare to distrust Joffre’s reports which revealed practically nothing. The engineer in charge of the defense works of Paris told the Minister of War that while the defenses of Paris existed on paper, absolutely nothing had been completed. They’d only begun razing areas for fields of fire. After all the talk of war, the failure of defensive preparation was a disaster. Paris had not been provisioned, no trenches or gun emplacements had been dug. No storage bunkers for ammunition had been built, and the laying of barbed wire had barely begun. General Joseph Gallieni, of Corsican and Italian extraction, told the Minister of War that the German armies would be before the walls of Paris in ten days. Was Paris prepared to withstand a siege? The Minister of War said no. To make matters worse, General Joffre had transferred two divisions from Paris to reinforce his troops in the North leaving only a few reserve forces for the defense of Paris. Joffre evidently thought that if Paris were lost it wouldn’t mean the end of the war. They’d just go on fighting. Gallieni disagreed. Notorious for his conquest of Madagascar in 1905, exiling Queen Ranavalona III and abolishing the ancient monarchy, Gallieni was one of the most respected generals in France, but the fact that he’d once been General Joffre’s superior, set up a fierce rivalry that lasted until Gallieni died during the war. With Paris about to fall to the Germans, Gallieni told the government that Joffre was wrong to abandon Paris. The city was too important symbolically. Gallieni said if the government would overrule Joffre and give him an army of several divisions and appoint him Governor of Paris, he could be counted on for the defense of Paris. And Gallieni kept that promise during the Battle of the Marne.”

“With the French army overwhelmed,” Giovanni asked, “how could they possibly defeat the Germans at the Marne?”

“With the help of a technological marvel.”

“A technological marvel?”

“The airplane.”



La Bataille de Fleurus, first military use of observation balloons, 1794 – Wikimedia

“Formerly slow-moving gas balloons were used for aerial reconnaissance over enemy troops, but for the first time, reconnaissance was made by an airplane, which discovered a gap of fifty kilometers between General von Moltke’s two German armies.



I Reconnaissance Camera, 1916 – Author, legiregsz.blog.hu, public domain



French heavy cavalry parading in Paris before heading to the front, 2 August 1914 – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia



German infantry on the battlefield, 7 August 1914 – Author, Underwood & Underwood, U.S. War Department, public domain, Wikimedia



Nieuport 10, Reconnaissance Aircraft and Trainer – NiD.29 – Wikimedia

“As soon as aggressive French commander, General Franchet d’Esperey was informed by aerial reconnaissance of the gap, he launched his Fifth Army into a surprise attack against the German Second Army, widening the gap and exposing the flanks of the Germans. Another factor which helped the French at the Marne was the quick thinking of General Gallieni. Realizing that the French were outnumbered by the Germans, he commandeered 600 Renault taxicabs in Paris to carry 6,000 French reserve troops to strengthen d’Esperey. The police gave the order to the taxis who emptied out their passengers, saying ‘We’re going to the battle.’



General Gallieni ordered 600 taxis to mobilize at Les Invalides to carry soldiers to the front at Nanteuil-le-Haudouin, 50 kilometers distant – Libération.fr, public domain



The taxis of 1914 were Renault AG1 Landaulets seating five men and averaging about 20-25 miles per hour – Public domain, guerre 14-18.org



Taxis and buses at the Battle of the Marne – Unknown author, public domain, historum.com

“Six hundred taxis each carrying five soldiers along with trucks and buses crammed with troops traveled 60 kilometers to the Ourcq making two round trips and delivering most of the 6,000 fighters, the rest arriving by train and truck. You might call it our *système D*.”

“*Système D?*”

“It’s a method of spontaneous invention which the French have in spades. The D stands for *se débrouiller*. It means to solve a problem through the exercise of one’s ingenious imagination. While many of the soldiers brought by the taxis were held in reserve, it allowed the battle deployment of hardened combat troops formerly held in reserve. The impact on morale was undeniable at a time when it was believed Paris would fall to the Germans. With the last-minute arrival of the British Expeditionary troops, General Franchet d’Esperey’s attack widened the gap, nearly encircling the Germans. When General von Moltke learned that the flanks of his First and Second Armies were outflanked and could be destroyed, he broke down. For the first time, the invincible German Army had been stopped. The Germans saved themselves from destruction by retreating to the Aisne River where they erected a massive system of deep trenches that would become the static nature of war for four deadly years. Of two million men in combat, one half million men were killed or wounded. The French had 80,000 slain on the field. The poet Charles Péguy was among the dead. The *Miracle of the Marne* was a critical success because it prevented the Germans from attaining a rapid victory in the West. It proved to the French people that France would not fall. The Germans hadn’t succeeded in capturing Paris in 42 days. The Schlieffen Plan had failed.”

“It’s hard to believe,” Giovanni said, “that after suffering defeat after defeat and retreating from Belgium to France with day after day of fighting and marching in retreat, that those worn out men could win a battle against overwhelming German strength.”

“That’s why it’s called a miracle. Philosopher Henri Bergson said, ‘Jean of Arc won the Battle of the Marne.’ It was the renowned *élan français*. Besides the fighting spirit of the French, there were other reasons for the victory. General d’Esperey owed much to the Tsar whose army, although woefully unprepared, had honored their commitment to France by attacking in the East forcing the Germans to ship several divisions to the East.



The Russians spoiled the German Schlieffen Plan by attacking first, thus preventing the Germans from transferring troops to the Western Front – The Telegraph, public domain

“Another factor was the mobility and firepower of the French 75 batteries which blunted the German counter attacks. But the overarching reason for victory was Marshal Joffre’s disciplined management of the terrible twelve days of retreat that kept the French Armies from disintegrating. If the cohesiveness of the French army hadn’t been maintained by Joffre, the victory of the Marne would not have been possible.”

“Orderly retreat under fire,” Giovanni said, “saved the French.”

“They were saved “by maintaining morale while retreating. Despite overwhelming fatigue, once the soldiers were on their own soil, their morale surged for they were fighting for their houses and farms. After the French were defeated in the Battle of the Frontiers, retreating for ten days, sleeping on the ground, half dead from lack of sleep, fighting and marching for 100 kilometers, the German Chief of Staff Moltke couldn’t image how the French could still mount an attack of that power. Von Moltke admitted that the significant reason for the German failure at the Marne was the extraordinary ability of the French soldier to recover quickly. Moltke said they’d not studied that at the war academy. French *élan* hadn’t been considered in the Schlieffen Plan. The legend of the *taxis de la Marne* became a symbol of national solidarity which helped France to carry on in her darkest hour.



Self-propelled anti-aircraft mounting of the French 75 gun defending Paris – Unknown author, public domain. U.S. Library of Congress, Wikimedia



German soldier on the Western Front – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia



Saxons and Anglo-Saxons fraternizing on the field of battle at the season of peace and goodwill – Illustration by A. C. Martin, *The Illustrated London News*, public domain, Wikimedia. Christmas, 1914, German and British troops leave their trenches to greet one another and exchange gifts.

“That was only the beginning of the war,” I said. “Over the next four years, the war would only become more furious, deadlier, and more futile. In all those years, there was only one moment of grace — a brief instant in which the humanity of man shone through.”

“When was that?”

“Christmas, 1914. The soldiers of Britain, France, and Germany declared a *Trêve de Noel*, *Weihnachtsfrieden*, a Christmas Truce.”

“How did that come about?”

“Spontaneously. The Germans began decorating their trenches, putting up Christmas trees with burning candles. When the Germans began singing Christmas carols, in nearby trenches, the British responded with English Christmas carols. Someone began singing 'Auld lang syne' and others joined in, soon French, English, Scots, Irish, Prussians, Wurttenbergers, Hanovers and Saxons joined in, the words of 'Auld lang syne' in several languages swelling up in the crystalline Christmas air drifting from trench to trench across no man's land where the day before had been a fiery wasteland of exploding shells and sudden death. Invitations were made, guns were laid down, men climbed out of the trenches eager to discover the face of an enemy they were sworn to kill.”



Trêve de Noël, Christmas Truce on the Western Front, 1914 – Unknown author, public domain, history.com

“Hard to believe.”

“But it happened . . . a magical moment, men coming out of their trenches offering presents to their enemies, bringing ham and cheese and chocolates, others bringing whiskey and cigarettes, sharing photos of their families with their foes. Some traded the brass buttons from their uniforms as souvenirs. One English barber cut the hair of a German officer. A few battalions even joined in a game of soccer in no man’s land which was quite a trick on a terrain ravaged by exploding shells, Brits and Boches leaping and shouting, young men who’d faced death the day before and would face death tomorrow, playing football in no man’s land for a moment not thinking of how soon they might die.”

“Even though,” Giovanni said, “they were of the same Christian faith, they were killing each other. And yet they came out of the trenches and made friends. What music can do.”

“I remember the words of one popular song during the war.”

“Can you sing it?”

Just a song at twilight when the lights are low.

And the flickering shadows softly come and go.

Though your hearts be weary, sad the day and long.

Still to us at twilight comes love’s old song,

Comes loves’ old, sweet song.”

“That’s real nice.” What happened the next day?”

“The war went on. The men who’d talked and played games were killing each other once more. After Christmas, the men’s attitudes began to change. The bloodletting of the Somme and Verdun wiped out any thoughts of kindness toward the enemy. After the horrors of poison gas, the two sides began to see the other side as inhuman, vile creatures to be destroyed.”

“If you roll over, I’ll work on your lower back.”

I stretched out on the blanket. He straddled me to work on the muscles between my pelvis and the shoulder blades, molding his hands to my body, moving to the top, fanning outwards, then gliding down the sides of my rib cage in a continuous flow of hands — so beautiful.

“I understand,” Giovanni said, “that World War One was the first war to become frozen in a static system of trenches. The only progress made was in the killing of the maximum number of men.”

“Warfare in previous centuries had been one of attack — the kind of combat in the battles of Agincourt and Austerlitz. The techniques of warfare change from era to era. During the Hundred Years War, the French knights at Agincourt were so eager to show their chivalric *prouesse* that they charged headlong in a mass through a narrow front between two dense woods which squeezed them together, their armored war steeds crashing into each other, slipping on the muddy field, a confused mass of men and horses, armored knights and hysterical horses falling into the churning mud while Henry V of England’s archers behind a phalanx of pointed



Morning of the Battle of Agincourt, 25 October 1415 – Painting by Sir John Gilbert, public domain, Wikimedia

stakes planted to halt the knight's attack, fired thousands of volleys of arrows slaughtering the cream of French nobility. I've seen paintings of the Agincourt slaughter — severed limbs and heads, soldiers on their knees begging for their life. If you weren't identified as a nobleman who had value as a hostage for ransom, you were killed.

“The tools of destruction change from century to century. At Agincourt, the longbow was the weapon of slaughter. In the Renaissance, the gun replaced the sword. In the 16th century, the renowned knight, Chevalier de Bayard was killed by a ball from a arquebus. In World War One, machine guns, Big Bertha artillery, and Krupp siege guns were the weapons of slaughter. While huge crowds in Britain, France, Germany, and Austro-Hungary were cheering declarations of war, they were oblivious to the staggering carnage possible due to the technological changes since the Franco-Prussian war. The new instruments of war had only been used against people who didn't have them.



Battle of Omdurman, September 1898. Sir Herbert Kitchener’s British Egyptian army equipped with Maxim machine guns slaughters the army of Abdulla al-Taashi – Painting by Robert George Talbot Kelly, public domain, Wikimedia

“The success of the Maxim machine guns in the colonial wars against primitive cultures gave many Europeans a distorted view of warfare. During the 1898 Battle of Omdurman in Khartoum, Sudan, the British-Egyptian army of 26,000 faced 52,000 warriors led by the Mahdi, the messianic redeemer of the Islamic faith and Successor of the Prophet of God. Armed with Lee-Enfield rifles, Sir Horatio Kitchener’s 21st Lancers slaughtered poorly trained tribesmen armed with single loading muskets and spears.”



Charge of the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman, Sudanese War, 2 September 1898 – Painting by William Barnes Wollen, public domain, Wikimedia. Winston Churchill rode with the 21st Lancers.

“That must have been,” Giovanni said, “a ghastly slaughter.”

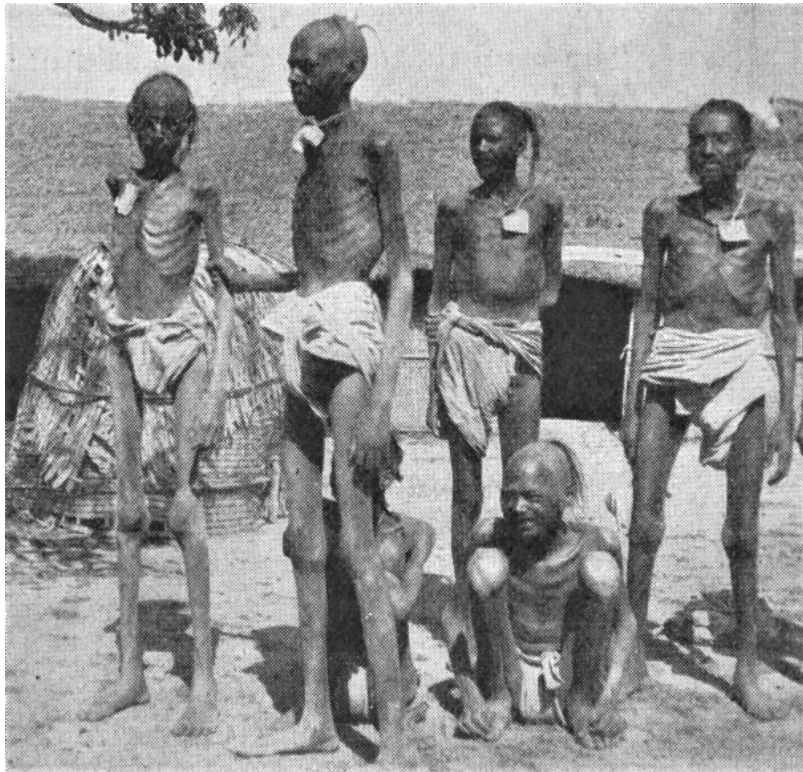
“Ten thousand Sudanese were killed in a single morning. Thirteen thousand more Sudanese were wounded, and most of them died. There were only 47 British dead. As one observer said, ‘It was not a battle. it was an execution.’ A young cavalry officer, Winston Churchill riding with the 21st Lancers, wrote to his mother, ‘Our victory was disgraced by the inhuman slaughter of the wounded. Lord Kitchener was responsible for this.’ When the revered Mahdi, the first leader of independent Sudan died of typhus, his body was entombed in a silver domed mosque in Omdurman, but Horatio Kitchener destroyed the Mahdi’s tomb, burned his body and threw his ashes into the river. Muslims don’t forget desecrations like that.”

“It appears,” Giovanni said, “the British heroes of World War One, had a background of savage repression.”

“During the Anglo-Boer War, Kitchener ordered his troops to wage a scorched earth policy, upon occasion giving the order ‘to take no prisoners’ and depriving the Boer guerillas of sustenance by destroying crops, slaughtering livestock, burning farms, salting fields, poisoning wells, depopulating entire regions by removing Boer and African women, children, and men to concentration camps for Boers and blacks. Thousands of prisoners died due to lack of basic hygiene, inadequate shelter, and food which led to malnutrition, typhoid, and dysentery especially tragic for the thousands of children who starved to death.



Sir Herbert Kitchener's Troops Burn the Homes of the Afrikaners in the Boer War – herileriche.com



Africans starved to death in British concentration camps – The Independent

“After visiting the camps, a welfare worker, Emily Hobhouse returned to England to raise an outcry against the treatment of the Boers which resulted in Lloyd George of the Liberal Party accusing the government of a policy of extermination against the Boers. The public outrage against the treatment of the Boers resulted in a commission being appointed to investigate the camps led by a suffragette, Millicent Fawcett, who determined that Hobhouse’s accusations were correct, revealing that due to starvation and the absence of medical care, 20,000 Afrikaner’s and 12,000 Africans had died in the camps. After the Boer surrender had ended the Orange Free State and the South African Republic, it was hard for the farmers to recover from Kitchener’s scorched earth policy — farms devastated by burned out buildings, salted earth, and poisoned wells, leaving many of the impoverished Boers and Africans with no choice but to labor in the gold mines.”

“In many ways,” Giovanni said, “the British repression of the Boers was much like today’s French repression of the Algerian FLN movement.”

“Repression of colonial insurrection,” I agreed, “followed the same pattern in many European colonies. However, what the Europeans didn’t comprehend leading up to World War One was that a war against poorly armed insurgents would be vastly different when the opposing side was *also equipped* with the Maxim machine gun which was credited for being the weapon most associated with British imperial conquest.

“Britain’s newly appointed Minister of War, Lord Kitchener was one of the few who realized the truth — the war would ‘not end until we have plumbed our manpower to the last million.’ But the governments weren’t listening. The generals didn’t realize that their troops could no longer survive without armor protection. Massed infantry and cavalry attack of the 19th century was obsolete. Millions and millions of deaths later, the generals began to fathom that. Driven by the internal combustion engine, the tank made its first appearance in the war — a lumbering dreadful weapon that would reach its apogee in the Battle of Kursk in the Second World War.”

“They had tanks in World War One?”

“The Industrial Revolution had transformed warfare, especially with the development of the internal combustion engine. Even ten years before World War One, the technological changes were apparent in the carnage of the Russo-Japanese War. The Japanese siege of Port Arthur in 1904 was the first battle where tens of thousands were killed by the *mitrailleuse* firing hundreds of rounds per minute and the 280mm howitzers of the Japanese mounted on circular geared tracks hurling 500-pound shells over five miles, sounding to the Russians like freight trains roaring through the sky. The Maxim machine guns, bolt-action magazine rifles, hand grenades, and mines made the practice of sending massed infantry over open ground through layers of barbed wire under heavy fire a certain way to create an astonishing number of deaths.

“The great fighter of the early Zionists, Joseph Trumpeldor, a Russian Jew who had volunteered for the Russian army, lost his left arm to shrapnel in the Japanese siege of Port Arthur, but continued fighting, saying ‘I still have one more arm to give to the motherland.’ In spite of the massive deaths in the trench warfare of the Russo-Japanese War, the generals of World War One persisted in the same modus operandi, sending wave after wave of attacking infantry to a certain death.”

“You’re telling me” Giovanni said incredulously, “that after losing thousands of men in frontal attacks against an entrenched enemy, the French generals kept repeating the same failed tactics?”

“The classic definition of insanity is repeating the same failures and expecting different results. Neither side could find a way to get its troops through enemy-held defenses four miles deep without exposing them to withering counter fire. After the Battle of the Aisne, the war became one of the trenches, the Germans defending well-built trenches and the French vainly trying to storm them in futile charges resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of men.

“For the next score of years, it left France with thousands of veterans missing arms and legs. The final cost of any war is not only the dead but the men who survive, maimed, unable to work with psychic traumas which follow them the rest of their lives. After the war, hundreds of men with missing arms and legs were begging or selling pencils on the street.”

“Young boys dream of war,” Giovanni said, “never thinking about what it’s like to come home with no legs.”



Disabled World War I veteran, Berlin 1923 –
Unknown author, German Federal Archives,

“To give you an idea of the carnage,” I went on, “one million lives were lost during the Battle of Verdun, lasting from February to December 1916 — 300 days, the longest battle in history up until that time. General Erich von Falkenhayn’s strategy was to pin the French down with massive artillery barrages causing the French army to suffer *weissbluten*, bleeding to death. He mounted 1,200 artillery, including Big Bertha, the 420mm mortar, a massive barrage setting up a field of fire never seen in warfare before. He believed that if the French army could be destroyed in a great battle, then Britain would surrender. However, Von Falkenhayn was only successful in one his goals.”

“What was that?”

“Killing an incredible number of Frenchmen. As von Falkenhayn had planned, the massive German artillery and machine gun fire decimated the French. The frontal assaults of General Nivelle and General ‘The Slaughterer’ Mangin, played right into the German strategy, for hundreds of thousands of French soldiers died in failed frontal assaults.

“Then how was Von Falkenhayn wrong?”



Daily Mail - public domain

“He was wrong in thinking he could defeat the French at Verdun by taking so many French lives. Despite the loss of life, the French refused to give up. Month after month, the troops had clung to life under ghastly conditions often with little food or water. After suffering hundreds of thousands of deaths in ten months of continual combat, the German high command realized they’d suffered a defeat at Verdun. While the French had been bled white, German casualties were so horrific that the German army never fully recovered from Verdun. But, for the French, it was a pyrrhic victory.”

“A pyrrhic victory?”

A pyrrhic victory is named for Greek King Pyrrhus who suffered irreplaceable casualties in defeating the Romans at Heraclea. It’s a victory which is won with such great losses that further resistance is impossible. They had succeeded in stopping the Germans at Verdun, but with a half million dead, France was demoralized.”

“What did they do to save France?”

“The Brits helped out a great deal by launching the Battle of the Somme. Unfortunately, they used the same direct frontal assaults as the French resulting in the same carnage as Verdun. The generals were fighting

the Franco-Prussian War of forty years before. They still didn't get it that for unarmored men to charge across a muddy field laced with continuous artillery fire, machine guns mowing down everything in sight, was mass suicide. And it was the common soldier who paid with his blood.”

“You're going to tell me,” Giovanni said, his fingers kneading the rotator cuff of my shoulders, “that the Battle of the Somme was as devastating as the Battle of Verdun?”

“The British soldiers called it the *Big Screw Up*,” I said. “General Douglas Haig bombarded the Germans with 1,500 guns for an entire week, firing one million shells before 110,000 British soldiers launched an attack. Haig had expected that after one week the German machine guns had been obliterated. He had no idea that at the very beginning the Germans had dismounted their machine guns, carried them to safety in deep reinforced basements. When the artillery barrage stopped, they quickly carried the guns back on top in time to slaughter the British soldiers who were still struggling through the barbed wire.



International Encyclopedia of the First World War – Flashback.com., Public domain

“Out of the 110,000 attacking soldiers, in one day, 60,000 were killed or wounded. The Battle of the Somme lasted four months with 420,000 British dead, 200,000 French dead, and 500,000 German dead. At the end of the first day, 20,000 British soldiers lay dying in No Man's Land. With the constant machine gun fire, no one could go into No Man's Land to bring back the wounded. It was days before the cries of the dying were silent.”



Ruins of Vaux-devant-Damloup, France, 1918 – Author Edward Steichen, War Department, U.S. National Archives, public domain, Wikimedia



Trenches of the 11th Cheshire Regiment, Ovillers-la-Boisselle, Battle of the Somme, July 1916
– Author, John Warwick Brooke, Imperial War Museum, public domain, Wikimedia



Battle of the Somme, July-November 1916. Bazentin Ridge, soldiers digging a communication trench, July 1916 – Author, John Warwick Brooke, Imperial War Museum, public domain, Wikimedia



Battle of the Somme. Dead German soldiers in a trench near Ginchy, August 1916 – Author, John Warwick Brooke, Imperial War Museum, public domain, Wikimedia



Battle of the Somme – Three Million Men Fought in the battle, One Million Killed or Wounded – David Doughty, public domain

“Didn’t some of the high command,” Giovanni said, “finally realize what they were doing was insane?”

“The generals were doing what they were trained to do. Once humans learn something, it’s difficult for them to learn something different. The brain is obstinate. French Commanding General, Joseph Joffre, a military engineer who had never commanded an army before, refused to go on the defensive even when the reality of the failure of massed attacks had brought a great number of deaths without any gain on the battlefield. Fortunately, there was one general who didn’t agree with Joffre’s tendency to attack, oblivious to cost. After the Battle of Charleroi, certain that Joffre was ignorant of the facts on the ground, General Lanrezac ordered a retreat and saved the French from a decisive defeat by preventing the German’s envelopment of the Schlieffen Plan. Winston Churchill admired Lanrezac’s grasp of the situation and his quick decision to retreat to avoid being overwhelmed by the massed German divisions. But Churchill added that it was a pity that Lanrezac forgot to tell his British Allies. General Joffre sacked Lanrezac, replacing him with generals who liked to attack whatever the circumstances. Like Joffre and the French general staff, British Marshal Haig kept obstinately to the same antiquated theory of combat. However, there was an intellectual British general who devised an inventive plan.”



Battle of the Somme, Thiepval Ridge, British Mark I male tank, 25 September, 1916
– Author, Ernest Brooks, Imperial War Museum, public domain, Wikimedia

“Who was the intellectual general?”

“General Sir Herbert Plumer. Near Messine, south of Ypres, Plumer had his *sapeurs* tunnel under the German front.”

“*Sapeurs?*”

“Sappers in English. They are military engineers.”

“I remember now,” Giovanni said, “it was the French sappers who dug the zig-zag trenches for the American and French assault on the British at Yorktown that won the Independence of the United States.”

“Quite right,” I replied. “Military engineers are the unsung heroes of war — building the bridges, harbors, and airfields that make victory possible. After aerial reconnaissance had determined the strong points of the German defense system, General Plumer’s *sapeurs* spent one year digging twenty-one horizontal mine shafts 80 to 120 feet under the critical points of the German defenses. Once finished, the British packed the tunnels with one million pounds of high explosives. Plumer’s army laid 40,000 feet of telephone cable 7 feet underground which could withstand dozens of artillery hits before the attack. Everything was carefully planned. At three in the morning, they set off the mines all at once. The explosion was so enormous that it shook London across the channel, the equivalent of a major earthquake. Ten thousand German soldiers were instantly entombed.”

“Jesus God.”

“Seven thousand panicked Germans were captured. With the advantage of a big surprise and an experimental new weapon of seventy-two tanks, the British gained Vimy Ridge. But the other British generals doggedly kept using the same failed tactics of frontal assault. At Passchendaele, to the north of the Ypres Salient, the British fired four million shells over ten days. The bombardment churned the soil just as rainstorm struck, transforming the landscape into a sea of mud pockmarked with deep pools of water in the craters of shells. Despite the mud the generals ordered the attack anyway, soldiers charging through the sludge carrying sixty pounds of equipment, barely able to keep upright helplessly exposed to a field of fire by thousands of machine guns, fallen men drowning in the mud. With hundreds of thousands of dead, the British made a foolish decision to continue the attack in the mud of Passchendaele, a tragedy even more devastating than the Somme.”



The Canadian Encyclopedia - public domain

“My God.”

“In violation of The Hague Convention, the Germans began using chlorine gas, mustard gas, and phosgene, terrorizing the soldiers. At Verdun, the Germans used hundreds of guns to fire 100,000 phosgene gas shells. But when the British began using chlorine gas in the attack at Loos, the wind blew the gas back into the British trenches.”

“You have,” Giovanni said, “a great knowledge of military tactics.”

“There’s no reason, that a woman wouldn’t make an outstanding general. A lot of the futility of the trench war stemmed from the inflexibility of male aggression. Women are capable of degrees of subtle reasoning that many men lack.”

“Papa told me about Italy’s use of poison gas during Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia.”

“The use of poison gas was one of the many horrors of the First World War. Chemical weapons demoralized soldiers on the battlefield along with the invention of the flamethrower which burned men alive.



The Independent - public domain

“Because France had a smaller economy and population, many leaders in France believed they couldn’t defeat Germany without the aid of Britain and the United States. Isolationism was strong in the U.S. Less than one percent of its GNP was devoted to defense. The American army was smaller than Serbia’s or Bulgaria’s army. English philosopher Herbert Spencer called the focus of the U.S. economy industrial rather than a military focus like that of Russia which had a front-line army ten times larger even though the United States was producing six times as much steel.



American Aviators Volunteering to Fight for France – neam.org, public domain

“In the beginning, Americans were determined to stay out of the war. But there were Americans, who out of gratitude for France’s aid to the American Revolution, formed the Lafayette Escadrilles in 1916, a squadron of several hundred pilots volunteering to fight for France, skilled flyers who were sorely needed to slug it out in the skies with the German aces. With lion club mascots Whiskey and Soda, the Lafayette Escadrilles flying French aircraft under French officers, entered combat at the Battle of Verdun, where they won their first aerial victory and suffered their first fatality.”



Eugene Bullard, First African-American Military Pilot, Lafayette Flying Corps, 1916. Chevalier de la Legion d’honneur, Croix de Guerre – Lafayetteescadrille.org - public domain

“Americans were fighting under French command?”

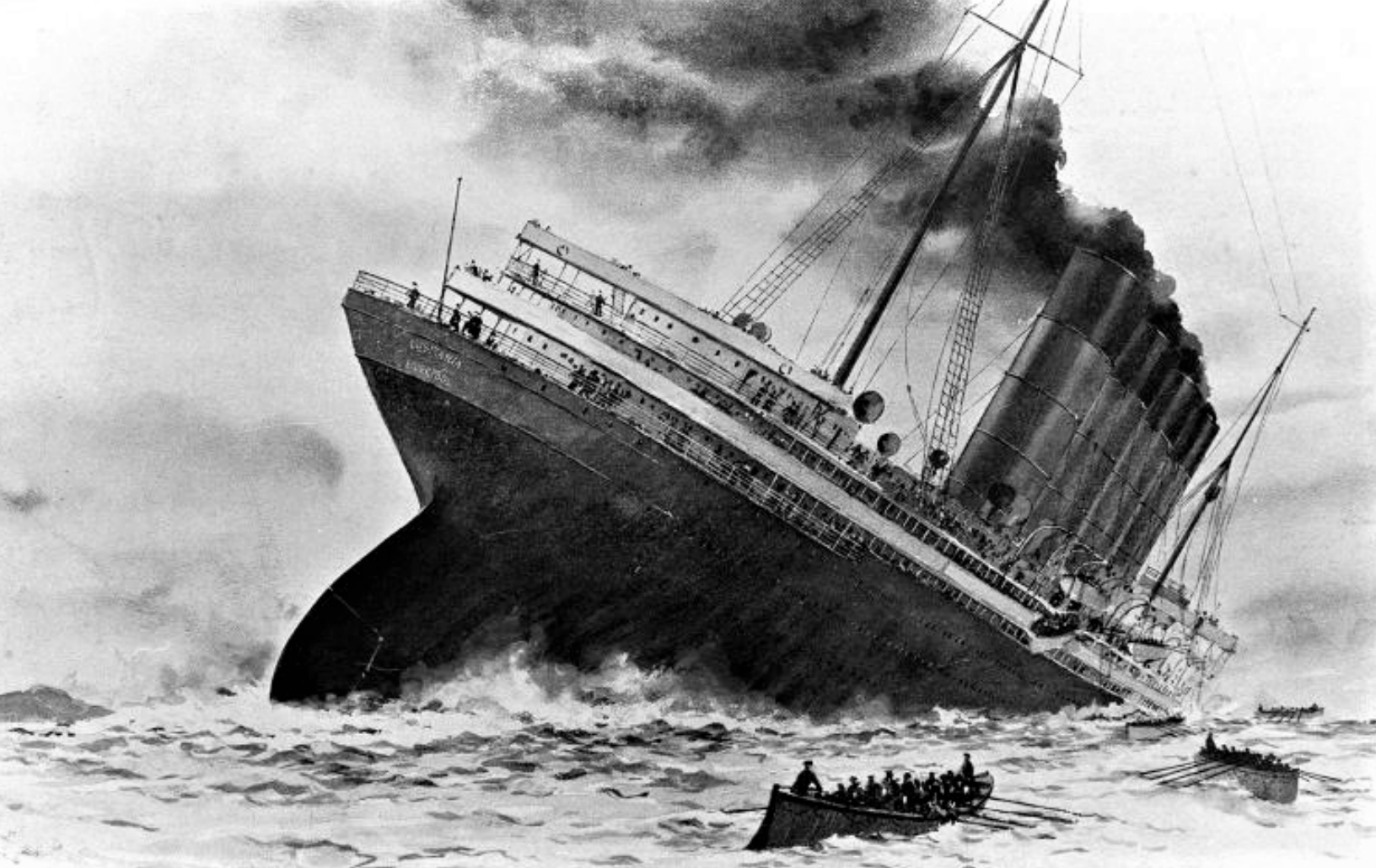
“It was the only way for an American to fight. The government of Woodrow Wilson was against entering the war.”

“What happened to change the minds of the Americans?”

“You could call it another German gamble in which the negatives outweighed the positives. General Ludendorff notified the United States that they were beginning unrestricted submarine warfare. Their reason was that the United States was carrying on an unbalanced trade with the Triple Entente and those war materials were helping the Allies win the war against Germany. The Germans believed their U-boat campaign was the only way to break the British naval blockade of German ports. The final break came when the Brits intercepted a German diplomatic message which outraged the American public.”

“How could they intercept a German diplomatic message?”

“After the Brits cut the German cables in the Atlantic, the German Foreign Office appealed to the U.S. for use of their undersea cable for diplomatic messages. President Wilson, believed that if the U.S. as a neutral nation cooperated with the Germans he was under the delusion that he could eventually negotiate an end to the war. Wilson agreed to the German request for use of the cable even allowing them to send messages in code. The American cable originated from the U.S. Embassy in Denmark and had to pass through a relay station at Land’s End where signals were amplified for the trans-oceanic crossing, giving the British intelligence the opportunity to pass it on to the code breakers at the Admiralty. Once the Brits decoded the telegram from German Foreign Minister Zimmermann to the German ambassador in Mexico City, they uncovered the secret plan of the Germans to encourage Mexico to attack the United States in exchange for Germany helping Mexico to recover the territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Wilson released the telegram to the press, infuriating the American public. Even before the discovery of the Zimmerman telegram, Americans had been enraged when the British liner Lusitania loaded with several million rounds of ammunition departing from New York, had been sunk without warning by a German submarine with the loss of 1200 lives including more than 100 Americans. However, even after the sinking of the Lusitania, Wilson still resisted going to war. But with the discovery of the Zimmerman telegram and Ludendorff’s decision to sink American shipping, a tempest of rage swept over America and isolationism vanished overnight.”



RMS Lusitania torpedoed by German submarine U-20, 1915 – 1,100 Perished – [paranoiamagazine](#)

“No one opposed the war?”

“There were some who opposed the war, not only Americans of German descent, but American socialists who for the same reasons as Jean Jaurès, strongly opposed the war. In Oklahoma, the Socialist Party and the International Workers of the World inspired the tenant farmers and sharecroppers to form the “Working Class Union” that organized a march on Washington to oppose the draft, calling it the Green Corn Rebellion. Several hundred members were arrested and convicted under the Espionage Act of 1917 and sentenced to the penitentiary for several years.”

“But how can an American be sent to prison for non-violently opposing a war?”

“President Wilson asked Congress to pass the Espionage Act. He said that there were citizens of foreign extraction who’ve poisoned the blood of America. He said, ‘Such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed.’”

“In a democracy, I don’t understand how it’s a crime to oppose war.”

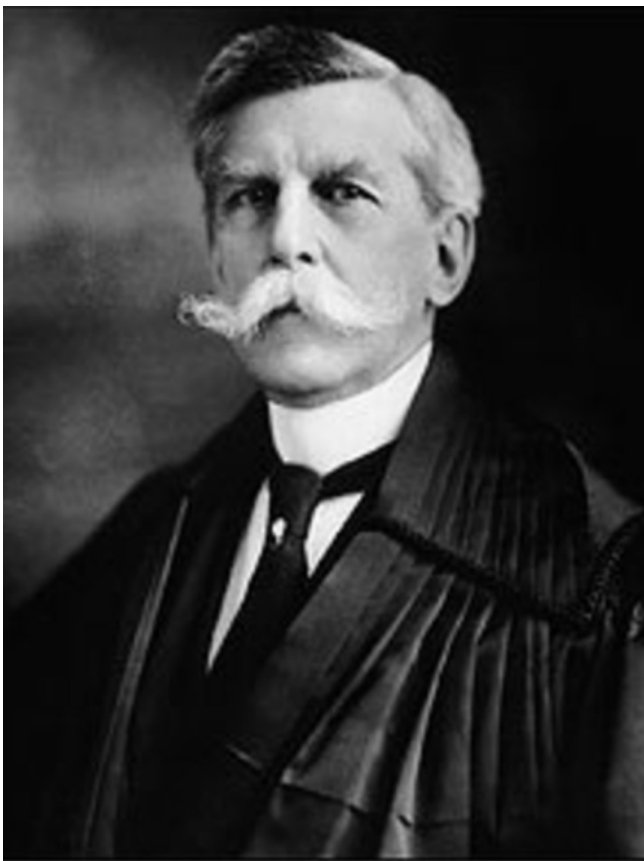
“The Espionage Act made it a crime to convey information with the intention of interfering with the armed forces of the United States or aiding its enemies, a crime punishable by 30-year imprisonment or by death.”

“But that’s an attack,” Giovanni cried, “on free speech protected by the First Amendment. Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech.”

“I’ve seen you done some work preparing for your citizenship. But the problem lies not with the U.S. Constitution, but rather the Supreme Court which consists of individuals who are *interpreters* of the Constitution.”

“What did the Supreme Court decide based on The Espionage Act?”

“To give you an example, Charles Schenck was arrested for distributing leaflets denouncing the war and the draft. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to prison for violating the Espionage Act. In Schenck’s appeal to the Supreme Court, his conviction was unanimously upheld by the Court. The famous liberal, Oliver Wendell Holmes, delivered the Court’s opinion which ruled that the leaflet had the purpose of obstructing the execution of the draft.”



Oliver Wendell Holmes, Supreme Court Justice – newsok.com



Louis Brandeis, Supreme Court Justice – Wikipedia

“But wouldn’t,” Giovanni protested, “Schenck’s leaflets be protected under the right of free speech?”

“Louis Brandeis, Associate Supreme Court Justice, born to Jewish immigrants from Bohemia, had said, ‘Fear of serious injury cannot alone justify suppression of free speech and assembly. Men feared witches and burnt women. It is the function of free speech to free men from bondage of irrational fears.’ And yet, Justice Brandeis voted with the rest of the court to convict Charles Schenck. Chief Justice Holmes ruled that free speech does not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing a panic. Congress has a right to prevent evils which are a clear and present danger to the nation.”

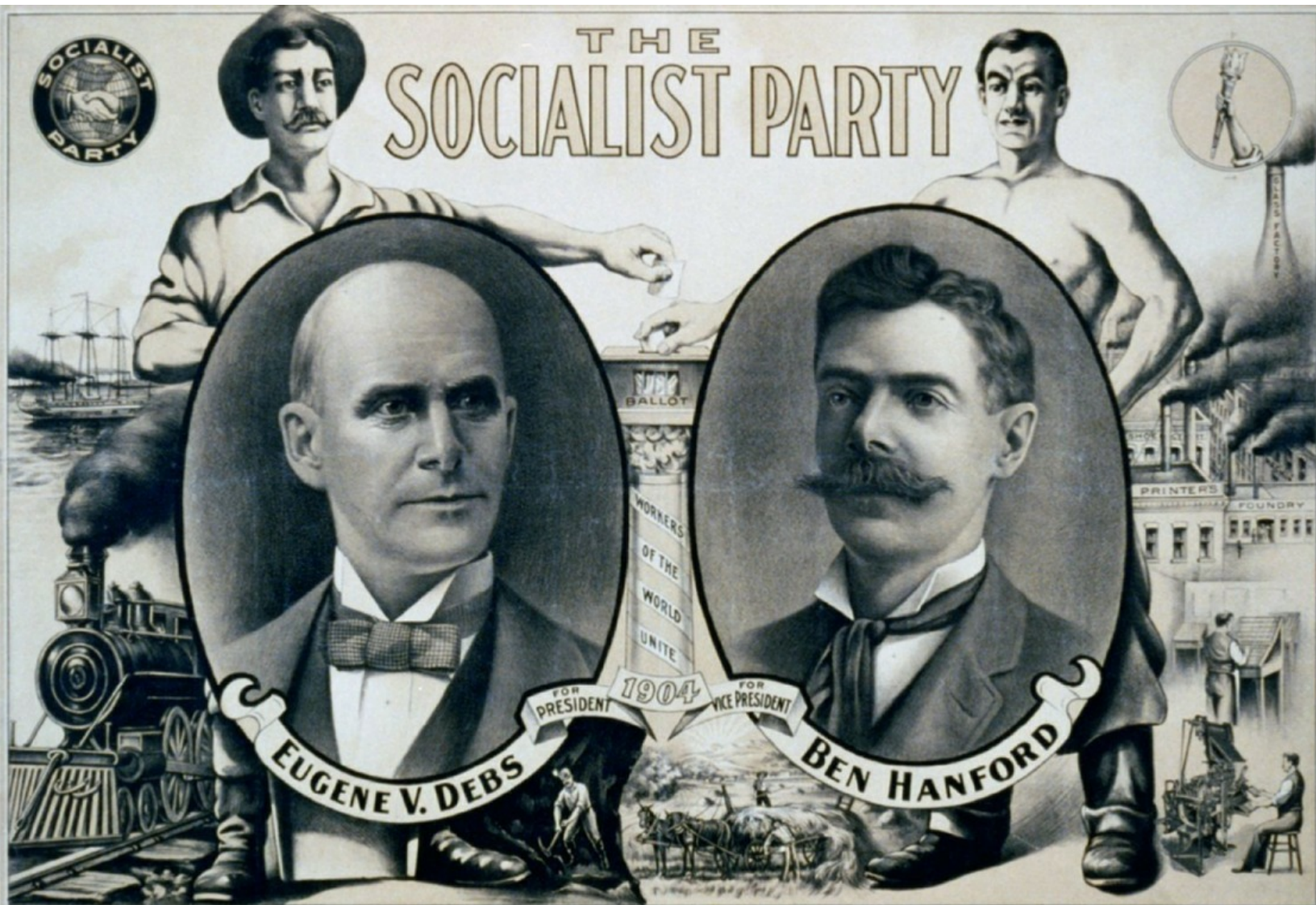
“But protesting the war is not the same as falsely shouting fire in a theatre. It’s a rational decision to oppose something that you believe is wrong.”

“I agree Giovanni, but in a time of war, societies become repressive of freedoms that previously were taken for granted. It is one of the negative aspects of being human. Like the folk tale of an acorn falling on Chicken Little’s head who began screaming to all the farmyard birds. “The sky is falling, the sky is falling.’ When the fox ate them up, they discovered they’d feared the wrong thing. When people are frightened, fear consumes them. Paranoia rules. Under the Espionage Act, nine hundred Americans went to prison. An innocent German was lynched by a mob in Illinois. Mobs are common when people are terrorized by a false fear. Herodotus said, ‘There is nothing more given to rage than a useless mob.’ An anti-German hysteria swept over America. Yellow paint was splashed on the doors of German-Americans, high schools refused to teach German, orchestras refused to play Bach and Beethoven, frankfurters called liberty meat and sauerkraut, liberty cabbage. Cincinnati even banned pretzels. President Wilson imposed restrictions on German born males in the U.S., a quarter of a million who had to register and carry their card at all times. Several thousand German-Americans were arrested, and over two thousand interned in camps including a distinguished geneticist, classical musicians, and the director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.”

“And no one opposed these violations of freedom?”

“As in France, the Socialist Party protested against the ruling of the Supreme Court. They declared that the right to oppose the war was guaranteed by the Constitution. The Socialist Party’s candidate for president, Eugene V. Debs, gave a speech against the war, enthralling his audience with impassioned oratory. The tenant farmers and sharecroppers of the Working-Class Union in Oklahoma, passionately supported Debs’ campaign

for President. Debs declared that throughout history, wars had been waged for conquest and plunder. It is always the same story — the ruling classes declare war, and the working class fight the wars. After delivering his speech, Debs was arrested for violating the Espionage Act. At his trial, he said, ‘Gentlemen, I abhor war. I have sympathy with struggling people everywhere.’ He was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years in prison. In Debs’ appeal to the Supreme Court, speaking once again for a unanimous court, Oliver Wendell Holmes confirmed Debs’ guilt, saying that the intended effect of his speech was to obstruct the draft. Debs, the presidential candidate of the Socialists, was incarcerated in the West Virginia state penitentiary.



Eugene Debs, Five Times Socialist Candidate for President – Wikimedia

“The newspapers increased the fear of opposing the war. Many citizens thought protestors should be jailed. Theodore Roosevelt commented that the dissenters should be handled like the French government had done during the revolt of the Commune — execute them for treason.”

“I’m disappointed in the United States,” Giovanni said glumly. “The more I see, the more I realize my adopted nation has not always been the country of justice as I once believed.”

“Don’t let it get you down, Giovanni,” I said, rolling over and kissing the hands which are so good to me. “You have to endure the bad with the good,” I said. “Every nation has its failures to live up to its ideals. It is our duty to ensure that our citizens live up to their ideals. That is our burden and our glory.”

“I thought,” Giovanni sighed, “that America was more democratic than Italy. The more I learn, the more I can see I overestimated America. When I become a citizen,” he declared, “I’m going to do as you say and fight for American ideals.”

I rolled over, and Giovanni began caressing my muscles once more.

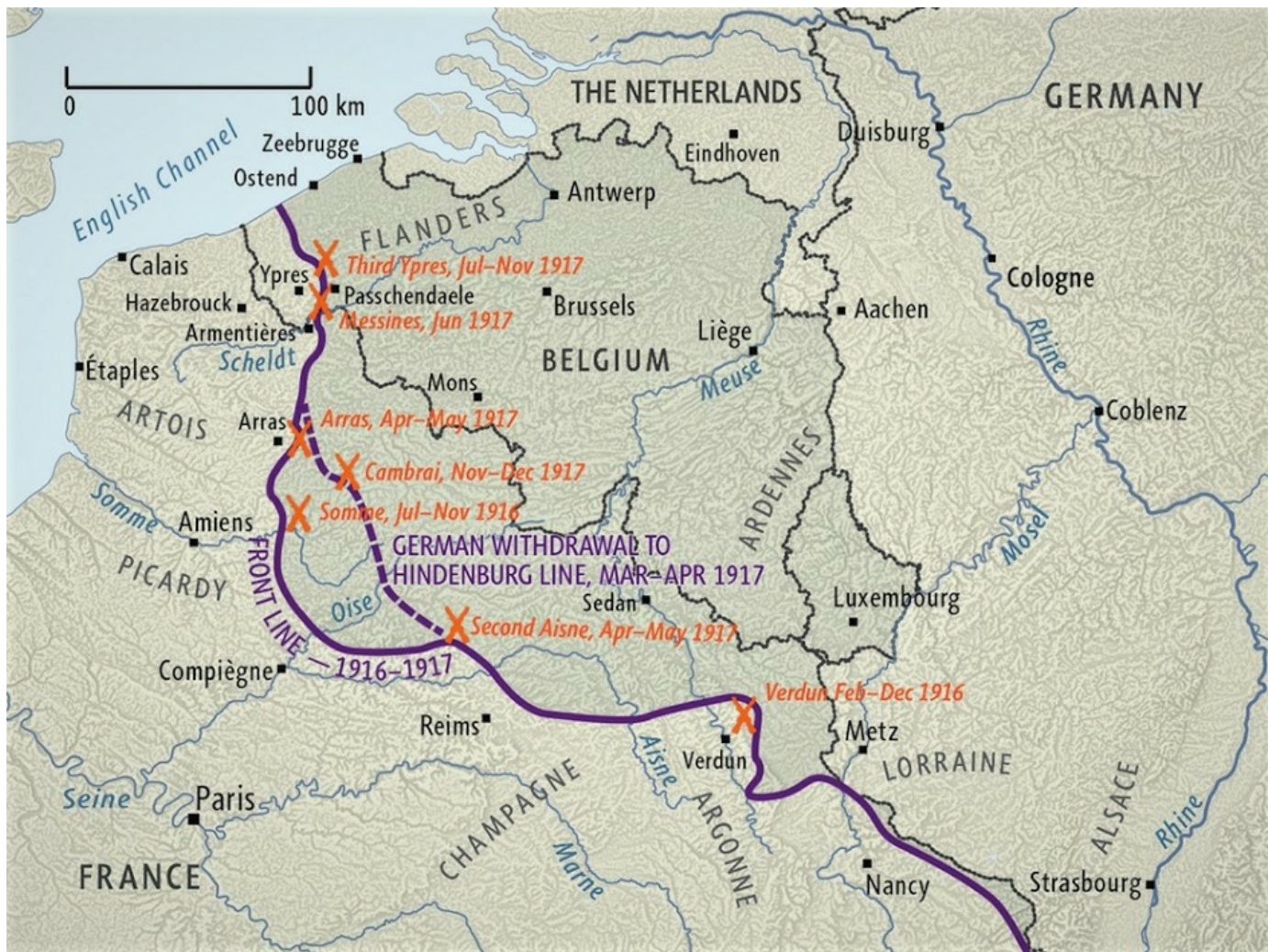
“Could you repeat,” I said, “what you did to my right rotator cuff?”

Giovanni began massaging my rotator cuff and said, “So after sitting out most of the war, the United States finally declared war on Germany.”

“While America’s declaration of war was welcome news to France, help didn’t come overnight. With the Germans only one hundred kilometers from Paris, the U.S. was still training troops. France was in dire straits, hanging on by a shred. The French soldiers were filled with despair, seeing their comrades dying by the thousands in the killing fields, their trenches inundated in water which never dried up, canons sinking into the mud until they were useless and the wounded lying in shell holes filled with water.”



allinfo.org.uk, public domain



Map of Major Trench Lines from the English Channel to Switzerland – nzhistory.gov.nz, public domain

“Les told me there were hundreds of miles of trenches built on the Western Front by the Belgian, British, French, and German armies.”

“It stretched from the sea in Belgium across Picardy to Alsace on the Swiss border. Including both sides, 26,000 miles of trenches were dug, enough to go around the earth. In theory, you could walk from Belgium to Switzerland without coming out of the ground. But that’s theoretical, for the numerous parallel and transverse trenches zigged and zagged and sometimes terminated. It was like the giant excavations of insects rather than men, a war of holes and ditches.

“With their passion for offense the British and French didn’t build well-constructed trenches like the Germans. While the British and French trenches were temporary, the German trenches were deep and elaborate. In the Argonne Forest you’ll still find today, German trench works, pillboxes, and blockhouses. Within a 200-square mile area, the Germans built some of the most impressive defenses ever created.



German trench, Western Front – grensland-docs.nl, public domain

While the French trenches were ditches with dirt walls, some German headquarters were made of poured concrete with stairs, drainage systems, periscopes, machine gun and heavy artillery shelters, and underground ammunition dumps. Some of the German officers even lived comfortably in underground compounds thirty feet deep with a dozen bunk-beds, water tanks with faucets, cupboards and mirrors, floors and ceilings, staircases, electric lights, kitchens, and overstuffed furnishings behind steel doors. In these quarters the German brass could hear only a distant rumble when the heaviest of shells hit.”

“What were the British trenches like?”

“The British trenches were dug in Flanders and Picardy where the water-table was highest and the rainfall greatest. Rubber waders were issued since the trenches were usually flooded with water several feet deep. The lice burrowed into their clothes and skin. Big, black rats with soggy fur fed on the cadavers of men and horses. After rats had devoured their food and even the battle communiques, an officer got a big tomcat and shut it up with the rats for the night. The next morning, he found that the rats had eaten the cat. Only a few pieces of fur remained. Other soldiers got dogs, but the rats tore them up too. They were the only winners — the grim reaper and the rats.”

“Rats,” Giovanni said, “are always associated with the Apocalypse.”



Waterlogged British Trench at Fonquevilliers – dailymail.co.uk, public domain

“With the stench of rotten flesh permeating air,” I said, “it was hard to eat. The greatest curse was to be trapped in a shell hole with a decomposing man. Dead horses and men weren’t buried for months, often becoming part of the parapet walls. The odor of one million unwashed bodies filled the air. When you approached the front lines, you could smell unwashed men for several miles before you could see them.”

“I can imagine the stench.”

“Although unbearable, the men bore their fate until the breaking point. And there was a breaking point for both Germans and the French. With a division of the French army mutinying and 20,000 men deserting, every offensive a bloody failure and Paris threatened, many in France believed the war was lost. In the midst of France’s misery, President Raymond Poincaré appointed Clémenceau to be Prime Minister, even though they were of different parties because he knew the man was a fighter. Clémenceau also took on the job of Minister

of War saying, ‘War is too important to be left to the generals.’ In his speech to the nation, he refused to talk of a compromise peace and called for nothing less than the total defeat and punishment of Germany for its crimes. Clémenceau’s speech stirring France’s morale was so effective that Winston Churchill borrowed his rhetoric during another moment of national despair. When he came to Paris for the first time after the liberation of Paris, Churchill laid a wreath on Clémenceau’s grave.”

Giovanni began working on my upper back, putting his hands at the top of my back, moving smoothly over the trapezius muscles, crisscrossing over the opposite shoulders, then gripping his fingers over the muscles where the trapezius intersects the neck, kneading and squeezing the muscles between his thumbs and fingers, relaxing the tight spots at the base of my neck.”

“You’re very tense right here.”

“Sitting at my typewriter takes a toll. Stay on that spot. It feels wonderful.”

“Clémenceau had guts like Giuseppe Garibaldi.”

“You have something in common with Garibaldi,” I laughed

“What’s that?”

“After Garibaldi was defeated in Rome, he escaped to New York City.

“Everybody who has a bad time in Europe, escapes to New York, including me.”

“Garibaldi,” I said, “offered his services to Abraham Lincoln to fight against slavery. But Garibaldi turned down a Major General’s commission because Lincoln hadn’t reached the point of declaring the purpose of the war was to end slavery. Garibaldi was ahead of his time in many respects.”

“Papa worshipped Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini for liberating Italy from the Hapsburg and Bourbon monarchies. For all that Mazzini endured during the creation of Italy, Papa called him the ‘Beating Heart of Italy.’ Mazzini spent a lot of time dodging the police in Italy, France, and Switzerland. Every time they shut down one of his newspapers, he started another one somewhere else. To stay out of prison, he fled to Marseille and organized a secret society *La giovine Italia* that was dedicated to unifying all the kingdoms into one country. Mazzini didn’t want a monarchy. Italy must be an independent Republic.”

“Italians,” I said, “were finally fed up with the French Bourbons and the Austrian Hapsburgs.”



General Giuseppe Garibaldi – Warrior, Writer, Sailor, Farmer, Candlemaker – The Hero of Two Worlds and Leader of the Red Shirts of the Risorgimento - Wikipedia



Giuseppe Mazzini – Leader of the Revolutionary Unification of Italy Movement. His writing on Democracy influenced Gandhi, David Ben-Gurion Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sun Yat-sen – Wikipedia

“Mazzini believed that a republic would only be possible if there were an uprising of the people. Mazzini dreamed that *La giovine Italia* would inspire a desire for freedom that would erupt all over Europe. All of Mazzini’s insurrections may have ended in failure, but they were failures only in the short term for over the long run, the revolutionary currents initiated by Mazzini exploded all over Europe.

“Much of the discontent was due to the boundaries that were set after the fall of Napoleon. Von Metternich, the Austrian Foreign Minister, invited the ambassadors of the great powers to the Congress of Vienna to determine the national boundaries after the surrender of France in 1814. The problem was that in drawing the national boundaries, the rulers didn’t respect the ethnic origins of the people, carving up Europe like it was a roast pig, giving half of Poland to Prussia and the other half to Russia. While the rest of Europe was made up of large nation states, Italy was a mess of little ones. To give you an idea how Italy was divided, the Congress of Vienna gave Piedmont, Nice, Savoy, and Genoa to the King of Sardinia. The Papal States controlled Rome and central Italy. The Bourbon King of Sicily was awarded the Kingdom of Naples, and so it went until Italy was mincemeat. The purpose of the Congress of Vienna was to reinforce monarchy and to

repress the republican ideals of Mazzini and Young Italy. But it wasn't successful because people were infuriated with the old monarchies, tired of living under repressive foreign governments. The appearance of many new newspapers and publications fanned the fires of the debate. The people were looking for more autonomy, a better deal for the working class, more freedom of the press.”

“The Risorgimento,” I said, “was inspired by the French Revolution.”

“The revolutionaries,” Giovanni said, “were determined to arouse the consciousness of the Italian people to free all the Italian states from foreign domination. After the Congress of Vienna, the Risorgimento movement spread like wildfire. The repression of the movement was violent. Members of the secret Carboneria society were hunted down and killed. **Ciro Menotti** was hung in the Citadel of Modena. Garibaldi was a great admirer of Menotti, even named one of his children after him. After his execution, Menotti became the conscience of Italy. His death inspired a new generation of Italian patriots.”



Ciro Minotti, leader of the Carboneria and fervent democrat. When Minotti attempted to free Modena from Austria, he was condemned to death by hanging at the age of 33, becoming the patriotic martyr of the Italian Risorgimento, public domain.

“1848 was a year of revolutions,” I said. “In the beginning, Louis Phillipe, called the ‘Citizen King,’ was popular with the French. But after the economic crisis of 1847, the French monarchy was overthrown because the division of income had become so great between the owners of property and the working class. There had been a crop failure a couple of years before the revolution. Alexis de Tocqueville said society was cut in two — those who had nothing on one side, and those on the opposing side who were filled with terror of the ones who had nothing. Half of a worker’s income paid only for bread and potatoes. The potato blight created a famine in Ireland forcing them to immigrate to America or starve to death. The English kept on exporting Irish food at the same time people were dying. All over the continent, revolution was powered by ideas and empty stomachs.”

“Empty stomachs,” Giovanni said, “drove the Italian revolution. The monarchies of Europe were only concerned with the welfare of the bourgeoisie, not the farmer, not the worker. In the First Italian War of Independence, Garibaldi and Mazzini failed. They took Rome, but Pope Pius IX called upon the powerful French army to put down the revolution. Once again, Mazzini and Garibaldi escaped to Switzerland.”

“It was a good thing,” I said, “that Switzerland held on to its neutrality. Through the centuries it has been a haven for revolutionaries and the persecuted.”

“Well, in this case,” Giovanni said, “the Swiss police were searching for Mazzini and Garibaldi too. In that time, revolutionaries were coming out of the woodwork. The Carboneria must’ve had a series of safe houses to hide from the police. When he returned to his birthplace in Genoa, Mazzini staged another unsuccessful uprising and was condemned to death, but again managed to escape. Despite Mazzini’s failed revolts, a revolution spread across Italy. Garibaldi invaded Sicily with a thousand men — mainly students and workers from the lower classes, called the *Mille* in Italian. After stealing two steam ships in Genoa, they sailed to Sicily and landed while British ships held off the Bourbon ships. Poorly armed with out of date weapons, wearing red shirts and grey pants, the *Mille* defeated the disorganized Neapolitan army and conquered Palermo. Garibaldi’s *Mille* crossed over the strait of Messina to Calabria and miraculously defeated the Neapolitan army at Milazzo. As Garibaldi’s troops advanced on Naples, the Bourbon armies melted before them, the soldiers switching their uniforms for peasant costumes. Garibaldi arrived on the train to Napoli, cheered by the Neapolitans as the liberator. After the conquest of Sicily and Naples by the *Mille*, Garibaldi realized that Vittorio Emmanuel II, King of Sardinia-Piedmonte was the only power strong enough to unite

Italy. Meeting the king in Teano, Garibaldi relinquished his control of southern Italy to the King and the nation of Italy was declared.”



Giuseppe Garibaldi at Palermo – saffifrienze1861,blogspot.com, public domain



Giuseppe Garibaldi meeting Victor Emmanuel II in Teano – Painting by Sebastiano De Albertis, public domain



Giuseppe Garibaldi a Digione – Painting by Sebastiano De Albertis, De Agostini Picture Library, M. Carrieri, public domain, Wikimedia

I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor food; I offer only hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles and death. Let him who loves his country with his heart, and not merely with his lips, follow me.

— Giuseppe Garibaldi



Entrance of Garibaldi in Naples – Wenzel Franz Jäger painting, Wikimedia

“But Garibaldi’s victory,” I said, “didn’t bring a better life to the landless peasants.”

“The revolutionaries,” Giovanni said, “got a big disappointment. It wasn’t a victory for the peasant. It was a victory for the bourgeoisie. The landless peasants who’d hoped to get land redistributed from the big estates got nothing. The big landowners held on to their land and the peasants who’d supported Garibaldi no little better off than before. Mazzini’s dream in the Risorgimento was to create a democratic republic. Italy had become a nation, but Mazzini’s dream of a democracy hadn’t come true.”

“Retrogression follows revolutions,” I said. “Either promises are not kept or there’s a conservative counter reaction which wipes out progress that’s been accomplished. The Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce, said that history is philosophy in motion. Ideas don’t advance in a direct line; they move forward and then regress. Liberalization is followed by repression. After the enlightenment of the 12th century came the disasters of the 13th century.”

“I know I romanticize Garibaldi,” Giovanni said, “but I need a role model to inspire me. I suppose it’s the spirit of the Count of Monte Cristo.”

“The spirit of Monte Cristo?”

“Around the age of 12, I thought I was the Count of Monte Cristo.”

Giovanni pulled out a white plume from his massage oil kit.

“That’s gorgeous. What kind of bird is that from?”

“A Snowy Egret.”

“Cyrano de Bergerac would have loved a plume like that.”

Giovanni began stroking my face with the Egret’s plume, beginning at my chin and slowly drawing it up the side of my cheek with languorous strokes, gently caressing my face and neck, then brushing the tantalizing feather ever so delicately across my breasts.



Snowy Egret in full breeding plumage – Author, Len Blumin, Wikimedia

“I can imagine,” I murmured, “how dashing you were in your black cape and rapier.”

“I’ve never let go of my childhood fantasies of Garibaldi and the Count of Monte Cristo.”

“Many writers,” I said, “including George Sand and Victor Hugo, have idealized Garibaldi.”

“If you look at his life,” Giovanni said, “you’ll understand the romance of Garibaldi. Originally, he was a mariner. On a voyage to Taganrog, Russia, the birthplace of Anton Chekhov on the Sea of Azov, he met a member of Mazzini’s *La giovine Italia* who inspired him to join his revolutionary group. Garibaldi took an oath to liberate Italy from Austria. After meeting Mazzini in Geneva, Garibaldi joined the failed rebellion in Piedmont. Sentenced to death in absentia, he escaped to Marseille and then to an exile in Brazil and Uruguay where he joined with rebels and honed his skill in guerilla style warfare.”



Giuseppe Garibaldi in Uruguay – pane-rose.it

“Isn’t Uruguay,” I asked, “where Garibaldi picked up the costume he wore the rest of his life?”

“He was influenced by Anita, a Brazilian woman of Portuguese descent that he married in Montevideo. She introduced him to gaucho culture and he adopted their poncho and sombrero. When the Uruguayan Civil War broke out, Garibaldi raised an Italian legion who wore the red shirts which later became the uniform of his troops during the *Risorgimento*.” Giovanni laughed and clapped his hands, “There’s a story that says that his red shirts were from a factory in Montevideo, originally intended to be shipped to the workers in the slaughterhouses of Argentina. That’s why they were blood red.”

“When did Garibaldi return from South America to fight for Italian independence?”

“After seven long years. When he heard of the revolution in Palermo, he brought some of his Italian Legion men over to fight in the revolution of 1848. After some victories and a terrible loss to the French in Piedmonte and Lombardy, Garibaldi seized Rome by defeating a superior French Army and Mazzini set up a Republican government. When Louis Napoleon sent overwhelming reinforcements to the French army besieging Rome, instead of forcing his troops to fight when he knew it would only end in a bloodbath, Garibaldi retreated to the Apennine mountains saying, ‘*Dovunque saremo, colà sarà Roma.*’ ‘Wherever we may be, there will be Rome.’



The Injured Garibaldi in the Aspromonte Mountains – Painting by Gerolamo Induno, Museo Civico Rivoltello, Trieste, public domain, Wikimedia

“Hunted by Austrian, Spanish, Neapolitan, and French forces, and with no means to continue the fight, Garibaldi had no choice but to go into exile.”

“Is this when Garibaldi went to New York?”

“First, he went to Tangier where an Italian businessman gave him some money to escape to New York and purchase a boat. He never got the boat and ended up earning his living as a candle maker. That’s what’s so great about Garibaldi. When he wasn’t leading troops in battle, he was a man of the people who worked with his hands. Between his many battles, he worked at various jobs throughout his life. Papa had me memorize Garibaldi’s words — words which I can only half remember now. Garibaldi said leadership is not to dominate other people. It is to lead nations to a brotherhood where egoism is vanquished. Leadership is founded in the spirit of medieval chivalry that supports the oppressed. Leadership means sacrificing wealth for the greater good of relieving the suffering of our fellow men.



Giuseppe Garibaldi, 1861 – U.S. Library of Congress, public domain

“Garibaldi followed a convoluted path through life. I don’t think he made a single lira during his combat days. He was a laborer, a mariner, a candle maker, a farmer, a politician, writer, and warrior. He loved to engage in new worlds. There are few in Italy who’ll say anything bad about Giuseppe Garibaldi. After his New York exile, he sailed to Nicaragua, then Peru, China, Manila, then back across the Pacific Ocean to Peru and Chile, around Cape Horn, and back to Boston. Garibaldi was a traveling man. I wouldn’t be surprised if he wasn’t a circus performer at one time.

“At the end of his life, Garibaldi founded the ‘League of Democracy’ which supported universal suffrage and the emancipation of women. Like Giuseppe Mazzini, Garibaldi believed in the creation of a European federation.

“A century later,” I said, “Europe is beginning to move in that direction. Jean Monnet is taking Europe towards the dream of Mazzini and Garibaldi — an integrated Europe.

“You’re talking about the Common European market for coal and steel that the French foreign minister has been talking about.”



Jean Monnet, Architect of the European Economic Community established by the Treaty of Rome, 1957, and a Father of the European Union – Wikimedia

“Five years ago, Jean Monnet and French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed that France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg delegate their authority to the Coal and Steel Community to regulate industrial production under a centralized authority. Monnet and Schuman are planning to set up a European Common Market — a cooperation of European countries that has never existed before. If it comes to pass, I hope it will prove to be a deterrent for the wars that have plagued Europe for centuries.”

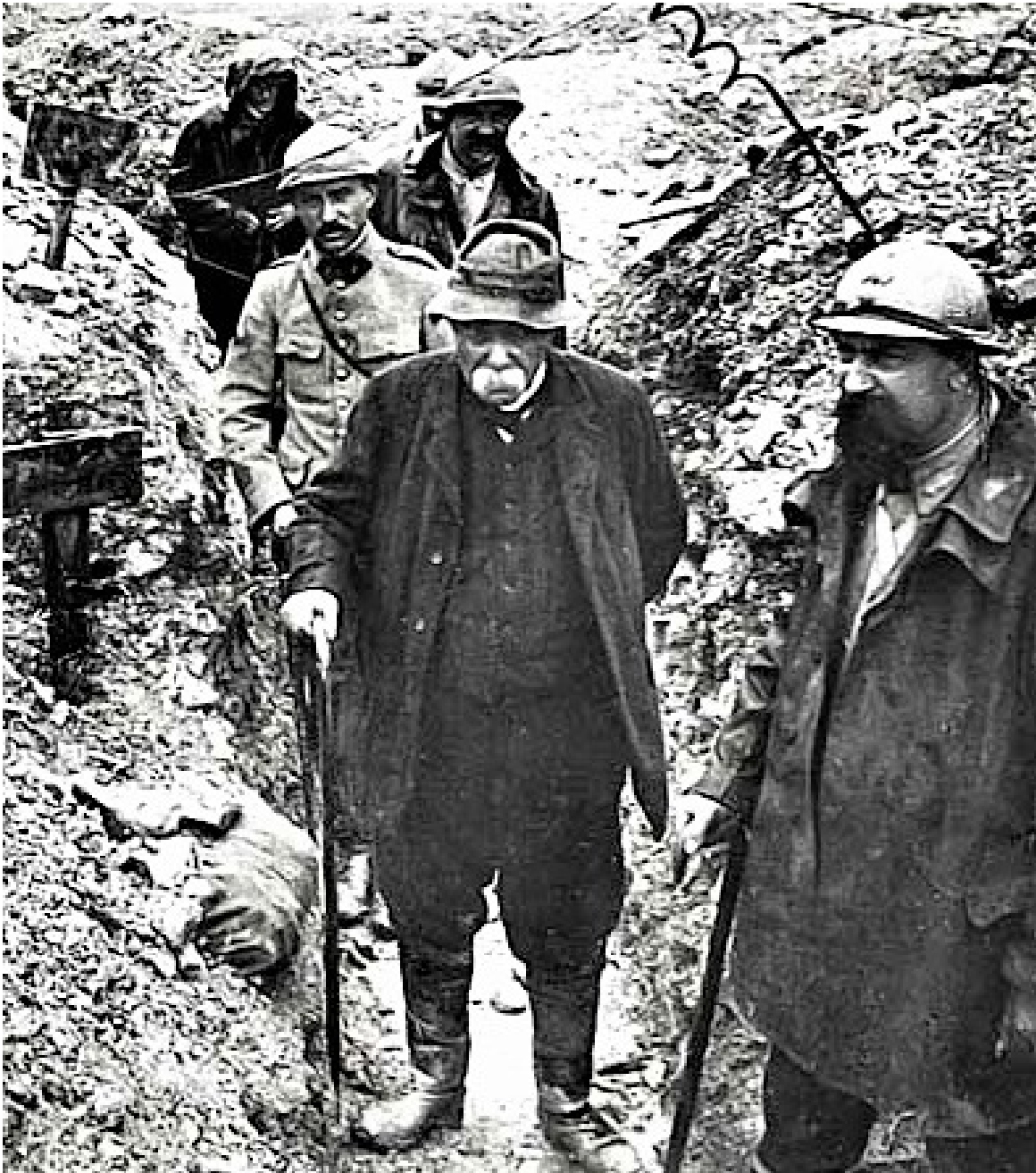
Giovanni laughed. “While you’ve been telling me about the heroes of France, I’ve been going on and on about the heroes of Italy. Papa said that Garibaldi, the Hero of Two Worlds, was the kind of leader that every country needed.

“What you’ve told me of Garibaldi’s abilities is relevant. The principles of leadership are the same everywhere. Clémenceau had the same fierce determination as Garibaldi. At the lowest point of the war, he told the French, forget about negotiating peace with the Germans. We can win the war. To the demoralized men in the trenches, Clémenceau’s leadership didn’t mean much at first. They saw him as another politician who came and went with the seasons. But Clémenceau succeeded in convincing the nation that with a determined psyche and the help of American troops, France could achieve total victory. When the Germans were at Château Thierry, 18 miles from Paris, and everyone thought the city was lost, Clémenceau said, ‘The Germans may take Paris, but that will not prevent me from going on with the war. We will fight on the Loire, we will fight on the Garonne. We will fight even in the Pyrenees. And if at last we are driven off the Pyrenees, we will continue the war at sea, but, as for asking for peace, never!’”

“In 1918, American troops began to pour into France, and the tide began to turn. Grateful for Lafayette’s support of the American Revolution, an American colonel just off the boat visited the Picpus cemetery in Paris where the American flag flew above his grave and said, ‘Lafayette, we are here.’”

“Cheers for Lafayette,” Giovanni said raising his fist. “On the nights when I’m not playing, I’m reading about the American Revolution. Lafayette picked up a lot of loot in France to support General George Washington. Without French financing, the American Revolution would’ve failed.”

“Once Clémenceau took over, the spirit of France began to revive. He began visiting the trenches while under fire from the Germans, his fierce determination lifting the spirits of the demoralized troops. To the horror of his staff, while under enemy artillery fire, he would climb to the top of the trenches, shake his fist and curse the Germans, ‘We’re going to get you . . . you sons of bitches,’ before his staff pulled the Tiger back to safety.



Georges Clémenceau in the Trenches, 15 September 1917 – John Glines photo, public domain

“Galvanized by the Prime Minister’s courage and his success in creating a unified French, British, and American command under General Foch, the soldiers in the trenches, *le poilu*, meaning the ‘hairy ones’ because it was impossible to shave frequently in the trenches, started to call him *Le Père de la Victoire*, the Father of Victory. The soldiers began to believe in Clémenceau in the same way our ancestors believed in Joan of Arc. Clémenceau was the savior of the French nation.”

“How do you feel now,” Giovanni said, dropping his arms and falling back on the blanket.

“So wonderful,” I moaned, rolling over.

“Where’s Céline? She’s been gone a long time.”

“Don’t worry. She’ll be back by four. Céline is a nature girl. She knows her way around the woods.”

I snuggled up to Giovanni. “Now . . . I have you all to myself.”

“Giovanni took me in his arms and kissed me.

“When I’m on tour, I miss the music of your voice.”

“Thank you for the massage.” I kissed him again. “You look really tired. Why don’t you take a little nap?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Sleep, sleep, my darling, sleep in my arms.”



Everett Historical

***People only accept change when they are faced with necessity,
and only recognize necessity when a crisis is upon them.***

— Jean Monnet