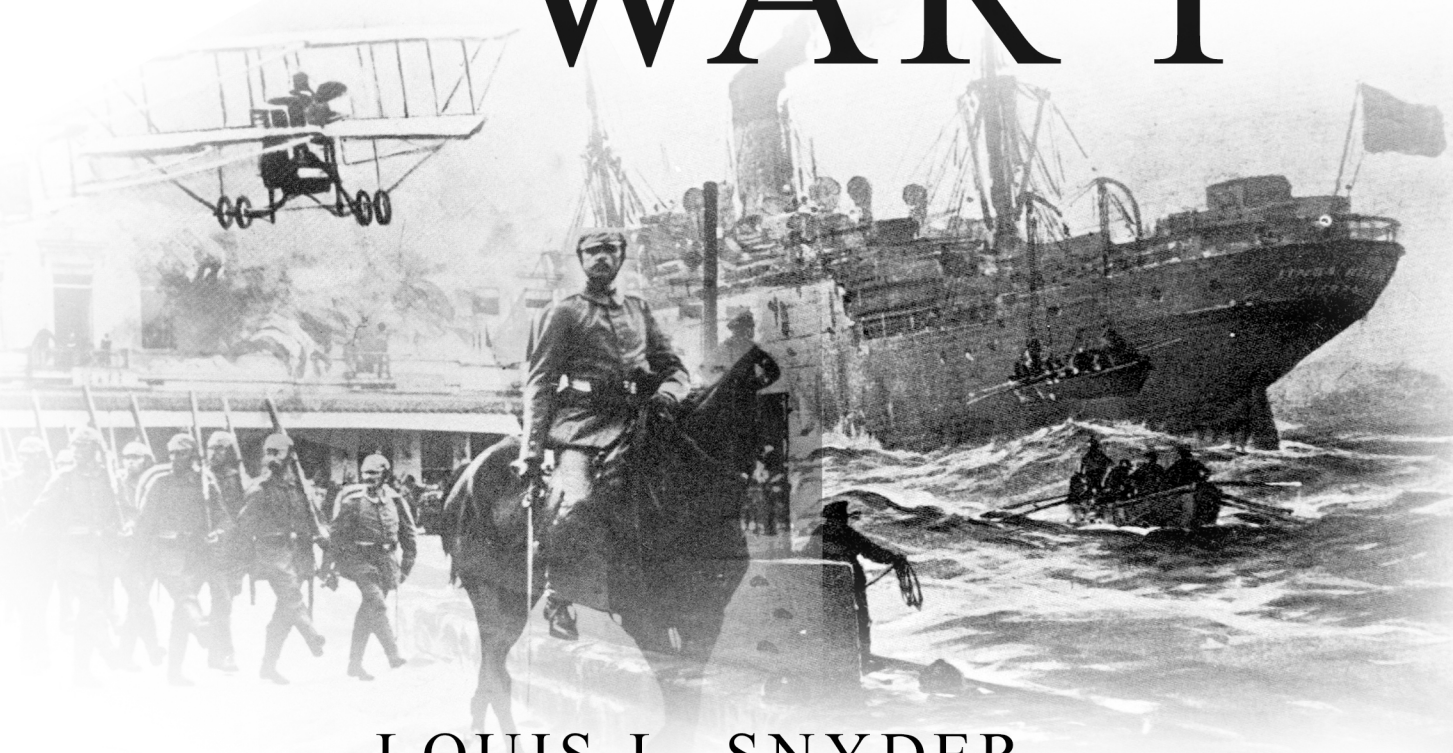
DISCOVER HOW A SINGLE SPARK CHANGED THE ENTIRE WORLD

THE FIRST BOOK *of* WORLD WAR I



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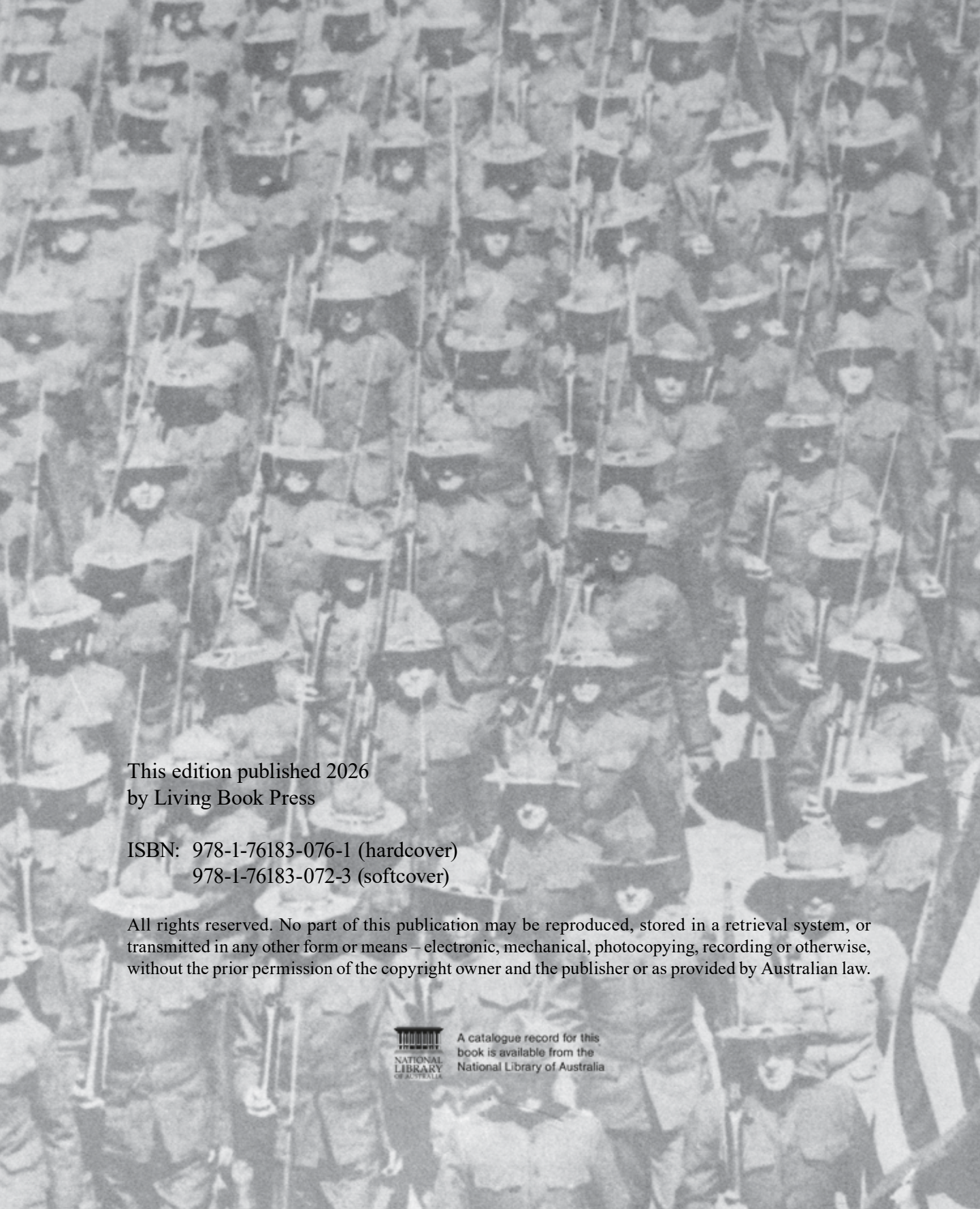

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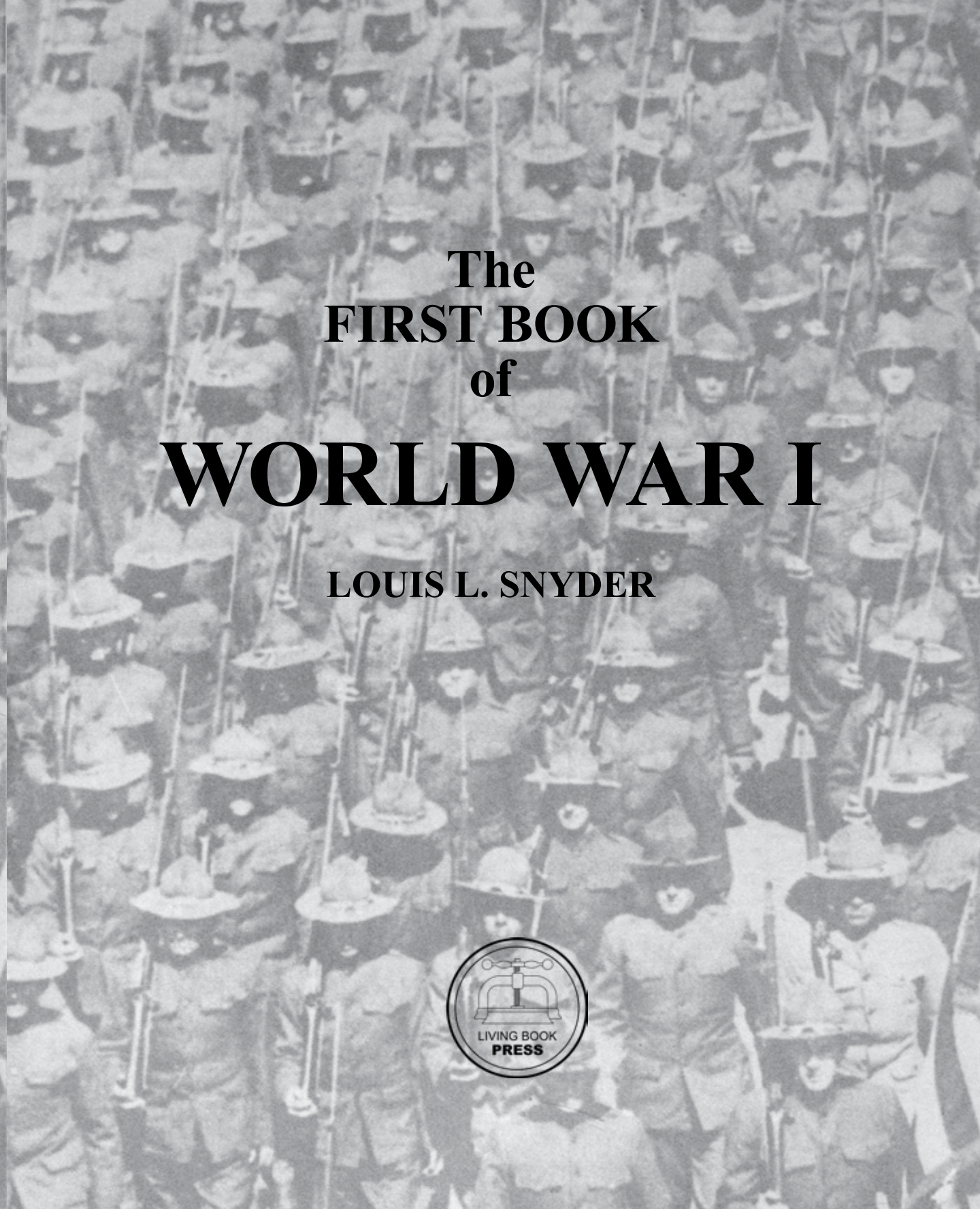


The FIRST BOOK of WORLD WAR I

LOUIS L. SNYDER

LIVING BOOK PRESS

CONTENTS

THE SHOTS HEARD AROUND THE WORLD

It was June 1914. At tables in a humble café in Bosnia, in the heart of the Balkans in Central Europe, sat thirty-five men. Most of them were young students. There were also teachers, tradesmen, peasants, and workers. All were from farms and towns of the small provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which the great Austro-Hungarian Empire had taken from Serbia a few years earlier.

These men were terrorists, members of the secret Serbian society called the *Narodna Odbrana*, or National Defense, who had pledged themselves to work for freedom. Their meeting that night was in protest against the coming visit of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand to Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia. The Archduke planned to direct army maneuvers in the neighboring mountains.

The terrorists resented the coming display of armed might in their conquered land. They also resented its timing—June 28, which was *Vidov-Dan*, St. Vitus Day, the five hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of Serbia's freedom from Turkish rule. They made their decision almost immediately. Death to the tyrant!

Later, eight members of the society were selected to carry out the sentence. They were to wait five hundred yards apart along the route the Archduke had to travel from the railroad station to the Town Hall. Among so many, one would surely succeed in killing him.

Among those chosen to kill the Archduke was a nineteen-year-old student, Gavrilo Princip. As a small boy he had tended sheep in Bosnia, where he had learned from the highland peasants the old folk tales and songs of Serbia's glorious past. Expelled from

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife leaving the Town Hall at Sarajeva

school at Sarajevo because of revolutionary activities, he had gone to Belgrade, capital of Serbia. Homeless, ill, and often hungry, he was kept alive only by his hope of leading his people to freedom.

At dawn on June 28, the eight conspirators were armed and waiting along the route. When the Archduke appeared, one of them hurled a grenade at his car. The Archduke threw himself back and was not injured. After the reception at the Town Hall, he was urged to leave by the shortest route out of the city.

As the Archduke's car turned at the bridge over the River Miljachka, Princip stepped forward and fired two shots. One pierced the Archduke's neck so that blood spurted from his mouth. The other struck the Archduke's wife, who died instantly. The Archduke's last words were, "Sophie, Sophie, do not die! Live for our children!"

The officers seized Princip. They knocked him down, beat him with their swords, all but killed him. The boy died in prison, but his shots echoed around the world to set off the explosion of World War I.

WHAT CAUSED WORLD WAR I

The causes of great wars are never simple. Many causes may work quietly under the surface for years before they are recognized. In 1914 nobody dreamed that a great war would spread from Europe all over the world. The continent seemed more stable than it had been for centuries. But under the calm seethed old rivalries, suspicions, and hatreds. They were ready to erupt for the slightest reason. To understand them, we must go way back to the late nineteenth century.

At that time, the nations of Europe were engaged in a fierce struggle for raw materials and markets for their products. Some nations managed to get these at the expense of others. Many nations needed food supplies. And the bankers in every country wanted places to invest their money.

From this struggle, Great Britain (England) had emerged as the strongest power in the world. Her industries and commerce were greater than those of any other nation. Her colonial empire was first in size and importance. Her navy ruled the seas.

But at the beginning of the twentieth century, the picture began to change. Germany became a dangerous contestant in shipping and commerce. Largely because of her efficiency and scientific genius, she began to outstrip Great Britain in the production of coal, iron, and steel. The rivalry between these two great countries grew strong and bitter.

While the struggle for markets and raw materials was at its height, an evil spirit began to grow in some of the countries of Europe—a

spirit that drew them apart from their neighbors. It was the spirit of bad nationalism.

Good nationalism hurts nobody. It is a feeling that binds together people who live in the same country, speak the same language, and have similar customs and ideas. But the nationalism that began to spread in Europe during the late nineteenth century was like a crippling disease. The nations suffering from it began to feel superior to others and to covet the land of neighboring countries. Some were even ready to go to war to get what they wanted.

By 1914 this bad nationalism had produced many "sore spots" in the world. One of them was Alsace-Lorraine, the rich industrial region between Germany and France. Germany and France had fought over Alsace-Lorraine for a thousand years. Germany had won it in the war of 1870–1871. Now France wanted it back.

Then there was the great Austro-Hungarian monarchy, where Austrians and Hungarians were the favored people. The other subjects—among them Czechs, Poles, Serbians, and Rumanians—wanted to break away and form their own nations or join other states.

The people of Italy were dissatisfied, too. They believed that Fiume and Trieste, then under Austrian control, and Nice and Savoy, then part of France, were really Italian.

Poland was not even on the map in 1914. In the late eighteenth century, it had been split up three times between Russia, Austria, and Prussia. But the feeling of Polish nationalism had never died. All over Europe there were people who still spoke Polish and had Polish customs. They wanted their country back.

Along with bad nationalism, still another deadly disease infected

ITALY JOINED THE ALLIES IN 1915

Europe. This was militarism. Each country, fearful that war would break out, began to arm and prepare for war. The people were heavily taxed to pay for these preparations, and they resented it.

Restless and uneasy, the nations of Europe began to combine in a series of alliances—treaties between two or more nations—to work together if war came. In 1882 Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy formed the secret Triple Alliance.

There was no world government, such as the United Nations today, to help solve the quarrels between nations. The only way to stop a country that broke the laws of nations was to go to war against it. In 1899 and later, in 1907, there were Peace Conferences at The Hague that tried to do something about this. They failed. The nations agreed on rules of land and naval warfare, the rights

KAISER WILHELM II (LEFT) WITH HIS SIX SONS LEADS A MILITARY PARADE IN BERLIN

of neutrals, and the handling of prisoners of war, but they were not able to prevent the outbreak of war on a giant scale.

Diplomacy, the relations between nations, became a kind of trickery. A diplomat was said to be a man "who lied for his country." Sworn allies were not necessarily loyal friends. In some cases nations even made secret agreements with the enemies of their allies.

In 1905 trouble flared in Morocco. Germany wanted part of that country, but France objected. War was barely avoided.

France, Russia, and Great Britain had strong suspicions that Germany was preparing for war. Although they had been enemies for years, these three countries decided that they must get together for protection. In 1907 they formed their own alliance, calling it the Triple Entente. It was not secret, however. France and Great Britain were countries in which treaties had to be made publicly by their Parliaments—the Chamber of Deputies (France) and the House of Commons (Great Britain).

Now Europe was divided into two great hostile camps, with the Triple Alliance on one side and the Triple Entente on the other. With suspicion growing and tensions tightening, it was anybody's guess who would fire the first shot.

In the Balkans, known as the "powder keg of Europe," there had been continuous friction for years. Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria all wanted Turkey driven out of her possessions in southeastern Europe. In 1912 they went to war against Turkey and won. Then they began to fight among themselves for the best pieces of Turkey.

You can see that Europe was well primed for the explosion set off by Gavrilo Princip's shots at Sarajevo.

THE CRISIS OF JULY, 1914

The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Leopold von Berchtold, was a good deal to blame for what happened next. He was furious with the Serbs for the murder of the Archduke, and he was eager to strike back at them. The German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, agreed that the Serbs deserved a lesson. He promised to support Austria-Hungary in anything she did to punish them. Like many others, the Kaiser believed that if Serbia resisted, the conflict could be kept between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.

On July 23, 1914, Count Berchtold sent Serbia a diplomatic note so harsh that it was actually an ultimatum, or final demand. It insisted on punishment for all those who had taken part in the plot. It demanded that Austrian police officials be allowed to go into Serbia to see that this was done. In short, Serbia was to give up her rights as an independent state. The ultimatum further called for a reply within forty-eight hours.

For the Serbs this was a deadly serious matter. They now asked for advice from two friendly states, France and Russia. Both urged Serbia to send a moderate reply to the ultimatum.

On July 25, just two minutes short of the time limit, the Serbs sent their answer. They accepted all the demands except the one specifying that Austrian officials be sent into Serbia.

"We cannot accept your note," said Count Berchtold. "It is unsatisfactory."

On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

At this point the Russians began to mobilize their armies. In those days mobilization was a dangerous word. It meant that armies were

ordered to be ready to fight at an instant's notice. It was the next thing to a declaration of war.

Both British and German leaders begged the Russians not to mobilize. They also urged the Austrians to accept a peaceful solution. But it was too late. Soon the would-be peacemakers found themselves in the midst of the fight.

Germany declared war on Russia on August 1. Two days later, Germany declared war on France. France, honoring her treaty with Russia, promptly declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary. Italy held aloof. She said she was not bound to help Germany because Germany had started the war. With the withdrawal of Italy from the Triple Alliance, Germany and Austria-Hungary became known as the Central Powers.

FRENCH SOLDIERS, IN THEIR PICTURESQUE UNIFORMS, ON THEIR WAY TO JOIN THEIR REGIMENT

THE INVASION OF BELGIUM

The Germans had a well-thought-out plan for winning the war quickly. First they would overwhelm the French with superior numbers. Then they would turn against the Russians. While holding the Russians in the East, they would head for a knockout blow on Paris. The attack would be like a gigantic hammer with all the force in its head.

To carry out their plan to attack Paris, the Germans would have to swing in a wide arc through Belgium, which lies between Germany and France. Back in 1839 all the great states of Europe had signed a treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of that little country. In case a great war broke out, the warring armies would not enter Belgian territory.

Now one of the German leaders called this treaty "a scrap of paper." On August 4, the German armies surged across the Belgian border.

A famous American war correspondent, Richard Harding Davis, was in Brussels, the capital of Belgium, the day the Germans goose-stepped through. He wrote an unforgettable story about it for the New York *Tribune*:

"The German army moved into this city as smoothly and as compactly as an Empire State Express. There were no halts, no open places, no stragglers.

"It came in with the smoke pouring from cookstoves on wheels, and in an hour had set up post office wagons, from which mounted messengers galloped along the line of column distributing letters and at which soldiers posted picture postcards.

The German army marches into Brussels, capital of Belgium, August, 1914

"The men of the infantry sang *Fatherland, My Fatherland*. Between each line of song they took three steps. At times two thousand men were singing together in absolute rhythm and beat. When the melody gave way, the silence was broken only by the stamp of iron-shod boots, and then again the song rose.

"Like a river of steel the army flowed, gray and ghostlike. Then, as dusk came and as thousands of horses' hoofs and thousands of iron boots continued to tramp forward, they struck tiny sparks from the stones, but the horses and the men who beat out the sparks were invisible.

"Whether they marched all night or not I do not know, but now for twenty-six hours the gray army has rumbled by with the mystery of fog and the pertinacity of a steam roller."

The little Belgian army resisted fiercely, but it was no match for

this monstrous German army of death. Tiny Belgium was overcome within two weeks.

Shocked by this disregard of international law, England immediately declared war on the Central Powers. Now the two great alliances were at war with each other.

Japan came to the support of England on August 23. One nation after another was drawn into the fighting. What had started as a little war in the Balkans now spread into a world conflict.

BELGIAN SOLDIERS RETREATED TOWARD THE ONE LITTLE CORNER OF BELGIUM WHICH SOON WOULD BE THE ONLY PART OF BELGIUM OUTSIDE THE GERMAN LINES.

A German girl bids a gay farewell to a soldier leaving for the war

WAR FEVER

"The lights are going out all over Europe," said Sir Edward Grey, British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, just before the war began.

Yet in all the warring capitals, the people seemed relieved that the strain of the armed peace was broken. Men, women, and children in every land were swept along in an outburst of patriotism. Newspapers and politicians shrieked that "our country" was the innocent victim of attack by the hated enemy.

Berlin was afire with war fever. People thronged the streets shouting, "War! War!" German troops goose-stepped down Unter den Linden to the tune of fierce Teutonic warrior songs. Girls kissed the blushing soldiers and put flowers in their guns.

Joyful crowds surged down the boulevards in Paris as shouts arose: "To berlin! To berlin!" Parisians massed in the Place De La Concorde and sang battle anthems. Speakers called for revenge for 1870–1871, when the Germans had beaten France.

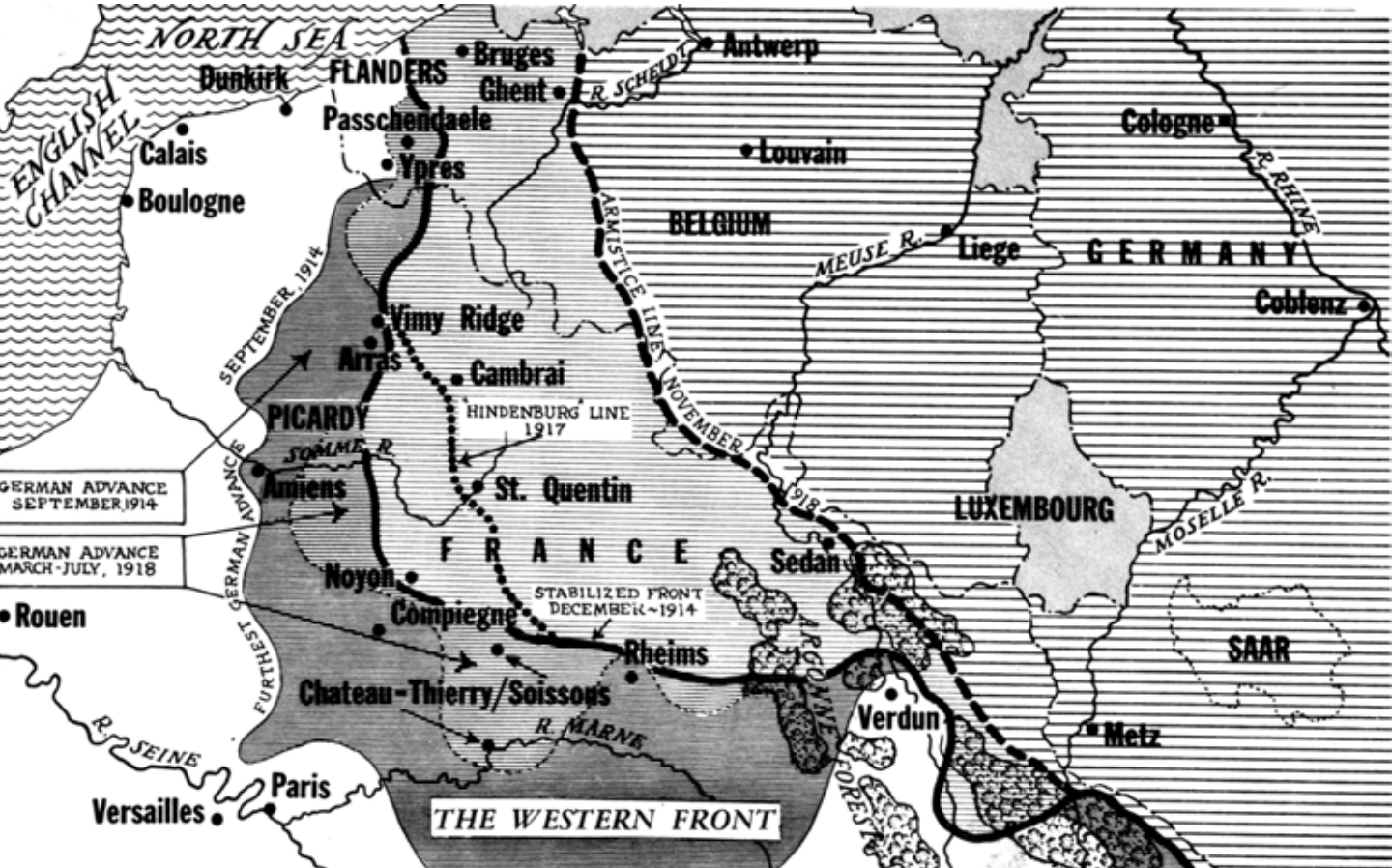
In Piccadilly Circus, London, crowds sang and shouted, "Death

to the Hun!" British troops, marching to the tune of *Tipperary*, set out as on a holiday.

In Russia, tough peasants abandoned their plows and headed for the cities to join the army. In St. Petersburg (later, in 1924, Leningrad), mobs attacked the German embassy and called for victory for Mother Russia. A prize of 200,000 rubles ($100,000) was set up for the first Russian soldier to set foot in Berlin.

Everything seemed glamorous at the time. Boys and girls were told that it was a fine and noble thing to die for one's country. The war, they were promised, would be short and glorious, like those of the nineteenth century.

It was a tragic mistake. People in 1914 knew nothing of modern war.



THE MIRACLE OF THE MARNE

"In six weeks it will all be over."

This was the telegram which General Helmuth von Moltke sent to Kaiser Wilhelm II after the invasion of Belgium.

A million German troops had poured into France. Despite the arrival of a British unit and French reinforcements, the Germans pushed steadily forward. Sometimes they marched as much as twenty miles a day on foot.

Unfortunately for them, the Germans tried too much too quickly. In those days, messages between units of the army were carried by men on horseback and motorcyclists. Many of these messengers lost their way in the confusion of the advance. Besides, the Germans had made the mistake of destroying all French telegraphic lines and stations. Often, German field commanders lost touch with each other and with their headquarters.

In the midst of the confusion, General von Moltke received an urgent message from East Prussia, saying that the Russians were pouring in and begging for help. He promptly transferred four of his divisions to the East. It was a serious mistake.

In spite of the confusion, however, the Germans reached the River Marne, fifteen miles from Paris, in the first week of September. The French government fled to Bordeaux, and the French and British staged a desperate counterattack. General Joseph Joffre, in charge of the French troops, said to his men, "The time for looking backward has passed. Die in your tracks rather than retreat!"

The famous First Battle of the Marne lasted five days, from Sep-

tember 6 to 10. Two million men were gripped in a battle to the death. It seemed that the Germans were about to win. The French commanders called for help from Paris.

Then an amazing thing happened. From the streets of Paris came a long line of taxicabs and buses headed for the front. Piled into this strange fleet were troops gathered from around Paris.

Suddenly the tide of battle turned in favor of the Allies. The Germans could scarcely believe it. For four weeks they had rolled on through Belgium and France. Now they had hit a stone wall. They halted and retreated in orderly fashion to the Aisne River. The six weeks were over. The Germans, although in a dominant position, had failed to reach their goal. Their hope for a quick victory had vanished.

Buses and taxicabs which carried French troops to the front during the First Battle of the Marne.

WAR IN THE TRENCHES

After the German drive on Paris had been stopped, both sides dug into the ground. The firepower of the machine gun and the field gun was so great that no man could stand up against it. The troops, like moles, had to seek protection under the ground.

There was nothing new about the simple trench. Caesar had used it against the Gauls, and both the North and the South had dug trenches in the American Civil War. What was new was the use of trenches on a grand scale.

First, each side dug a long line of trenches underground, stretching nearly six hundred miles from Belgium down to Switzerland. But a single trench system did not offer much protection, so both sides made second and third-line trenches to which troops could retreat if they could not hold the first line.

All these lines were connected underground so that the soldiers could move from one line to another without being exposed to enemy fire. Under the ground were first-aid stations, troops' and officers' quarters, kitchens, supply depots, even miniature cars running on rails.

Between the German and Allied trenches was "No Man's Land." It was covered with mounds of dirt and tangles of barbed wire. It was a dangerous place in which to be caught because it was continually swept by gunfire of all kinds.

Day after day, week after week, the opposing armies lived in the water, muck, and mud of these trenches. In the summer it was

blasted hot; in the winter, cold and wet. The trenches were infested with vermin, especially by vigorous insects called "cooties."

During the day the ground trembled with the concussion of the heavy guns. Men's ears ached with the incessant bark of these big guns with their deep-throated bass. Then came the rattle of the machine guns, each delivering three hundred shots a minute.

At night the battlefront was lit up by huge flares. Every few seconds came the flashes of the big guns. Giant fireworks exploded in the air and made the scene as bright as day.

THE FACES OF THESE MEN MIRROR THE MISERY OF LIFE IN THE TRENCHES ON THE WESTERN FRONT

"No Man's Land"

During the night it was time for the rats to take over. They swarmed in and out of the dugouts and jumped over the heads of the men while they slept.

Just before the break of dawn, soldiers waited at the edge of the trench for the signal to "go over the top." Knowing they stood small chance of coming out of "No Man's Land" alive, they were usually in a cold sweat. But orders were orders, and they had to go to the attack. Sometimes the enemy trench was only ten yards away.

Worst of all were the unceasing monotony and boredom. Nobody could make much headway against the combination of trenches, machine guns, and barbed wire. Both sides tried to blast their way through by heavy artillery bombardments, but it was really impossible to make any major attacks against the enemy. Yet the commanders of both sides insisted upon hurling their men against positions which just could not be taken. It seemed that no one could get anywhere unless one side developed new weapons.