

René Jean-Paul Dewil

# The Family Vincius

# Berlin

## 1880- 1930

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	4
The Characters .....	7
The Family Vincius .....	7
Other characters .....	9
The Leaders of the Nations.....	13
<b>Part I. The years 1880 to 1914. La Belle Époque.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The Family Vincius .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>German Politics. Otto von Bismarck. 1870-1890 .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>The Kulturkampf.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>The international Situation and the Great Depression .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Early anti-Semitism in Germany. 1879-1882 .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Bismarck’s Social Welfare Bills and his Fall from Power. 1883-1890.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>The Times after Bismarck’s Resignation .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>The Vincius of Thorn. 1890-1900 .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>The Jews in Russia and in Poland. The Pogroms. 1880-1900 .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>The Pogroms .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>The young Julian Vincius. 1890-1898.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Julian Vincius in Freiburg. 1906-1912 .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Dora Gomol. Freiburg and Berlin. 1908-1911.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>The Persecution of the Jews in Russia. 1900-1914 .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>International Developments. 1890-1914.....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>The Concert of Europe. 1880-1900 .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>The Russo-Japanese War. 1904-1906 .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Continued Conflicts. La Belle Époque. 1905-1912 .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Julian Vincius and Dora Gomol. Paris. 1910 .....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>More Conflicts. The Balkan Wars. 1912-1913.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>The Conflagration. 1914.....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>The Kleinberger and the von Chrapitz. 1900-1914.....</b>	<b>140</b>

<b>Part II. The World War. 1914-1918</b> .....	147
<b>The War begins. 1914</b> .....	147
<b>Julian Vincius in the War. 1914</b> .....	150
<b>The War. 1914</b> .....	158
<b>Julian Vincius at Longwy. 1914</b> .....	164
<b>On the Eastern Front. 1914</b> .....	173
<b>The ongoing War, the Years 1915 and 1916</b> .....	179
<b>On the Western Front in 1915</b> .....	179
<b>The Battle of Verdun</b> .....	181
<b>Longwy and Julian Vincius in 1915</b> .....	187
<b>Verdun from March to Autumn 1916</b> .....	209
<b>Julian Vincius in Longwy during the Battle of Verdun, 1916</b> .....	211
<b>Verdun from October to December 1916</b> .....	218
<b>On the eastern Fronts from 1915 to end 1916</b> .....	220
<b>The Battle of the Somme</b> .....	225
<b>On the Balkan Front and Conclusion</b> .....	229
<b>The World War in 1917</b> .....	232
<b>The Russian revolution</b> .....	232
<b>Germany and the USA</b> .....	243
<b>German actions in the spring of 1917</b> .....	244
<b>1917 on the Western Front</b> .....	245
<b>Malou Vincius</b> .....	249
<b>On the Italian Front</b> .....	253
<b>The British Offensives of 1917</b> .....	256
<b>Colonel Otto von Chrapitz in Longwy</b> .....	261
<b>Politics and Peace Talks</b> .....	269
<b>The USA in the War</b> .....	273
<b>New War Tactics</b> .....	275
<b>The last Offensives and the Ending of the War. 1918</b> .....	277
<b>The Peace Treaty of Brest Litovsk for the Eastern Front, 1918</b> .....	277
<b>The German Offensives on the Western front in 1918</b> .....	280
<b>From the Diary of Otto von Chrapitz. Operation Blücher-Yorck. May-June 1918</b> ..	288
<b>The Turning of the Tide. Allied Attacks on the Western Front. 1918</b> .....	299
<b>Malou Vincius in Belgium</b> .....	304

<b>Developments on the Eastern Front</b> .....	309
<b>Longwy in 1918</b> .....	311
<b>The End of the War</b> .....	316
<b>Julian Vincius’ return to Berlin</b> .....	321
<b>After the War</b> .....	324
<b>Part III. The Weimar Republic Years of 1919 to 1930</b> .....	327
<b>The political Evolution in post-war Berlin. 1918-1922</b> .....	327
<b>Julian Vincius in post-war Berlin until 1922</b> .....	331
<b>The Years of Worries. 1922-1927</b> .....	341
<b>The Crisis Years. 1928-1930</b> .....	348
<b>Author’s Notes</b> .....	361
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	363

## The Characters

### The Family Vincius:

Abraham Vincevicius	1792-1871	Married to Abi Abramovski in 1814, son of Ezra Vincevicius
Abi Abramovski	1792-1876	Married to Abraham Vincevicius in 1814
Asa Vincius	1790-1860	Married to Leah Perlman in 1814, son of Ezra Vincevicius
Leah Perlman	1798-1880	Married to Asa Vincius in 1814
Esther Vincius	1818-1863	Married to Finkel Kaunavicius in 1836, daughter of Asa Vincius
Rebekah Vincius	1816-1903	Married to Samuel Klaipevicius in 1836, daughter of Asa Vincius
Max Vincius	1820-1900	Married to Sara Benavicius in 1840, son of Asa Vincius
Sara Benavicius	1823-1902	Married to Max Vincius in 1840
Iosel Vincevicius	1815-1895	Married to Sara Rausnitz in 1835, son of Abraham Vincevicius
Sara Rausnitz	1816-1903	Married to Iosel Vincevicius in 1835
Edek Vincevicius	1817-1897	Married to Rachel Levin in 1837, son of Abraham Vincevicius
Rachel Levin	1820-1910	Married to Edek Vincevicius in 1837
Sarah Vincevicius	1800-1878	Married to Anton Svirskius in 1827, daughter of Ezra Vincevicius
Anton Svirskius	1798-1873	Married to Sarah Vincevicius in 1827
Anton Svirskius the Younger	1832-1900	Son of Sarah Vincius
Paul Svirskius	1833-1898	Son of Sarah Vincius
Johanna Svirskius	1835-1910	Daughter of Sarah Vincius
Kurt Vincius	1840-1910	Married to Hannah Sonnenfeld in 1862, son of Max Vincius
Hannah Sonnenfeld	1845-1913	Married to Kurt Vincius in 1862
Max Vincius the Younger	1863-1939	Married to Maria Rosenthal in 1882, son of Kurt Vincius
Maria Rosenthal	1866-1930	Married to Max Vincius the Younger in 1882
Andreas Vincius	1864-1942	Married to Lore Kremer in 1885, son of Kurt Vincius
Lore Kremer	1865-1942	Married to Andreas Vincius in 1885

Julian Vincius	1866-1942	Married to Hanne Altman in 1886, son of Kurt Vincius
Hanne Altman	1870-1942	Married to Julian Vincius in 1886
Haim Vincius	1842-1920	Married to Leah Goldstern in 1865, son of Max Vincius
Leah Goldstern	1843-1910	Married to Haim Vincius in 1865
Avram Vincius	1866-1920	Married to Manyah Kalpern in 1890, son of Haim Vincius
Manyah Kalpern	1866-1930	Married to Avram Vincius in 1890
David Vincius	1868-1928	Married to Rosa Kalpern in 1892, son of Haim Vincius
Rosa Kalpern	1869-1935	Married to David Vincius in 1892
Mikhael Vincius	1843-1920	Married to Fredia False in 1870, son of Max Vincius
Fredia False	1845-1915	Married to Mikhael Vincius in 1870
Naomi Vincius	1871-1950	Married to Osyp Raisfeld in 1890, daughter of Mikhael Vincius
Osyp Raisfeld	1871-1955	Married to Naomi Vincius in 1890
Rivka Vincius	1873-1956	Married to Johann Handelsmann in 1890, daughter of Mikhael Vincius
Johann Handelsmann	1870-1946	Married to Rivka Vincius in 1890
Avram Goldstern	1812-1888	Father of Leah Goldstern, Berlin editor

Other characters

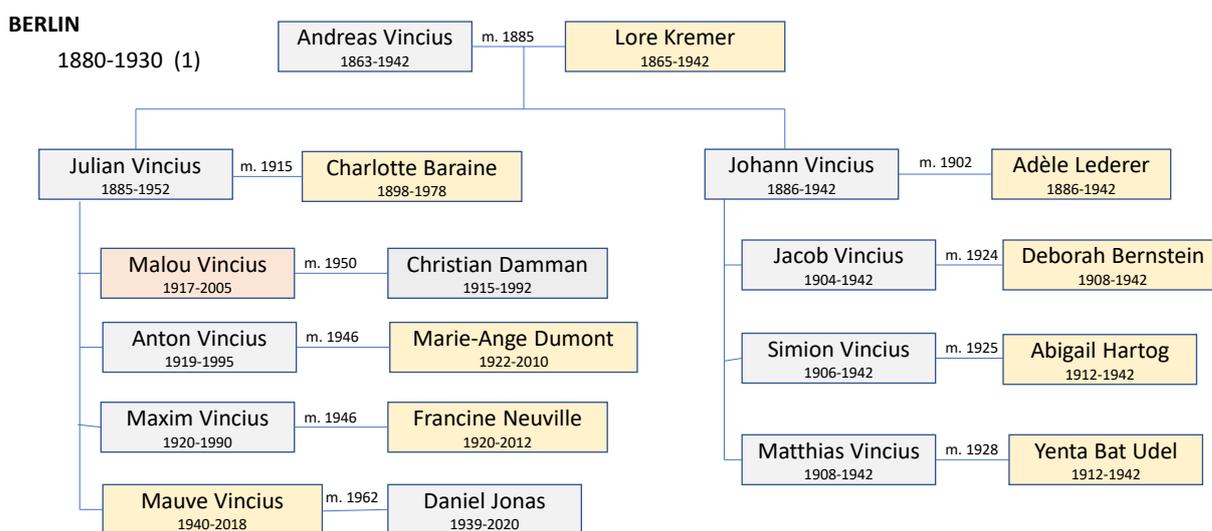
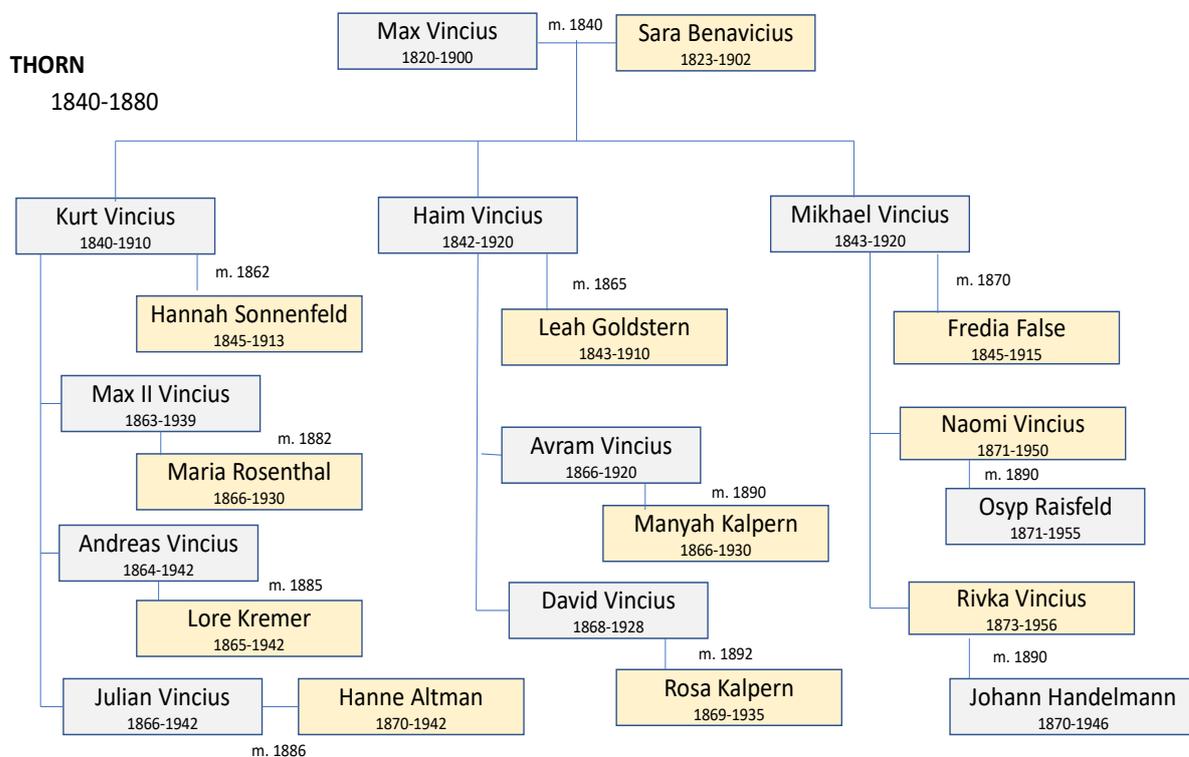
**The Kleinberger Family:**

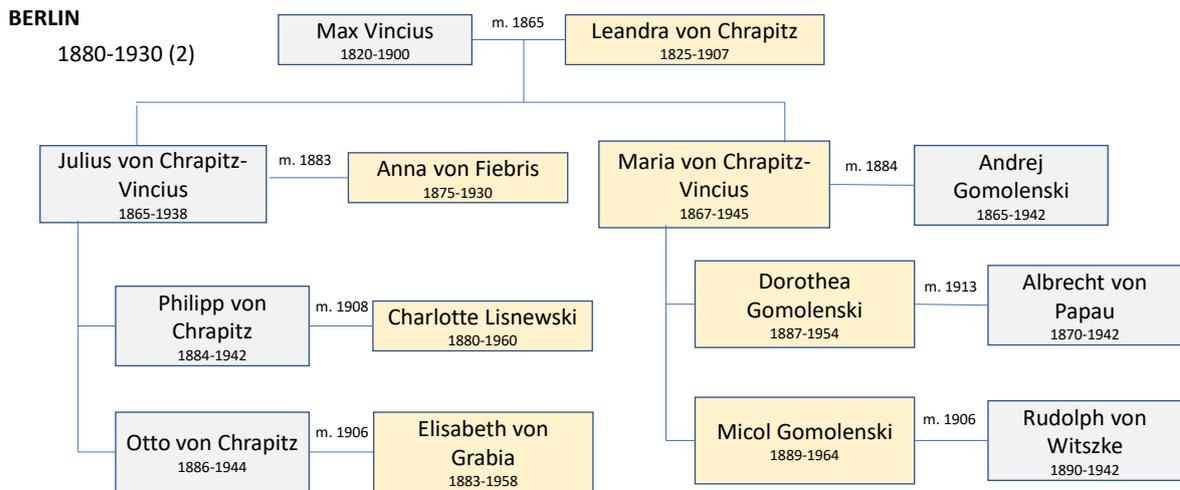
Friedrich (Fried) Kleinberger		Saxon immigrant to Thorn
Anna Kleinberger		Wife of Friedrich Kleinberger
Esther Kleinberger	1845-1917	Daughter of Fried and Anna Kleinberger, mistress of Kurt Vincius
Richard Vincius	1867-1931	Son of Esther Kleinberger and Kurt Vincius Married in 1888 to Rosa Danemann (1875-1930)
Marlene Vincius	1869-1943	Daughter of Esther Kleinberger and Kurt Vincius married 1884 to Anders Lipinski
Peter Vincius	1894-1972	Son of Richard Vincius, married 1918 to Michaela Kohle (1897-1975)
Frieda Vincius	1896-1980	Daughter of Richard Vincius, married 1920 to Otto Markusa (1894-1976)
Ernst Vincius	1897-1978	Son of Richard Vincius, married 1921 to Eva Trakei (1898-1979)
Joseph Lipinski	1887-1965	Son of Marlene Vincius, married 1912 to Regina Schmied (1889-1940)
Erich Lipinski	1889-1970	Son of Marlene Vincius, married 1918 to Bettina Danksa (1891-1960)

**The von Chrapitz Family:**

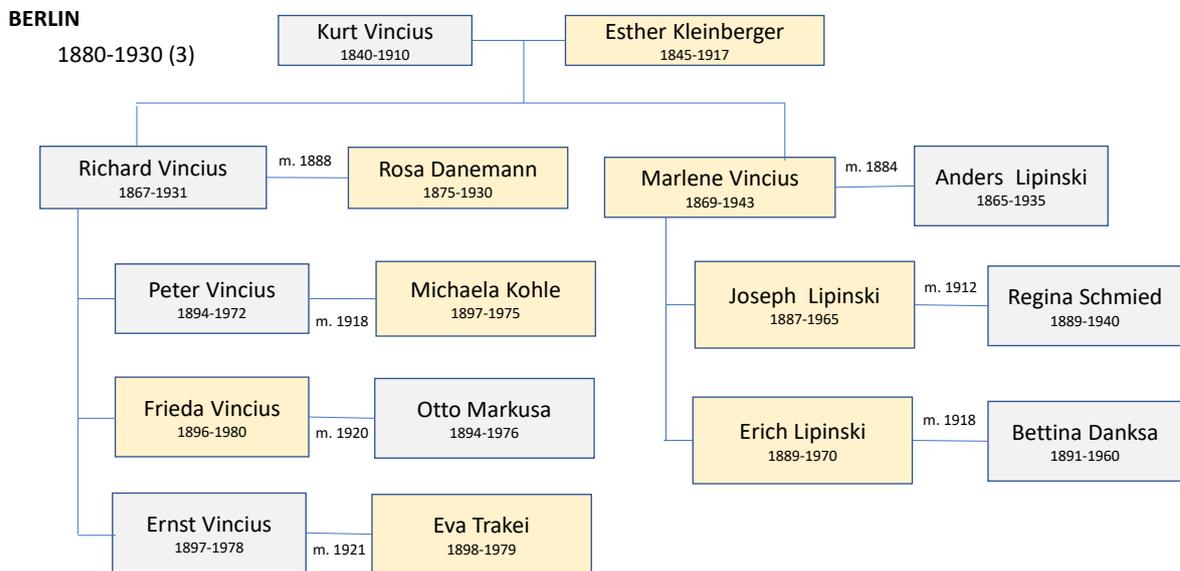
Leandra von Chrapitz	1825-1907	Second wife of Max Vincius, married in 1865
Julius von Chrapitz-Vincius	1865-1938	Son of Leandra von Chrapitz and Max Vincius, married in 1883 to Anna von Fiebris.
Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius	1867-1942	Daughter of Leandra von Chrapitz and Max Vincius, married in 1884 to Andrej von Gomolenski.
Philipp von Chrapitz	1884-1942	Son of Julius von Chrapitz-Vincius, married in 1908 to Charlotte Lisnewski (1880-1960).

Otto von Chrapitz	1886-1944	Son of Julius von Chrapitz-Vincius, married in 1906 to Elisabeth von Grabia (1883-1958).
Dorothea von Gomolenski	1887-1954	Daughter of Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius, married in 1913 to Albrecht von Papau (1870-1942).
Micol von Gomolenski	1889-1964	Daughter of Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius, married in 1906 to Rudolph von Witzke (1890-1942)





**The Family von Chrapitz**



**The Kleinberger Family**

## The Leaders of the Nations

**Russia and Poland**

Tzar Alexander II (1818-1881) R. 1855-1881 Tzar of Russia, King of Poland-Lithuania, Grand-Duke of Finland, Dynasty Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov, married 1841 to Marie of Hessen (d. 1880, Maria Alexandrovna) and in 1880 to Catherine Dolgorukova (morganatic, Princess Yurievskaya). Son of Nicholas I and Alexandra Feodorovna.

The so-called ‘Congress Kingdom of Poland’ was created at the Congress of Vienna (1815), after the demise of Napoleon Bonaparte. Kings of Poland during this period of rule and afterwards, until 1915, were the Russian tzars. The tzars appointed Governor-Generals to represent them in Poland.

Tzar Alexander III (1845-1894) R. 1881-1894. Son of Tzar Alexander II and Maria Alexandrovna of Hesse. Dynasty of Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov, married in 1866 to Maria Feodorovna (Dagmar of Denmark). Tzar of Russia, King of Poland, Grand-Duke of Finland.

Nicholas II (1868-1918) R. 1894-1917. Son of Tzar Alexander II and Maria Feodorovna. Tzar of Russia, King of Poland, Grand-Duke of Finland. Married in 1894 to Alexandra Feodorovna (Alix of Hesse). Abdicated the throne during the February Revolution. Executed by Bolsheviks.

Chairmen of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets (1917–1938):

Lev Kamenev (1883 - 1936) In office 9 Nov 1917 - 24 Nov 1917  
 Yakov Sverdlov (1885 - 1919) In office 1917 - 1919  
 Mikhail Vladimirovsky (1874 - 1951) In office 16 Mar 1919 - 30 Mar 1919  
 Mikhail Kalinin (1875 - 1946) In office 1919 - 1938  
 Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (1870 - 1924), alias Lenin. Head of the Government of Soviet Russia from 1917 to 1924 and of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1924.

**Prussia and Germany**

Emperor Wilhelm I (1797-1888) R. 1861-1888. King of Brandenburg-Prussia. Full name: Wilhelm Friedrich Ludwig von Hohenzollern. President of the North German Confederation (1867-1871) and German Emperor from 1871 on. Dynasty of Hohenzollern. Younger brother of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Married in 1829 to Princess Augusta of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach (1811-1890).

Emperor Friedrich III (1831-1888). Emperor and king for 99 days only in 1888. Married to Victoria, eldest daughter of Queen Victoria of Great

Britain. Full name Friedrich Wilhelm. Only son of Emperor Wilhelm I. Dynasty of Hohenzollern.

Emperor Wilhelm II (1859 - 1941). R. 1888 - 1918). Wilhelm II abdicated in 1918. Married in 1888 1<sup>st</sup> marriage to Princess Augusta Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg (d. 1921) and in 1922 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage to Princess Hermine Reuss of Greiz (d. 1941). Dynasty of Hohenzollern. Grandson of Wilhelm I and son of Friedrich III.

#### The Weimar Republic Presidents:

Friedrich Ebert (1871 - 1925) In office: 1919 - 1925. Member of the SPD Party (Social Democratic).

Hans Luther (1879 - 1962). In office: 28 Feb 1925 - 12 Mar 1925, for 12 days.

Walter Simons (1861 - 1937). In office: 12 Mar 1925 - 12 May 1925, for 60 days.

Paul von Hindenburg (1847 - 1934). In office: 1925 - 1934. General and Field Marshal of the German Army.

#### Chancellors of Germany:

Otto von Bismarck (1815 - 1898). In office: 1867 - 1890. Before also Minister-President of Prussia. Prince.

Leo von Caprivi (1831 - 1899). In office: 1890 - 1894. Count.

Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (1819 - 1901). In office: 1894 - 1900. Prince.

Bernhard von Bülow (1849 - 1929). In office: 1900 - 1909. Prince.

Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856 - 1921). In office: 1909 - 1917.

Georg Michaelis (1857- 1936). In office: 14 Jul 1917 - 1 Nov 1917. For 110 days.

Georg von Hertling (1843 - 1919). In office: 1 Nov 1917 - 30 Sept 1918. Count.

Max von Baden (1867 - 1929). In office: 3 Oct 1918 - 9 Nov 1918. Prince.

Friedrich Ebert (1871 - 1925). In office: 9 Nov 1918 - 13 Feb 1919. For 96 days.

Gustav Bauer (1870 - 1944). In office: 21 Jun 1919 - 26 Mar 1920. 279 days.

Hermann Müller (1876 - 1931). In office: 27 Mar 1920 - 21 Jun 1920. 86 days.

Constantin Fehrenbach (1852 - 1926). In office: 25 Jun 1920 - 4 May 1921. 313 days

Joseph Wirth (1879 - 1956). In office: 10 May 1921 - 14 Nov 1922.

Wilhelm Cuno (1876 - 1933). In office: 22 Nov 1922 - 12 Aug 1923. 263 days.

Gustav Stresemann (1878 - 1929). 13 Aug 1923 - 30 Nov 1923. 109 days.

Wilhelm Marx (1863 - 1946). 30 Nov 1923 - 15 Jan 1925.

Hans Luther (1879 - 1962). 15 Jan 1925 - 12 May 1926.

Wilhelm Marx (1863 - 1946). 17 May 1926 - 12 Jun 1928.

Hermann Müller (1876 - 1931). 28 Jun 1928 - 27 Mar 1930.

Heinrich Brüning (1885 - 1970). 30 Mar 1930 - 30 May 1932.

Franz von Papen (1879 - 1969). 1 Jun 1932 - 17 Nov 1932. 169 days.

**Austria**

- Franz-Joseph I (1830 - 1916) R. 1848 - 1916. Emperor of Austria-Hungary. Dynasty of Habsburg-Lorraine. Married in 1853 to Duchess Elizabeth of Bavaria (called 'Sissi', 1837-1898). Son of Ferdinand I.
- Karl I the Blessed (1887 - 1922) R. 1916 - 11 November 1918 (resigned). Grand-Nephew of Franz-Joseph I and great-great-grandson of Franz I.

**France**

- Emperor Louis Napoleon III (1808 - 1873) R. 1848 - 1870. President of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, Emperor of the French as of 1852. House of Bonaparte. Married 1853 to Eugénie de Montijo, Marchioness of Ardales (d. 1920).

Presidents of France after the Second Empire:

- Adolphe Thiers (1797 - 1877). In office 1871 - 1873.
- Patrice de MacMahon (1808 - 1893). In office: 1873 - 1879
- Jules Grévy (1807 - 1891). In office: 1879 - 1887.
- Sadi Carnot (1837 - 1894). In office: 1887 - 1894.
- Jean Casimir-Perier (1847 - 1907). In office: 1894 - 1895.
- Félix Faure (1841 - 1899). In office: 1895 - 1899.
- Émile Loubet (1838 - 1929). In office: 1899 - 1906.
- Armand Fallières (1841 - 1931). In office: 1906 - 1913.
- Raymond Poincaré (1860 - 1934). In office: 1913 - 1920.
- Paul Deschanel (1855 - 1922). In office: 18 Feb 1920 - 21 Sept 1920.
- Alexandre Millerand (1859 - 1943). In office: 1920 - 1924.
- Gaston Doumergue (1863 - 1937). In office: 1924 - 1931.
- Paul Doumer (1857 - 1932). In office: 1931- 1932

**Great Britain**

- Queen Victoria (1819 - 1901) R. 1837 - 1901. Married 1840 to Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Granddaughter of George III.
- Edward VII (1841 - 1910) R. 1901 - 1910. Married in 1863 to Princess Alexandra of Denmark.
- George V (1865 - 1936) R. 1910 - 1936. Married in 1893 to Princess Mary of Teck.

Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom:

Benjamin Disraeli	(1804 - 1881). In office: 27 Feb 1868 - 1 Dec 1868. 279 days.
William Ewart Gladstone	(1809 - 1898). In office: 1868 - 1874.
Benjamin Disraeli	(1804 - 1881). In office: 1874 - 1880.
William Ewart Gladstone	(1809 - 1898). In office: 1880 - 1885.
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil	(1830 - 1903). In office: 1885 - 1886. 220 days.
William Ewart Gladstone	(1809 - 1898). In office: 1 Feb 1886 - 20 Jul 1886. 170 days.
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil	(1830 - 1903). In office: 1886 - 1892.
William Ewart Gladstone	(1809 - 1898). In office: 1892 - 1894.
Archibald Primrose	(1847 - 1929). In office: 1894 - 1895.
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil	(1830 - 1903). In office: 1895 – 1902.
Arthur Balfour	(1848 - 1930). In office: 1902 - 1905
Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman	(1836 - 1908). In office: 1905 - 1908.
H. H. Asquith	(1852 - 1928). In office: 1908 - 1916
David Lloyd George	(1863 - 1945). In office: 1916 - 1922.
Bonar Law	(1858 - 1923). In office: 1922 - 1923. 210 days.
Stanley Baldwin	(1867 - 1947). In office: 1923 - 1924. 246 days.
Ramsay MacDonald	(1866 - 1937). In office: 22 Jan 1924 - 4 Nov 1924. 288 days.
Stanley Baldwin	(1867 - 1947). In office: 1924 - 1929.
Ramsay MacDonald	(1866 - 1937). In office: 1929 - 1935.

**The main figures of 1914**

Austria-Hungary: Emperor Franz-Joseph I of Habsburg

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Count Leopold Berchtold von und zu Ungarschitz,  
Fröttling und Püllütz

Chief of the General Staff: Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf

Germany: Emperor Wilhelm II von Hohenzollern

Chancellor: Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Gottlieb von Jagow

Chief of the General Staff: General Helmut von Moltke the Younger

Minister of War: General Erich von Falkenhayn

Great Britain: King George V

Prime Minister: Herbert Henry Asquith, Earl of Oxford and Asquith

Lord Chancellor: Richard Burdon Haldane

Foreign Secretary: Sir Edward Grey

Secretary of War: Field Marshal Earl Horatio Herbert Kitchener

First Lord of the Admiralty: Winston Churchill

France: President Raymond Poincaré

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs: René Viviani

Minister of War: Adolphe Messimy

Commander in Chief Western Forces: Marshal Joseph Joffre

French Ambassador in St Petersburg: Maurice Paléologue

Russia: Tzar Nicholas II Romanov

Chairman of the Council of Ministers: Ivan Logginovich Goremykin

Minister of War: Vladimir Alexandrovich Sukhomlinov

Chief of the General Staff: General Mikhail Alekseyevich Belyaev

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Sergei Dmitryevich Sazonov

Belgium: King Albert I of Saxony-Coburg

Head of the Government: Charles de Broqueville

## Part I. The years 1880 to 1914. La Belle Époque.

### The Family Vincius

In those years, the many members of the Family Vincius had dispersed over vast territories. The recognised patriarch was now Max Vincius, living in the West-Prussian city of Thorn, called Torún in Polish. Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the district of Thorn formed part of the kingdom of Prussia, and from 1871 on, from the Empire of Germany. In 1880, Max was 60 years old, quite grey of hair. Slim and very dignified, he was still strong in body and swift of mind. His determination to do what was right for his family had remained unwavering.

The Vincius Family was Jewish of origins. Max had first married a Jewish woman, Sara Benavicius of Vilna in Lithuania, and then an Evangelic aristocratic Prussian lady called Leandra von Chrapitz. The von Chrapitz domains in Prussia, consisting of forests, fertile grain fields and large pastures, were vast. Max had converted to the Prussian Evangelic faith to marry Leandra. Leandra owned her wealth of yore in West Prussia, near the city of Thorn.

Thorn was also where Max Vincius and his children had lived most of their life. It was the town he loved best, almost obsessively. Max had three sons by Sara Benavicius, called Kurt, Haim and Mikhael. These were the original Vincius sons. With Leandra von Chrapitz, Max had two children, Julius and Maria, who received the name of von Chrapitz-Vincius by special, official agreement with the Prussian authorities.

Kurt Vincius, the oldest of the Vincius sons, 40 years old in 1880, was a trader like his father. He was a devout Jew, and so was his wife, Hannah Sonnenfeld. Kurt's family lived in the same street as his father, in the *Breite Strasse* of Thorn. Kurt was dutifully married. His true love since many years, however, was Esther Kleinberger, a Christian woman. Kurt lived as well with his legal wife Hannah, as with Esther.

He had three sons by Hannah Sonnenfeld, and a son and a daughter by Esther. Kurt had legally recognised his two children by Esther Kleinberger, so Hannah must have known of their existence. She chose to keep her silence. Richard and Marlene, the Kleinberger children, also wore the name of Vincius. The Prussian authorities seemed to have forgiven Kurt for his adultery and have forgotten the affair. Forgiveness cost Kurt a fortune, but he was never short of funds! Kurt was a very successful trader, probably even a better trader than his father had been. He was well-known and appreciated in Thorn.

The second Vincius son by Max, Haim, 38 years old and equally Jewish, had been a soldier. He had even been promoted to the honorary degree of general in the Prussian Army. Haim had been a true hero in the last wars of Prussia with Denmark, Austria and France, and he had nurtured connections with the German Imperial court. He had married an editor's daughter, the equally Jewish Leah Goldstern, a Berlin lady. Together with his wife, Haim currently headed a successful editing company in Berlin. Leah actually owned the company, after her father, the founder of the respected firm, had retired and turned the business over to his beloved and only girl. Avram Goldstern and Haim Vincius agreed with each other and

enjoyed each other's company. Haim and his family lived quite happily in the *Landgrafenstrasse* of Berlin. Their editing company flourished and expanded.

Mikhael Vincius, 37 years old and the youngest son of Max Vincius and Sara Benavicius, proved to be a true exception in the Vincius Family. He had married a Bremen girl, and later emigrated with her to Denmark. His family now lived in the Danish city of Aarhus. Mikhael was an enterprising man. He knew all about brewing and distilling alcohol. With Fredia False, his wife, he had built a quite successful business in brewing beer and in distilling *Akvavit*, a well-known white brandy in Denmark.

Kurt, Haim and Mikhael had families of their own. Kurt and Haim conceived boys only, Mikhael had two daughters. Mikhael's daughters were called Naomi and Rivka. The rest of the Vincius Family saw the girls seldom, usually only at exceptional family reunions in Thorn. The girls remained in a branch of the Vincius Family that lived too far from Thorn to have tight and warm relations with the rest of the Vincius of that fine city. The same actually happened with Haim's two sons, Avram and David. These lived in Berlin and did not really fit in with the Vincius of Thorn. Naomi and Rivka, Avram and David, were looked at as of a different breed by the Vincius of Thorn. They were boys and girls of the grand capital of Germany and of far-off Denmark. They wore the airs of arrogance on their faces and in their ways of moving and talking, which the true Vincius of Thorn sneered at, though always in silence.

The core of the Vincius Family of Thorn was thus constituted merely of the children of Kurt Vincius, the boys Max the Younger, Andreas and Julian. Added to these could be counted the 'Kleinberger' children and the 'Chrapitz' children, who were not quite considered of the main and true branch.

Max the Younger, Andreas and Julian were 17, 16 and 14 years old in 1880. They remained practising Jews. With time, they married fine authentic Jewish girls from Thorn. Max married a Rosenthal girl, Andreas a Kremer, and Julian got married to an Altman daughter. The three sons of Kurt Vincius were traders. They had all three been able to buy and modify fine houses in the *Breite Strasse* of Thorn. Max the Younger was the true pride of the family. He became a very rich man, though not a very educated person in the classical and Jewish sense. He was smart, cunning and energetic in business.

The most intelligent Vincius son of Kurt might have been Andreas, who was still studying at the Thorn German Gymnasium in 1880. In due time, he would become very educated. He finished his German Gymnasium with the highest rewards, and promised to turn into a famous scholar. But Andreas soon sank in the darkest of melancholic moods, which demolished his energy and drive to seek riches. He was not a joyful and warm-hearted father to his sons, Julian the Younger and Johann. Andreas did not much care about his sons, one should add. Andreas might have been much affected by the kind of life his father led, torn between two women, yet loving and appreciating both. He evolved to become a very torn man, who could not really cope with his internal conflicts.

Luckily, Andreas's wife, Lore Kremer, was a very intelligent and industrious woman. She had to act as the head of her family. She took up the challenge as if it was the most natural development of matters, for her children's sake. She wondered often in which world Andreas lived. Maybe in some fantastic environment of his own, private, unique imagination?

Andreas travelled a lot, and neglected his business in Thorn. The Traders' Association of the

city, therefore, saw more of Andreas's wife than of the man himself. They allowed her in their midst. She was the only woman to have won the right to talk in the traders' meetings. The fortune of the family of Andreas grew slowly, and then only and entirely due to the initiatives of Lore Kremer.

The third son of Kurt Vincius, Julian Vincius, was a quiet man and yet a fine trader. He lacked the imagination and the daring and drive to be an extremely successful man. He made up for his weakness by entering only the simplest trading initiatives, in the usual, consistent ways of dealings of his father. His fortune, received for the largest part from his father, augmented slowly, as his brother Andreas's. His wife and children never lacked in anything. He could live quite well and happily. His life slipped past him totally uneventfully. Yet, he remained a respected trader of Thorn. Hanne Altman was devoted to him and to her children. She too had no brilliant mind, and adored her husband. She did not allow herself to outgrow and outsmart her husband. She adored him too much for that. She was docile, warm-hearted, plump, and a fine mother.

Of the two children of Andreas Vincius, two boys, one was dull and one was brilliant, a prodigious child. The youngest, Johann, born in 1886, was still small in 1890. He learnt to speak Yiddish late. He spoke little, but he thrived on rich food. He was a fat child who resembled his mother in face and body. He seemed content with food only. He proved interested in little else! He was not stupid, just slow. Andreas and Lore didn't think they could ever make a trader out of him. They considered setting him up in a shop.

The other child, Julian, learnt quickly. Nobody really addressed him, except his mother. He picked up words and expressions when they came. He seemed to catch the meaning, and filled his memory with the concepts and with the words associated. He was fast in that, and his memory was huge. He not only uttered his Yiddish words clearly and correctly, but started forming phrases early on. His explanations, mostly addressed only to himself, quickly became elaborate and his phrases sounded grammatically correct and harmonious of tone. He spoke in poems, some people said, astonished. He picked up German as well as Polish words for the same concepts and objects. Soon, he surprised his parents by talking with the same ease, haltingly at first, though quite understandably, to their Polish and German speaking visitors. Julian the Younger was 5 years old in 1890, a child eager to learn everything. His great-grandfather remarked the swiftness of mind of this Julian the Younger. He got interested in the child more than in his other offspring. He was astounded by what he regarded soon as a child of prodigious intelligence. It seemed as if all the fine qualities of the Vincius had come together in this boy.

Still other members in the Vincius Family of Thorn were born in side branches of the family tree. To begin with, Max Vincius had married in second marriage a Prussian noble Lady Leandra von Chrapitz. Leandra was an authentic Prussian noblewoman of an old Teutonic lineage. Her family name was well-known all over Prussia. The two children called Julius and Maria had been raised in the Prussian Evangelic Faith, in which Lutheran thoughts dominated. They would be educated in the all-German schools of the town, and by private teachers. The other Vincius children had few contacts with them. They rarely all came together to play in the vast rooms of Castle Chrapitz.

Julius had been bred and educated to become a traditional great landowner, taught in the management of domains by his father and mother. He married well, and was happy in his marriage.

The girl, Maria, handsome and fine as no other girl of Thorn, married a Prussian nobleman of Polish descent. The von Chrapitz-Vincius stuck together. Brother and sister liked each other. Slowly, though inexorably, the rift between men and women of different religions and upbringing widened. The von Chrapitz children grew up and with time got well aware of the difference in status between themselves and the Jewish branch of their family. They did not particularly seek out the members of that branch.

The 'Kleinberger' children, also bearing the name of Vincius, Richard and Marlene, were the grocers' Vincius children of Thorn. They had been called so in the family, because their mother managed one of the largest shops in town. They also vowed to the Prussian Christian Evangelic faith. Marlene grew up to a rare beauty. She soon married a trader's son, whose family originated from Königsberg, the capital of the original Prussian homeland. Her husband was a very prosperous man. He deeply loved his wife and the children by her. He was a good father and a fine husband. Marlene almost never returned to Thorn after her marriage, and then she only saw her mother, Esther, for short, heart-breaking moments. Marlene's brother Richard stayed on in Thorn and, with time, took over the business of his mother. In essence, he was born in a shop and raised as a shopkeeper. He remained that way. Nevertheless, he had inherited some of the ambitious character of his father, like his grandfather Max also had shown. With Max's help, he developed and owned several large shops in other towns of Prussia. He was the quintessential businessman, who diversified with time, invested in factories, in railway lines even, and in the shipping industry around the Baltic Sea. He always stayed working out of Thorn, equally living in the *Breite Strasse* and raising his family in his hometown.

The Vincius Family of Thorn thus resembled more and more a large, wide and strong tree, with many branches and luxuriously green foliage, which extended its canopy higher and higher and ever wider. One could distinguish separate groupings of branches in the tree, but all groups nourished from the same roots. These roots extended from Max Vincius, whose father, Asa, had moved from Vilna to Thorn. Almost independent groups of branches, members of the family, now lived in Lithuania of Russia and in Denmark, as well as in other cities such as Vilna still, Berlin, Danzig and Königsberg.

This is the story of a Vincius branch from which would ultimately sprout the continuation of the Vincius Family in Western Europe. It was the branch that began with Max Vincius and then divided into the Kurt branch, the Andreas branch to Julian the Younger.

This Julian, luckily, was one of the very smartest boys of the Vincius Family ever. He was born a Jew, and in him had grown and buoyed the intelligence and creative spirit that had grown by centuries of careful Jewish religious education and schooling. He had inherited the Jewish experience in skills that demanded much intelligence and training. His father and grandfather, and even for a while his great-grandfather, developed his cunning in trade and finances. They laid in him their knowledge of the world, of dealings in commerce, their wisdom and logical reasoning. He was a person of very rational thinking, who remained cautious in everything he undertook.

For many generations, the Vincius men had received at least a dozen years of schooling - and sometimes more - and the finest, Jewish upbringing. No one like they could think about all the aspects of a deal, and reason to make sure the deals would bring in money or remain profitable always. Young Julian seemed to be the exponent, the hope of the family. In him, all the knowledge and experience of the Vincius forefathers seemed to converge. Ultimately, he would not disappoint his great-grandfather Max Vincius, survive where many others didn't, and lead the Vincius family to safety after the most atrocious armed conflicts of centuries.

## German Politics. Otto von Bismarck. 1870-1890

The Vincius Family headed by Max Vincius in that period, lived and thrived in Thorn, a former Polish town and district. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian Empire had handed over Thorn to the Prussian Kingdom. Since 1771, the city was thus part of the German Empire. Then, the Prussian and German influence had shaped the region, though the largest part of the population still spoke Polish. In 1871, the king of Prussia had been crowned in France, in the Royal Palace of Versailles near Paris, to emperor of the unified Germany. King Wilhelm I had ascended the imperial throne with the consent of all the Lands of Germany. Once, these had been over forty independent countries speaking the German language, but each Land having a different sovereign. Germany developed into a unified confederation, under an emperor as the head of state. Berlin had become the capital of the nation. The political and military power of Germany resided in the emperor.

Under the emperor served two men who managed the country and its army. These men were, in the political domain the *Reichskanzler*, the Chancellor Prince Otto von Bismarck, and in the military domain the Field Marshal Count Helmut von Moltke, the Chief of the General Staff. These men were also still in the same function for Prussia. Thus, Otto von Bismarck was equally the Minister-President of Prussia. The parliament of Germany was the *Reichstag*, the one for Prussia was still the old, royal *Landtag*. The *Reichstag* then only held the representatives of the Lands, sent by the sovereigns. It was not directly chosen by the people.

The *Reich* consisted of the larger Lands of Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden. Smaller Lands were Mecklenburg, Oldenburg, Sachsen with its several smaller yet also independent territories bearing almost the same name, but ruled by different sovereigns. Furthermore, Germany was made up of Braunschweig, Hessen, the Pfalz, and the recently conquered Alsace -Lorraine, conquered from France. Among the further, much smaller Lands were the three independent, free cities of Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen, and then also Reuss, Lippe, Waldeck, and Schwarzburg.

In our years of interest, from 1870 to 1890, and even to the very turn of the century, the German Empire developed into an economic and military European superpower. Its industrial production grew to larger than the production of its European rivals combined. In the sciences, including the medical sciences, in electrical engineering, in metallurgy, mining, in industrial chemistry and in technology overall, Germany grew to the most advanced and larger producer than any other country in the world.

The members of the Vincius Family navigated on those waves of prosperity, even though they lived in one of the farthest corners of the empire. Be they traders, editors, distillers, soldiers or shopkeepers, their fortunes grew. They enjoyed fine head-starts, of course, for they received ample funds from their forefathers. Still, each Vincius man added to the money he received. They fructified their starting capital, married in some wealth, and multiplied their capital to the proper needs of their own branch in the larger family.

The German *Reich* could also show the most powerful, better educated, better trained and better organised army than any of the other nations on earth. By 1914, it had constructed and put to sea the second largest navy after Great Britain. This last country had become a colonial empire by its extensive domination over many territories in the other continents, foremost in

Asia and Africa, most notably with India. Great Britain was an island empire, with a mentality of islanders, its power centred in its fast-growing capital, London. Great Britain nurtured the traditional distrust of everything non-British, of everything continental in Europe. Great Britain would never evolve to a friendly ally to Germany.

In the same way, defeated France, which had to abandon the wealthy Alsace and Lorraine regions to Germany after the disastrous war with its enemy of 1870-1871, would never ally with Germany. The foreign policy of France was based on seeking revenge, on getting back its lost territories. The German chancellor therefore turned to the powers of the East and to its natural ally of the South. The latter power was the Austrian Habsburg Empire, with its dazzling capital Vienna. At the ruling court of Austria, also the German language was spoken, though next to French. The Austrian-Prussian War of 1866-1867 had merely determined the Prussian domination over Germany, rather than the hegemony of the Habsburg emperors of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire over the global, German-speaking Lands of Germany. It was the largest, dramatic failure of the Habsburg Dynasty not to have achieved dominance over all the German-speaking territories. The Habsburgs of Vienna had lost their competition with the Hohenzollern ruling in Berlin.

Emperor Wilhelm I and his Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had sought the basic defence of Germany in the consolidation and union of the conservative powers of middle and eastern Europe. This movement had been officialised in the *League of the Three Emperors*, of the czar of Russia, the Habsburg emperor of Austria-Hungary, and the new Hohenzollern emperor of Germany. The league was also directed against new revolutions fomented by the leftist Liberals, as well as by the democratic and Socialist political parties.

The Vincius Family kept itself far from any passionate engagement in political parties. They preferred to conserve what they had. They knew very well it was far better to make friends than enemies. The frontier region they lived in, was still in need of consolidation and protection. Hence the important garrison of Prussian soldiers in Thorn, which had attracted at least one Vincius son, Haim, into the military service. He did as brilliantly as his brothers in trade.

The Vincius voted to the right, to the more modern-thinking and moderate Liberal parties. They usually voted for the *Reichspartei*, the party to which also their hero, Otto von Bismarck, voted. The von Chrapitz children might have voted for the Conservative Parties, the *Junker* parties. Yet, all of them had a heart. They showed sympathies for the demands of the poor and gave charity to the poorest. They offered much money to the charitable institutions of their Churches, and also helped the needing people privately.

The sovereignty in the Empire did not originate in the people. The German *Reich* was no democracy. The sovereignty was still held by the Lands now, around 20 plus of them, though already condensed from over forty a few decades earlier.

The dominance of the largest Land, Prussia, was preponderant. Prussia had fought the Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs over this dominance over Germany. It had won. More than half of the population of Germany lived in what was by then greater Prussia. Prussia occupied about two thirds of the territory of Germany.

The German Emperor was the head of the German Confederation. The political management was held by the Chancellor, *der Reichskanzler*, who was responsible only to the emperor, not to the *Reichstag*, the new Parliament.

The *Reichstag* existed to help defining the laws. It exerted few additional powers. Justice in the countries still lay with the courts in the various states, according to the laws and customs of the individual Lands, though a *Reich* Constitution existed.

Parliament could not control, nor limit the powers of the Chancellor. The emperor also led the German Army. He was the Head of the State.

The education of the children of the *Reich* happened in the German language, and the *Reich* schools were excellent. This was equally the case in the regions where Polish was spoken, such as of 1873 in Posen, and from 1878 on also in the former Danish territories of Schleswig-Holstein. From 1876 on, German was the only allowed business language in the Archduchy of Posen. The German Penal Law dated from 1872, the Civil Law from 1900, the same laws for the entire *Reich*.

Parties in the *Reichstag* were the National Liberals, then the largest group, the Left Liberals, the Conservatives, and the *Reichspartei*, which supported Prince Otto von Bismarck, the Chancellor. This last party was also rather conservative. Then, there was the Catholic Centre, fuelled mostly by votes from Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. Another, growing party, were the Social Democrats, formed out of the ‘General German Workers’ Association’ and the ‘Social Democratic Workers’ Party.

In 1871, Bismarck pushed through the *Reichstag* a Military Law, which would keep the German Army in times of peace at 402,000 men. The budget for this army was modified by law only every 7 years. The right to determine the budget by voting in the *Reichstag* was thus granted only to every second parliament. This system was called the *Septenat*. Much of Bismarck’s opposition in the *Reichstag* resulted from these laws. But Bismarck was no man to want to change them!

From 1870 to 1895, politics in Germany could be distinguished more or less in three distinct periods.

During the first, the Liberal Era, Chancellor Bismarck broke with his conservative allies, with the conservative political parties. He also broke with the Catholic centre, to liberate the state from the influence and interference of the Popes of Rome. This struggle came to be called the *Kulturkampf*, the battle for dominance of the state in the culture of the country.

The second period began in 1873, with the Great Depression of the German economy. The depression hit Germany hard. It gradually worsened, calling to life and to growing power in Parliament of the Socialist, left Liberal movements. These threatened to become the most important forces undermining the absolutist, monarchist organisation that Otto von Bismarck defended with increasing political ruthlessness.

In 1876, the *Vereinigung der Steuer- und Wirtschaftsreformer* agitated for the introduction of custom duties at the *Reich*’s borders and for the end of free trade. This was a reaction to end the economic downslide of Germany from after 1873, which had been accompanied by crashes on the stock exchanges. As from 1895, the economic situation evolved into times of high conjuncture in economy and finance. Expansion of the industry in Germany led to new heights of German welfare.

The Vincius men too should have been hit hard by the Great Depression in Germany. Actually, they didn’t! They could always buy something at low prices, selling it at higher

prices somewhere else. They learned to profit from the situation in a frontier town, buying for instance low in Poland and selling high in Eastern Prussia, or vice-versa. They did not particularly profit much from the Great Depression, but they also never suffered dearly. The trading and selling in shops slowed down, but the Vincius never lost money. When the depression slackened, they came forward with funds, and risked in new ventures that brought in vast amounts of foreign money. They had learned the dynamics of commerce to perfection, and applied themselves to profit from the cycles in prices of products and services. The downturn was an issue, they told, only to be mastered and brought to good use. In that, to everyone's astonishment, they excelled.

During the third period, the chancellor undercut the Socialist and Communist tendencies in the country by introducing general welfare laws and social security for the workers. To realise his aims, he had to break also with the dominant Liberal forces in the *Reichstag*, a particularly tricky move. He had to make peace with the Roman Catholic Church, and with the Catholic Centre party of Germany. This period lasted from about 1878 to 1891, to the moment when new emperors had been crowned and to when Bismarck's power had started to wane.

In 1878, Bismarck proposed laws against the Social Democrats. All Socialist and Communist associations were forbidden, their press forbidden, demonstrations forbidden. Agitators were banned from the *Reich*. These laws remained in function until 1890. As a counter-weight, the Chancellor Bismarck introduced a comprehensive system of social security for the workers of Germany. These laws organised the sickness insurance, and the insurance of care of the invalids. They introduced a pension system for the elderly, and an insurance system for orphans. By such measures, Bismarck drew away the workers from their own radical political organisations.

The Vincius Family had little sympathy for Socialist or Communist politicians. They applauded Bismarck's later social security laws. They understood that these laws and provisions were the only means able to avoid revolutions and violent uprisings in the Lands. They cared for the people who worked for them. Ultimately, they called several such men their partners, and led these men too, to the status of well-to-do Prussian citizens. They would not have hesitated to have their daughters and sons marry into such families. They looked to the quality of the minds of the families, rather than to their initial fortune.

Germany had been constructed from the *North-German Bund*, totally dominated by Prussia, mostly of the Protestant Lutheran and Evangelic Christian religions. The southern Lands that joined the confederation and later Empire of Germany, were also mostly of the Protestant Christian Faith, but with large Catholic minorities. Some of the largest southern states, such as Bavaria, were even predominantly Catholic! The German Empire then consisted of about 62% protestants and 36.5% Catholics. Catholics could be found in the majority in Bavaria, Baden, Alsace and Lorraine, in West Prussia, in Posen, in the Rhineland, Westphalia and in Upper Silesia. These formed a power of their own, though not one of wanting to disunite Germany.

The mainly Jewish Vincius preferred the Prussian Evangelic Church over the Catholics. Yet, they considered the Catholics somewhat as their allies, as also the Catholics were a minority religion in the *Reich*. Laws directed against the Catholic Church, would probably also mean issues for Judaism! Prussia, a country dominated mostly by men who were sons of the

Enlightenment, would never attack politically only one particular religion. Thus, the Vincius men who were Jews, felt safe and protected, even when in the 1880's anti-Semitism lifted its ugly head also in Germany. They were convinced their State of Germany was tolerant and would remain so to all religions.

At the first imperial *Reichstag* elections of 1871, the traditional National Liberal Party gained 100 seats, and all liberal groups together over 200! The old *Kreuzzeitung* Conservative party, so called after their official newspaper, together with the German *Reich* Party to which vowed Otto von Bismarck, won only 37 seats. The Catholic Centre Party got 63 seats. This party grew to over 90 representatives in 1874.

## The Kulturkampf

In July of 1870, the dogma of the infallibility of the Popes was promulgated in the Vatican of Rome.

Ironically, within a few weeks of the publication of the dogma, the Italian Kingdom seized Rome. It eliminated the last vestiges of the Papal States, and forced the Popes into the fortress of the Vatican. This happened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September of 1870.

In May of 1871, the Pope issued the encyclical *Ubi Nos* on the pontifical states, rejecting all relations with the apparently godless Italian State. The Liberal Italian State proclaimed free speech for all citizens, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, separation of Church and State, secular education, and civil marriage and civil divorce. During the 1870s, countries such as Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Austria also defended these values against the influence of the Roman Catholic political parties.

In Germany, in April of 1871, the *Reichstag* rejected a proposal of the Centre (Catholic) Party to copy in the new Constitution of the German Empire six prominent articles of the Prussian Constitution. These articles were about the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of religious belief, the freedom of science, and as last and most controversial, the autonomy of the religious institutions in the state. The majority Liberal parties thereby abandoned some of their Liberal principles to their outspoken anti-Catholicism!

The Vincius, and certainly among them Max, Kurt and Andreas, applauded the dogma of the infallibility of the Popes, even though they did not particularly or openly sympathise with many aspects of the Catholic Church.

The infallibility dogma solved for the Catholics the issue of the interpretation of the Holy Writings of the Catholic Church, the New Testament. When you started to interpret divine texts, you knew where you started – at the texts themselves -, but you didn't know where to stop.

In Judaism, the issue of interpretation had been solved – though never entirely – by the reflections of the Talmud. In the Talmud, written throughout the centuries, you could find how far to interpret the Holy Texts, and especially the laws of the Torah. There did not exist any official Jewish other authority to decide on interpretations. And then, the Talmud was never finished!

In Catholicism, reigned by western rationalism, one could now only interpret the New Testament as far as the Pope allowed, and the Pope was henceforth infallible. His word could not be contested. What a wonderful, radical, and also humanist solution! The Pope could eliminate the worst diversions of religious fundamentalist zealots. At least, as far as the Popes were not ambitious religious zealots themselves, which they really never were once they stepped into office.

The then Chancellor Bismarck rather considered the Catholic Party as a subversive rabble, the power of which had to be broken. No religious party, or no religious power, could influence or dictate the laws of the state. Bismarck introduced a preventive, political, interior German war to defend the rights of the nation and the power of its parliament over the dominance of the religious institutions on the souls of the people. This war has later been called the *Kulturkampf*, the war over culture. The term *Kulturkampf* was first used by the

deputy of the *Reichstag*, *Rudolf Virchow*. He told he had the conviction a great cultural struggle was on between the German Government and the Catholic Church. At about the same time, similar strifes racked France, Switzerland, Belgium, and other countries. Bismarck had addressed a true concern of the modern state.

Bismarck launched a series of aggressive reactions directed against the Catholic Centre Party. He nevertheless kept a cautious and moderate stance in dealing with the Vatican. He tried to insert wedges between the common people, the faithful, and the German Catholic political Party, the Centre Party.

Bismarck's aims with the *Kulturkampf* remained all by all very concrete and practical. The conflict went to decide over who, the State or the Religious Institutions, which were plentiful, would decide over the sorts of schools in Germany, over the kind of hospitals (the hospitals of state-educated doctors and nurses versus the hospitals of the convent nuns), over who would organise the poor relief. It also concerned the legality for the State of the religious marriage ceremonies and marriage certificates, and over the provisions for the divorces. The State allowed divorces, not so the Catholic Church! The Culture War would also have to decide over the charitable status of the churches and monasteries.

In January of 1872, more practically, Bismarck appointed the Protestant, Liberal lawyer Adalbert Falk as his Minister of the Cults. Falk believed in the same fundamental values for the secular State, as Otto von Bismarck. Not long after his appointment, Falk issued an amendment to the penal code of Germany. It was henceforth an offence, punishable by up to two years of imprisonment, for clergymen to proclaim political statements from the pulpits, especially the statements which might endanger the peace in the empire. Falk and Bismarck thereby condemned the Catholic priests to silence over the organisation of the secular State. The priests were also to keep silence over further laws restricting the power of the Church. This law, once voted, would last in Germany until 1935.

The Vincius generally agreed with the laws of Falk and Bismarck. They owed safety and peace in trade to Prussia and to Germany. They did not like the prospect of having the Catholic Church to provide for the education of their children, nor the priests telling the state, and the members of the *Reichstag*, on how to decide on religious matters. They understood how important the Catholic religion might seem for Bavarians and for Württembergers, but Poland surrounded Thorn, and the pressure of the Catholic bishoprics on the Polish-speaking people could still be felt in the district of Thorn. The Vincius were in favour of having the state occupy itself with the welfare of the citizens, and the religious institutions relieve the souls of the people. The churches could take care for the spiritual, private beliefs of the people, not of public life. The Vincius quoted from the New Testament: give onto God what belongs to God, and onto the emperor what belonged to the State! The enlightened State had brought them peace; society divided by religions had mostly brought them distress.

In the Prussian *Landtag*, a new law was voted, the School Supervisory Law, requiring state supervision instead of clerical control in all public and private institutes of instruction. This law seemed directly directed against the purist Liberal leader Eduard Lasker, and against the leader of the Catholic Centre Party, Ludwig Windthorst.

Windthorst was the most notable opponent to Bismarck in the *Kulturkampf*. He championed the rights of minorities all through his life. Eventually, he defeated Bismarck, but Bismarck could negotiate directly with a new Pope Leo XIII, undercutting Windthorst. Ludwig

Windthorst had been a Minister of the Land of Hannover. From 1874 on, he was recognised as the leader of the Centre Party. After the annexation of Hannover by Prussia, he was a member of the Prussian *Landtag*, accepting the annexation.

Eventually, in 1879, he reconciled with Bismarck. The two men held each other in high esteem. Later still, Bismarck even allied with the Centre Part against the Liberals! Windthorst died in 1891 in Berlin. Emperor Wilhelm II paid him a visit, two days before he died. It was the sign Evangelic Prussia had definitively reconciled with the Catholic South of Germany. Windthorst was buried in the *Marienkirche*, the church of Our Lady, of Hannover. Windthorst had been of a noble, integer character. During the anti-Semitic wave in Germany at this end of the century, he stood up for the Jews and expelled anti-Semites from the Centre Party.

Eduard Lasker was altogether of a very different breed! He was the leader of the leftist wing of the National Liberal Party of Germany. He was born in the Archduchy of Posen, the son of a Jewish tradesman. From 1865 on, he too had been a member of the Prussian *Landtag*, and later he sat in the German *Reichstag*. In a speech of 1873, he exposed the financial mismanagement of the Pomeranian railways, so that a man called Hermann Wagener, one of Bismarck's most trusted assistants, had to resign from his functions. When one acted against Bismarck, one made of him an enemy for life! Lasker remained a detested enemy of Bismarck, refusing the chancellor's economic and financial policies after 1878. Bismarck generally and bitterly attacked Lasker in his speeches. Lasker, of course, argued against the absolutist monarchy, which Bismarck defended.

Eduard Lasker was an idealist, an optimist, and a fervent defender of freedom of the citizens. He lost his seat in the Prussian *Landtag* in 1879. He became ill from the incessant attacks against his person, also within his own party. He worked hard in the *Reichstag*, criticising Bismarck endlessly. In 1883, he went on a tour in America, and died suddenly in New York in 1884. The United States House of Representatives sent a motion of regrets to Berlin, to the German Foreign Office, hoping its message could be communicated to the *Reichstag* and be solemnly read there. Bismarck, however, refused to communicate the American resolution to the *Reichstag*. He also forbade all civil servants and public officers to attend Lasker's funeral. Otto von Bismarck could forgive Windthorst, never Lasker!

After the School Supervision Law, a second clash happened in April 1872. The Vatican under Pope Pius then rejected the Cardinal Gustav Adolf, Prince of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, as German ambassador. Schillingsfürst had opposed the Pope on the Infallibility Dogma. Germany and Bismarck left the diplomatic position henceforth vacant! Prussia suspended its relations with the Vatican in December of that year of 1872.

In May of 1872, the German *Reichstag* passed a motion, asking the Government of Bismarck to introduce a bill governing the legal status of the Catholic religious orders. It particularly wanted to stop the allegedly subversive activities of the Jesuit Order.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, a new law banned the Jesuits from Germany. The Government accused the Jesuits of contesting the secular authority of the State, acknowledging only the supremacy of the Papal authority.

Several European countries knew the same evolution as Germany. In 1873, the *Reichstag* voted to extend this law to the other orders, such as of the Redemptorists, the Lazarists, the Fathers of the Holy Ghost, and the Ladies of the Sacred Hearth. A few months later, the

Prussian bishops protested in vain against these regulations, as hostile to the Church. And in December, the Pope denounced the new German Laws as persecution of the Church!

In 1873, four new laws were passed in the *Reichstag*, which later received various amendments. These were called the '*Falk Laws*', or the '*May Laws*'. The laws were about:

1. The so-called *Kirchenaustritt*, or religious disaffiliation. This was made easier. A person could sever his ties with the Church by a simple declaration before a Judge of the Peace. The declaration freed him from all links and dues to the Church.
2. Disciplinary measures of the Church were restricted to the spiritual realm. Only the German ecclesiastical authorities were allowed to exercise disciplinary powers over the clergy. This included the infliction of the Great Excommunication proclaimed with the name of the guilty, and that because of possible disturbances of civil and social relations.
3. An ecclesiastical disciplinary law, establishing the Royal Court of Justice for Ecclesiastical Affairs in Prussia, subordinating the Catholic Church to state jurisdiction, also in internal matters of the Church. The members of this court had to be German citizens, residing in Germany. Bodily chastisement by the Church was forbidden, fines were limited, restrictions of freedom could only consist in banishment to a church institution of Germany for no longer than 3 months, and not against the will of the person concerned. The new court also received jurisdiction over ecclesiastical officers in the cases of violation of State laws. Clerics who were punished by the Church for not resisting the other rules of the *Kulturkampf*, could appeal to the new court. Out of the *Reichstag*, Ludwig Windthorst announced passive resistance against the May Laws.
4. The Prussian State determined the education standards of priests. A graduate or *Abitur* degree from a German Gymnasium was needed, plus 3 years of theology studies at a German university. The appointments of clerics had to be approved by the state. The ecclesiastical offices could only be occupied by permission of the civil authorities in the provinces.

As of May 1873, the Catholic bishops issued pastoral letters calling to resist the new laws. They informed the Prussian Government they could not cooperate in the execution of the laws. As a result, clergymen obeying the bishops instantly became subject to the punishments prescribed by the laws. The Prussian authorities then imposed fines by the hundreds. When the clerics refused to pay, the Government resorted to force, either confiscating goods or by imprisoning the culprits to up to two years.

Generally, the Vincius men could agree with the *Falk Laws*. They did not really see how the rules could fundamentally change the situation for the Jews, nor for their proper education systems of the *heders*, the *besmedreshes* and the *yeshivas*. Also, the Jewish communities did not have religious orders or monasteries organised by the Rabbis, by Judaism! They had always considered monasteries and convents rather contradictory to human nature. Religion, they thought, needed no proselytising, no publicity, no coercion on children or adults.

More of such laws continued to be promulgated in 1874. The Prussian Civil Registry Law for births, marriages and deaths came. Then an Expatriation Law, stipulating that after a conviction, a cleric could be banned from his parish and even, in case of reoccurrence, be expatriated and expelled from the country. Another Prussian law declared administrators had

to be elected for vacant bishoprics, thus allowing lay men to assume administrative responsibilities at the level of the parishes.

In July of 1874, in the town of Bad Kissingen, an assassination attempt against Bismarck failed. Bismarck got only slightly hit in the hand. The perpetrator, one Eduard Kullmann, cited the Church Laws as the reason for his attempt at murder. This led to an intensification of the *Kulturkampf* measures.

Otto von Bismarck thus made miserable the life of Catholics. Nevertheless, his measures seemed to fail, as the Centre Party doubled in votes for the *Reichstag*! Also, the relations between Bismarck and the Conservative parties deteriorated. Many conservatives sided with the Catholics. Bismarck targeted the *Kreuzzeitung* party with criticism.

Germany was not alone in its struggle for the secular State. For instance, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1880, in France, Parliament adopted a law prohibiting the religious associations that assured an education of the young, to continue to exercise.

In February of 1875, the Papal encyclique *Quad Numquam* declared the Falk or May Laws invalid, as they opposed the divine order of the Church. The encyclique could only get in print in one German newspaper. The State Police confiscated all the following newspapers publishing the encyclique! Bismarck could be ruthless.

As a retaliation, Bismarck stopped all government subsidies and other payments to the Catholic bishoprics and clergymen, unless they signed a declaration of adherence to all the *Kulturkampf* Laws. This last law was called the *Sperr- und Brotkorbgesetz*, the Prussian Payment Law.

Another May Law of 1875 dissolved all ecclesiastical orders within 6 months, exception made for those involved in the care for the infirm. For the teaching orders, this period could be extended. Further laws, limiting the power of the Church, passed the *Landtag*.

No new laws of more importance were really voted for or were introduced by the Government until 1879. By then, Bismarck did not feel comfortable any longer with the increasing harshness of the *Kulturkampf*. The laws had proven to be rather ineffective and counterproductive. Bismarck was a political realist. He considered he had obtained enough, as far as the separation of State and Church was concerned.

His main reason for stopping the *Kulturkampf* was one of sheer political necessity. The Centre Party had grown in the *Reichstag*! Bismarck drew his attention to the increasing popularity of the Socialists. To handle the Great Economic Depression in Germany, Bismarck wanted to introduce import duties on goods. In such matters, he could not count on the National Liberals and on their leftist wings, as they were advocates of free trade. Bismarck could only turn to the Centre Party as his ally!

Pope Pius IX died on the 7<sup>th</sup> February of 1878. The new pope, Leo XIII, was a far more pragmatic man, open to reconciliation and to mutual settlement. Moreover, the Minister Falk resigned on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July of 1879. Then, in February of 1880, the Vatican agreed to the civic registry of clerics in the empire. These openings slowly resulted in a series of Prussian mitigation laws between the Vatican and Berlin. As of 1882, the diplomatic relations between Prussia and the Vatican resumed. Bismarck had found a possible partner at the highest level of the Catholic Church! Ludwig Windthorst could but rejoice, yet feel he had once more been

outwitted by the Iron Chancellor. The clerics laws of Prussia were gradually eased in the next years.

In the elections in Germany of 1878, the National Liberals lost 29 seats. The progressive parties also lost by 9 seats. Bismarck's party, the *Reichspartei*, won 19 seats. The Conservatives of the *Kreuzzeitung* won 59 seats. The Centre Party remained at the same number of representatives, plus 1 seat. The Conservative and the Centre Party had 11 seats more than the required majority in the *Reichstag*. Bismarck could play the Liberal block against the Conservatives and Catholics, a situation he relished.

Even though key regulations and laws concerning the separation of Church and State were continued, the Mitigation and Peace Laws restored the autonomy of the Catholic Church over its own interior matters. The Pope even sided with Bismarck on non-religious issues, often to the dismay of Ludwig Windthorst. Many Liberals, including Falk, objected to the concessions made by Bismarck to the Church. The *Kulturkampf* ended.

The German Government and the Vatican were largely at peace with each other after 1878. Most of the tensions between the State and the Church ended or found solutions. Bismarck accepted the state could not fight any longer against the wishes of a third of the German population. His relations to Windthorst also, improved.

After the elections of 1874, the Centre Party became the second largest in the *Reichstag*, a force to be reckoned with politically, and hence a force to be used by Bismarck. It remained so until the next Great War! By 1880, the authorities of larger Prussia released hundreds of imprisoned Catholic priests to freedom.

The importance of the *Kulturkampf* for the shaping of the European society cannot be over-emphasized. Due to the *Kulturkampf*, the influence of the Catholic Church on the political power and on education was greatly reduced in Germany. The secular power of the State left the battle in strength. The laws concerning the separation of Church and State remained largely in place: the civic marriage, civic registry, registry of the clerics, the government school supervision, the pulpit law, the ban on Jesuits and the supervision of the State on Church assets remained. Nevertheless, both the Vatican and the Prussian Government had made concessions. New relations set in between the Church and the State, which lasted.

The *Kulturkampf* in Prussia was one of similar movements in several European countries. The secularisation of the State grew to commonplace. It was taken one step further, and has remained so in Europe ever since, as decreed by Chancellor Bismarck of Germany.

## The international Situation and the Great Depression.

In August of 1871, Emperor Wilhelm I met the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph at Bad Gastein. Both rulers realised they had better forget and forgive about their conflict and war of 1866-1867. In September of the next year, the emperors, this time including the czar of Russia, met in Berlin. The result of these contacts was the *Three Emperors' League*, signed in October of 1873. In the long run, however, this attempt of Bismarck to hold the three Eastern-European blocks together, the German-speaking and the Russian speaking, would fail.

The Ottoman Empire slowly declined, opening the Balkan lands to all hopes of extensions by Austria and Russia.

The nationalist aspirations could not but come into conflict and end the general goodwill of the then men in power.

Thorn was a frontier town. It was surrounded on three sides by the Russian Empire, though in fact by Poland. Poland was in Russian hands since the end of the previous century! This situation seemed permanent. Several times in their recent history, the Vincius traders had dealt with Russian officials, even with Russian generals. They had appreciated the trustworthiness of the Russian military. The Vincius could be called Russophiles, though the Russians certainly would not have granted any friendly relations with them. Business, they could do in partnership with Russians. There lay mutual respect between the Vincius and the Russians. The French had invaded Prussia in the Napoleonic Wars, not the Russians! Therefore, the Vincius of Thorn welcomed agreements consolidating the peace with their larger country, Germany, and the giant that was their close neighbour, Russia. All intelligent people of Thorn knew very well, of course, Thorn could fall quickly in any first line of war or in a conflict with Russia.

The main issue then became that the Austrian Empire got deeply involved in the Balkan conflicts, in competition with Russia. The rivalry would lead to the first major war of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Russia considered the kingdoms of Serbia, Bulgaria and even Rumania as of its national interests. Even though France was a republic and Russia an autocracy, France was bound to become the natural ally of Russia against the growing power of Germany, which displayed its might with full confidence.

From about 1867 and 1873 on, Germany had developed enormously in a period of continuous economic and financial growth, to a stage of inflated expectations. As very many large German companies of world importance were founded in this period, those times have been called the *Gründerzeit*, the founding times. For instance, the *Deutsche Bank* had been founded in 1870.

The reasons of the bubbling economy in Germany were the huge French and Austrian payments to Germany, victorious in these wars. Money must be used! It had to roll to bring in more money, and the Germans knew how to exploit opportunities. The result was an overexcited economy, high gambling on the stock exchange, unjustifiable mortgage deals in ensuring the property boom. Enterprises that were scarcely viable could appeal to borrowing huge sums at low rates. All this led to frauds in the financial business world, and dubious deals added scandals. Due to the evident speculation, which had to end at one time or other, the Vienna stock exchange crashed in May of 1873, followed in September by crashes on the

stock exchanges of Paris and London. Investments suddenly came to a halt and the industry investments stalled. A period began that was later called of the Great Depression.

The heavy industrial sector, one of Germany's primordial sectors, in which huge sums had been invested, suffered badly. This downfall was joined by an agricultural depression due to the large supply of American and Canadian grain, which began to flood the European markets, depressing prices. In economic theory, businessmen did not yet realise that the economic growth had exceeded the growth of money supply. Too many goods produced chased after too few buyers, after too little money. Prices fell as a result, affecting badly the income of the industry of any kind.

Due to the general crash of 1873, the national income of Germany suddenly shrunk by one-third! Layoffs sent large numbers of hungry paupers in the streets of the largest cities. The hungry and the poorest cried out for more power, to direct the wealth of the nation some more to them. They understood they needed more political power. Votes could provide them what they wanted.

At that moment, the German Chancellor Bismarck was at the height of his power. He was the chancellor of the German Empire and the minister-president of Prussia, its largest block. He ran two governments by himself. He also had to face two difficult parliaments, the national *Reichstag* and the Prussian *Landtag*. By the end of 1872, Bismarck walked into a crisis. He proposed a new law in the Prussian *Landtag*, abolishing the patrimonial police of the large landowners in Prussia, as well as their control over the administration of the villages. In October of 1872, this local district organisation bill was defeated with overwhelming numbers in the *Landtag*, in the House of Lords of Prussia.

As usual, the old emperor stood by his minister-president. Wilhelm I threatened to appoint in November 25 new peers, in favour of his demands and more, to the House of Lords. The House bowed. It accepted the bill on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December of 1872. A little later, the emperor signed the bill.

By then, Bismarck had fallen into a period of deep depression, probably from overwork. He sank into self-pity and self-deception. He could not accept he could not anymore do everything alone. He handed over his resignation.

That was not the first time the chancellor waved his resignation paper. Wilhelm I knew well such moves of his chancellor. This time, however, he accepted Bismarck's resignation! He limited it for a duration of about one year, though, to the end of October of 1873.

In the meantime, the successor to Bismarck became his old friend, Albrecht von Roon. Most of the current ministers remained in office. As minister of war, von Roon agreed to General Georg von Kamecke. Finance minister in these critical months became the Liberal Otto Camphausen, and minister of agriculture was Moritz von Blankenburg, people well known to Bismarck. The Count zu Eulenburg was minister of the interior.

Bismarck's physical and psychological condition deteriorated. His tempers worsened. Still, he gradually returned to the matters of the state. Meanwhile, Albrecht Von Roon had collapsed under the burden, like Bismarck before him, under the strain of government. From July 1876 to November 1876, Bismarck returned to his domain of Varzin to rest.

At the end of 1876, the National Liberal party insisted to the continuance of the principle of free trade between Germany and the surrounding countries. Bismarck had become convinced

of the contrary. Also, Wilhelm I was a convinced protectionist. Bismarck might have already moved to the introduction of custom duties for products entering Germany as a means to stop the Great depression for Germany. Something would have to be done to thwart the Liberals.

As traders, as ruthless dealers in commerce, the Vincius men stood for free trade. However, when their interests started to worsen because of the goods that entered Prussia from the outside, driven by foreign traders, they changed their minds. Foreign goods overwhelmed the markets with deals agreed upon in London, Copenhagen or Stockholm, or even in French cities. The Vincius too felt a strong reaction was now necessary. Free trade had been their slogan, as long as they could profit from it. When the contrary began to happen, they too supported the change of mind of Bismarck towards protectionist measures. They hoped new custom duties for Germany on incoming goods could bring back some of the sanity in the flooding of the German markets with cheaper goods by foreign dealers.

As of the middle of 1875, the international relations worsened in Europe. Otto von Bismarck heard of the increasingly aggressive French press against Germany. Germany then still occupied Alsace-Lorraine! In May of 1877, Tzar Alexander and his Chancellor Gorchakov, the old acquaintance of Bismarck, travelled to Berlin. They tried to persuade Emperor Wilhelm I not to launch a pre-emptive war on France. Wilhelm I had no intention to do so, but Bismarck had! When Bismarck once more threatened to resign over the matter, both Wilhelm and Alexander calmed the German chancellor. Bismarck finally promised not to provoke a preventive war against France.

The relations with the Ottoman Empire also worsened in those times. In mid-July of 1875 already, Herzegovina rose in revolt against Ottoman rule. The Turkish authorities repressed it with great brutality, which made the English press very nervous. An Austrian note from the Austrian Prime Minister Andrassy asked for reforms in the Balkan. The sultan accepted those, but not the leaders of the Herzegovina uprising. For them, the Turkish concessions did not go far enough.

Not long after, the sultan of Ottoman Turkey was overthrown. Abdul Hamid II became the new sultan. The Turks aggressively suppressed further revolts in the Balkan. When in May of 1876, the German and the French consuls in Salonika were murdered, Bismarck wanted to send a fleet against the Ottomans. France and Great Britain had learned a lesson from the earlier Crimea War. They refused. Bismarck remained furious and frustrated over the matter. There was talk of a Berlin meeting to be arranged by the three emperors of Germany, Russia and Austria, to coordinate their policy on Turkey. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, at Reichstadt, Russia and Austria decided to divide the Balkan lands among them in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The Turkish Army succeeded in routing all the rebels, also in Serbia. The Russian diplomats worked to obtain the support of Germany against the Ottoman rulers. By the end of October 1876, the Turkish Armies advanced on Belgrade. The Russian Tzar sent an ultimatum to the Turks to stop their advance within the next 48 hours and to accept an armistice of at least 6 weeks. The sultan accepted this, and a conference would be held in Istanbul. In January of 1877, the Ottoman diplomats rejected the Russian and English proposal for a settlement in the Balkan. The same month, the Germans and the Austrians agreed in the Convention of Budapest to jointly discuss and decide on the measures to take in the event of a new war with Turkey.

A little later, in April of 1877, Russia declared the war on Turkey. Russia declared the war to protect Bulgaria from the Ottoman Armies. The Russian forces advanced very rapidly at first, but in the second half of the year 1877, the Turkish opposition stiffened. The Ottoman Empire asked for the mediation from the countries that had stayed neutral so far. In the summer of that year, Bismarck wrote his famous *Bad Kissingen Diktat*. This contained his strategy for the foreign policy of Germany in the Balkan.

Bismarck's policy became consolidated from the realisation Russian and Austrian interests in the Balkan led to increasing rivalry between them in the East. Russia might seek an alliance with Germany to strengthen its defensive position in the Orient, on the coasts of the Black Sea and in the Mediterranean. Both England and Russia finally agreed in maintaining the existing situation, the status quo.

Germany could hope on having pushed a peg between England and France, because of Egypt and the Mediterranean, an evolution positive for Germany because France had taken an increasingly hostile stance to the German Empire. Bismarck recognised influences at the Austrian court against Germany, temporarily halted by the unfriendly relations between Russia and Austria over the Turkish matters.

Something had to be done, decisions had to be made. Harmony had to be restored, a new war had to be avoided. Bismarck saw no use or profit from a new war.

In February of 1878, Otto von Bismarck announced his proposal for a conference in Berlin to settle all the outstanding issues from the Russian War with the Ottoman Empire. The conference was held. It took away most of the Russian gains from the war, to return to the previous status in the Balkan.

The Russian court had launched a costly war for practically no results! The Russian diplomats and the court of St Petersburg blamed Bismarck for this outcome. Bismarck recognised the danger. He negotiated a *Reinsurance Treaty* with Russia. Bismarck feared a Russian attack on the frontiers of Germany, joined by France on the western side. Such a war might well have been won by Germany, but would still have to be waged at a difficult moment for the country. Bismarck worked to preserve the peace also between Austria and Russia in the Balkan.

So, Bismarck acted. In fact, he called a halt to a war that would come about 40 years later, when he was not anymore chancellor of the *Reich*! Bismarck succeeded in renewing the Three Emperors' Treaty that had been signed earlier on.

From the summer to the fall of 1877, in the interior politics of Germany, Bismarck sought new ways to link the Liberals to his views, though he knew very well he would soon have to clash with them over protectionist measures to boost the economy. He tried to get a leading Liberal in his cabinet as minister. Emperor Wilhelm I refused!

Bismarck once more entered a period of psychological collapse, went in rest, to return only to Berlin at the very beginning of 1878. In February, 1878, he spoke about a national tobacco monopoly, a move against the National Liberals. As a result, his Minister Otto Camphausen resigned. Camphausen could not accept interventions to limit free trade. Bismarck was working at another national issue at that moment. He started an aggressive crusade against the Social Democratic Party, a party directed against the absolutist, monarchist regime Bismarck had always defended.

In May 1878, a man called Max Hödel fired at the emperor in *Unter den Linden* of Berlin. Nobody got hurt, but shortly thereafter a new attempt was made on the emperor's life, this time by one Karl Nobiling. Nobiling hit the emperor three times. The emperor had to be taken to bed. He would not recover well from his wounds.

Bismarck saw a chance for his own aims. He ran a scare campaign and accused the Liberal Party of lack of patriotism. He provoked the dissolution of the *Reichstag*. In the ensuing elections for the new *Reichstag*, at the end of July of 1878, the National Liberals lost heavily. The progressive parties also lost, whereas the Conservative and the Catholic Centre Party won together enough votes to reach the majority of seats. Bismarck could move unhindered against the Liberals, and end the *Kulturkampf* in style, as his former opponent, Pope Pius IX, had died. With the successor to Pius, Leo XIII, Bismarck could negotiate more easily.

In 1875, the population of Herzegovina revolted against the Turkish occupation. The revolt soon spread to Bosnia. The regions declared their independence from the Ottoman domination. The year after, in 1876, the Bulgars equally rose against the Turks. The Ottoman Armies repressed this Bulgarian uprising with much violence and cruelty, killing 12,000 men, women and children in the country. The movement for independence continued to spread, however, to Serbia and Montenegro.

Mostly Slav people of the Christian Orthodox faith inhabited these Balkan countries. Naturally, the defenders of the Orthodox religion, the Orthodox Russian clergy, stirred the public opinion and the conscience of the Russian leaders. Many an aristocratic Russian leader regarded it his duty to assist other Christian, Slav people, in their struggle against Muslim Turkey. The Russian Tsarist Court soon recognised the opportunity of expanding westwards by annexing the Balkan States. Such prospect then was clearly against the direct interests of Austria. Vienna rather preferred a Turkish buffer between itself and powerful, vast Russia. The tension in the region rose.

Great Britain also disliked the possible plans of expansion of Russia towards the seas in the region. At that time, the Ottoman Empire controlled the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, blocking thereby the access of the Russian war fleets to the Mediterranean. Great Britain wanted to keep the Russians in the Black Sea, out of the Mediterranean, and far from her all-important commercial and military routes leading ultimately to India by the Suez Canal.

A war between Russia and Turkey eventually did broke out, in April of 1877.

The Russian Armies marched into Turkey-controlled Rumania, passed the Danube and moved into the Balkan Mountains. The Turks fought back. They stopped the Russians in the mountains, near the fortress of Plevna. The Russian Armies learned the Turks could fight. They took almost half a year to advance still, yet advance they did. The war was getting expensive for the Russians. Turks and Russians agreed on negotiations. They also agreed on a Peace Treaty, signed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March of 1878 at San Stefano.

According to the terms of the treaty, a state to be called Greater Bulgaria would be founded, consisting of two main parts or provinces together. Bulgaria would reach out in the east to the Black Sea and in the south to the Aegean. Serbia and Montenegro received additional territories, as well as their independence. Rumania too received parts of previously Turkish-dominated terrain. Russia secured large sums of money, a part of Bessarabia from Rumania, and Kars and Batum in Near Asia.

Russia had triumphed, of course. It was Russia now, that led in the Balkan. The Russian troops stood near Istanbul, ready to march on. A new great war of Russia with the Ottomans threatened. In such a war, the European greater powers would have to intervene. The horror of the former Crimean War came immediately to mind. All parties reconsidered. The idea was brought forward to hold a large European Congress, and handle the matter to a definite agreement. The place to organise the congress could be Berlin!

Otto von Bismarck reluctantly agreed, even though he didn't like getting mixed up in the Slav Balkan affairs. He had more serious work to dedicate his mind to, in his own empire. He would play the role of benevolent mediator, though, and heighten the international prestige of Germany. Bismarck hesitated, yet he finally accepted to host.

International developments did not slow. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1885, the Bulgarian Army defeated a Serbian Army at Slivinika. This strife ended on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March of 1886, when at Bucarest, a Peace Treaty was signed between Serbia and Bulgaria. The union of the two Bulgarian provinces was then realised, and Alexander I of Battenberg accepted the throne of the new Bulgarian kingdom. His reign didn't last long! Prince Alexander von Battenberg would abdicate under Russian pressure already on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September of the same year. Later, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1887, Prince Ferdinand von Sachsen-Coburg was elected as Prince of Bulgaria.

In the Berlin Congress, which opened on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June of 1878, the most important diplomats who drew all attention to them were Otto von Bismarck and Benjamin Disraeli. The congress gave Cyprus to Great Britain, reduced the size of Bulgaria, but preserved the Turkish rights on Macedonia and on the Mediterranean coastline. The Straits of the Dardanelles remained under Ottoman control. Austria gained control over Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as over the Sandjak of Novi-Bazar. Russia received Bessarabia, Kars, Andahan and Batum, far less than the territories it had fought for. Russia did not advance in the Balkan! As already mentioned, this deteriorated the relations between Germany and Russia.

The Berlin Congress, the largest and most prestigious since the Vienna Congress of 1815, ended on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1878. In the agreement, Bulgaria would be separated in two provinces. Its northern part would become independent, though still under the influence of Turkey. The southern province remained in Turkish hands fully, though it had to be governed by a Christian Orthodox governor-general. Austria received the right to occupy militarily and administratively Bosnia and Herzegovina. That was close to annexation. Montenegro, Serbia and Rumania had won their independence. Great Britain got Cyprus.

With this Treaty of Berlin, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire entered the Balkans, more dangerously still than before, close to Russia. The situation could easily lead to a war between Austria and Russia. The Berlin Congress solved the issue of the Turkish dominance in the Balkan, an issue with a weakening Ottoman dominance, by introducing another very probable, potential subject of tensions between the emperors of Russia and of Austria-Hungary. Austria actually had won most during the congress. Turkey and Russia lost most.

The Russian diplomats especially, left Berlin in a bitter mood. The czar sent a letter to Emperor Wilhelm I, warning the German Emperor to not thwart any more the future Russian politics. The congress had effectively ended the alliance of the three emperors in the region.

The relations also hardened and sharpened between Russia and Germany, the supposedly former allies.

Bismarck understood quite well the new threat. But in Austria, people spoke German. He had chosen. Bismarck sought almost immediately closer relations with Austria. As of mid-1879, Bismarck started negotiations with Austria against Russia, the trust of which country he seemingly had lost after the Berlin Congress of 1878. An alliance with Austria could save somewhat the protection of Germany. Emperor Wilhelm I, however, liked Tzar Alexander II, who was the son of his favourite sister Charlotte! The emperor uttered reservations against an open alliance with Austria.

Nevertheless, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1879, Bismarck proposed a meeting with Gyula Count Andrassy, the Hungarian magnate who was Austria's minister of foreign affairs. Andrassy and Bismarck saw each other on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of August. The result was an Austro-German Treaty stipulating that if either country was attacked by any power, the other would maintain neutrality, except if the attacker was Russia. If either country would be attacked by Russia, the other would have to intervene. Austria would not get involved in a new French-German War for the defence of Alsace-Lorraine. This Austro-German Treaty was signed by Emperor Wilhelm I in October of 1879. Emperor Franz Joseph agreed enthusiastically. He signed the treaty on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October of 1879. It was a defensive alliance. The agreement was clearly directed to the threat of Russia. It was therefore kept secret.

The new German *Reichstag* met for the first time in September of 1878. In October, talks began in the *Reichstag* over Bismarck's anti-Socialist Law on subversion. The law forbade associations of the Social Democrat or Communist movements, intending to overthrow the State and its existing social order. Meetings to the same aim were outlawed. Nevertheless, the law still allowed citizens to vote for the Socialist political parties. Eduard Lasker introduced an amendment to have the law in first instance, to last only till September 1881, for about two and a half years. In this form, the law came to be accepted by the *Reichstag*.

In mid-November of 1878, Bismarck proposed to create a new tariff commission. He wanted the income of the State in the future more to be derived from indirect taxes than from direct taxes. The new tariffs would allow financial reform. The arguments Bismarck gave went in the line of market protection. Bismarck wanted most of the State's income to come from the income tax on the really rich people. It was his way to start working both at the Great Depression, enhancing trade, protecting Germany against incoming products, and at the same time begin undercutting the Socialist movements by measures intending to better the situation of the poorer workers.

With the opening of the new *Reichstag* in February of 1879, the Centre Party, with its 94 seats, could give Bismarck and the Conservatives a majority, or refuse him that majority with the Liberals. Bismarck had to look to Ludwig Windthorst and be nice to the Centre Party. He preferred to do so, rather than give in to Eduard Lasker and to the National Liberals! After hard debates in the *Reichstag* and some concessions of Bismarck, the protective finance bill passed the *Reichstag* in July of 1879. This also forced a slight change of ministers on the Government. Falk left the cabinet, as well as Karl Rudolf Friedenthal. Robert *Freiherr* von Puttkamer entered. The family name of Bismarck's wife was Puttkamer! Bismarck also lost Robert *Freiherr* Lucius von Ballhausen as minister of agriculture. But Bismarck survived, and he had his bill.

Germany's Liberal parties stood for freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of learning and of research, protection from arbitrary arrests, and the standard protection provided by the rule of law. These freedoms had been guaranteed in the Constitution of 1850, but had not been included in the *Reich* Constitution of 1870. The rules had been rather ruthlessly ignored by Bismarck in his defence of the monarch's powers and privileges. The Liberals cried out for these freedoms. For Bismarck, the Liberals were therefore guilty of revolutionary tendencies all, which he loathed.

During those years, Germany continued to adopt new technologies. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1881 for instance, an official telephone service was installed in Berlin. Germany continued to expand its railway system.

## Early anti-Semitism in Germany. 1879-1882

As from 1879 on, a wave of public anti-Semitism broke out openly in Germany. Otto von Bismarck found neither the anti-Semitism nor his reactions to it opportune. He had declared himself against anti-Semitism, but also did nothing to stop it. He could live and talk with some of his Jewish political opposers, such as Ferdinand Lasalle, and remain arch-enemies with others, such as Eduard Lasker.

Anti-Semitism had been smouldering and remained endemic in wide sections of the German Protestant population, as well as in the Catholic Lands. The first man to have written about it, and maybe even having founded modern anti-Semitism in Germany, was probably – of all men – Richard Wagner! Wagner had written in 1850 an essay entitled *Das Judentum in der Musik*, on Judaism in music. In that essay, Wagner argued the Jews formed a separate race, which definitively could not in any way express genuine German art. The Jews could therefore never become much more than parasites on the authentic German creativity. The Jews embodied commercial life and only corrupted art by using it as commodities in the economic market. The Jews corrupted morals and culture by money.

Wagner, the romantic figure by excellence, rejected reason, private property and capitalism, as well as free markets and social mobility, the values most cherished by the Prussian conservative Junkers. He categorically refused the *Gewerbefreiheit*, the freedom of artisanship, and was in favour of protectionism and control of the larger artisan class.

The Jews could easily be the subject of envy. Not only were the Jews fine traders. Around 1871, 10% of all students in the Prussian universities were Jewish. In 1887, more than 20% of all lawyers in Prussia were Jews. The Jews largely stood for Liberalism. Jews dominated private banking in the 1850s and 1860s. A disproportionate high number of Jewish millionaires formed the super-rich class. A well-known name was Gerson Bleichröder, Bismarck's financier. The Jews delivered about 8.6% of all writers and journalists. Almost 26% of the Jews worked in the finance sector, and 4.6% of the wholesalers, retailers and shippers were Jews. From 1867 to 1878, 12 Jews sat in the *Reichstag*, some of whom got baptised, such as Karl Rudolf Friedenthal, one-time minister of agriculture in Bismarck's cabinet.

The Great Depression started in 1873, reached its apogee, its deepest point in 1879. It lasted also from 1882 to 1895. Scholars have argued that, as people sought for scapegoats to blame, the great foundation stage of modern anti-Semitism started and developed in this period. With the amelioration of the economic situation in Germany from 1896 to 1914, anti-Semitism also waned. Speculators and swindlers in the stock exchange were invariably called Jewish, even when this assertion was generally not true.

In 1855, the author Gustav Freytag published a novel called *Soll und Haben*, in 6 volumes, an anti-Semitic story. His books became very popular.

The word anti-Semitism was in fact founded by Wilhelm Marr in his pamphlet *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Deutschtum* of 1879, on the victory of Judaism over being German.

Another anti-Semitic figure was Heinrich von Treitschke.

Treitschke was a member of the *Reichstag* from 1871 to 1884, a historian and a publicist. He was born in Saxony from a Protestant civil servant in a military officers' family. His father

was an ennobled lieutenant-general. Heinrich von Treitschke was as of 1863 a professor in economy at the university of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, and from 1866 on a professor of history and politics at the university of Kiel. Afterwards, he moved in positions at the university of Heidelberg and from 1873 on he taught at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University of Berlin. In a memoir written in 1873, called *Unsere Aussichten*, our views of the future, he wrote the phrase *The Jews are our Misfortune*, a phrase eagerly taken up by all anti-Semites. His polemics declared the Jews were directed against the culture of the Germans. His solution for the *Judenfrage*, the Jewish question, what to do with the Jewish people in Germany, was the assimilation by the Germans. But according to Treitschke, most of the Jews refused this. Treitschke rejected Judaism as a religion with the same values as the Christian traditions. In this way no national unity could be reached in Germany, he argued. He saw only an alternative in the banishment of the Jews out of Germany. Treitschke nevertheless also rejected the racist views of Wilhelm Marr and of Karl Eugen Dühring, two other notable anti-Semites. He remained favourable to the assimilation of the Jews in Germany. Treitschke refused to sign an anti-Semitic petition launched by some of his students. He was a patriot, who ultimately refused to be called an outright anti-Semite.

Eugen Dühring wrote in his 1881 *Die Judenfrage als Rassen-, Sitten- und Kulturfrage* for maybe the first time about the Jews as a race. He found most dangerous the baptised Jews, who, although they had entered the Christian religions, used their conversion to throw open all doors of the German society and of the German political life for them.

The journalist and politician Wilhelm Marr was later called the father of the anti-Semitic movements. Marr published in the 1860s pamphlets such as *Der Judenspiegel*, the mirror of the Jews, and the satirical *Der Judenfresser*, in which he provided a very dark, degrading image of Judaism. He accused the Jews of having renounced on the assimilation in the Prussian society, and on any political reforms.

The Vincius men remained rather divided over the religious question. They had mostly abandoned being practising Jews. They rarely attended still regularly the Jewish religious ceremonies, organised in the synagogue of Thorn. Some of the men, Max Vincius and Mikhael Vincius, had converted, Max to Evangelism and Mikhael even to Catholicism. Kurt Vincius and Haim Vincius remained loyal overall to their Jewish religion, Haim primarily because he had married the rather pious Leah Goldstern.

Kurt Vincius had a long-lasting affair with the Evangelic Esther Kleinberger. Had there been only her in his life, he would have converted to Evangelism too, since long. His legal wife, Hannah Sonnenfeld, was Jewish. Judaism was her only consolation for a marriage that had failed. Kurt's children had received a thoroughly Jewish education. They attended the ceremonies in the synagogue more than their father.

The nagging question ever remained: were you a Jew because you believed in the Torah, because you attended to ceremonies in the synagogue, because of the religion, or were you a Jew because of your ancestry? Did you remain Jewish, even after a conversion to a Christian religion? Was being Jewish a religious matter or a matter of race? Few were the Vincius men who thought one was not truly a Jew anymore, merely because one changed religion. Max and Mikhael Vincius, deep inside, remained Jews, with Jewish characters and mentality. They thought with nostalgia about the old family traditions of feasting Jewish Holy Days. The trouble was probably, non-Jews had the same ideas about the effect of conversions. They

could not truly believe conversions suddenly changed Jews into non-Jews! One could renege on a religion, but not on one's birth and one's forefathers.

At the Prussian court preached and worked the court preacher Adolf Stoecker. He too argued against the Jews. Dangerously, he had as disciples such men as the later Emperor Wilhelm II and General Alfred Count von Waldensee, the later successor of von Moltke as head of the General Prussian Military Staff. Stoecker moreover sowed dissension in the royal Prussian household, and later contributed to the fall from power of Bismarck.

The anti-Semitic movement in Prussia held its origins in the Christian-Social movement founded by Adolf Stoecker. Out of this group followed the *Anti-Semitic Voters' Association*. Its first president was one Friedrich Raab. Raab was a member of the *Reichstag*. He represented the anti-Semitic *Deutsch-Soziale Reformpartei* from 1898 to 1903. In those times, however, such parties remained marginally small and insignificant in the overall German constellation of political parties.

The Prussian *Landtag* engaged in a great debate on the Jewish question on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1880. A representative had asked the minister of the interior what the position of the Government was on the matter. Bismarck couldn't care less. He fought to retain a neutral stance towards the Catholic Centre. Windthorst had already spoken out against anti-Semitism, but he had an opponent in his own Centre Party. This was Carl Constantin *Freiherr* von Fechenbach, who regarded the anti-Semitic conflict as a means to stop the *Kulturkampf* by forming an alliance between the Catholic and Evangelic or Protestant groups. The debate became agitated. The majority of the representatives rather preferred to join in the attack on the Jews. In the end, however, Windthorst fended off Fechenbach's intentions and remained the recognised leader of the Centre Party.

On New Year's Eve of 1881, during an anti-Semitic demonstration in Berlin, a group of men destroyed and plundered Jewish shops and shouted for the first time the slogan *Juden raus!* for out with the Jews.

When on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January of 1882 the *Landtag* reopened, a Liberal representative connected Otto von Bismarck to the anti-Semitic agitation. Bismarck actually detested this man called Eugen Richter, as much as he did Eduard Lasker.

Bismarck had nothing against the Jews. He hated Lasker not because he was Jewish, but because Lasker had dared to attack the principles of government Bismarck defended. Bismarck did have something against the intellectuals among the Jews, who, like Lasker, sought ever more rights and protections against the State. Bismarck was on to combat Leftist Liberalism. This was his true enemy, to him and to the cause he defended. And at that time, Bismarck tolerated no opposition to his views. Lasker once more attacked Bismarck in those years, but he died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1884. Bismarck refused his ministers to attend Lasker's funeral. That funeral took place in the famous *Oranienburg Synagogue* in Berlin. Bismarck had been an honoured guest at the opening of this synagogue, but he wanted not to enter the synagogue now, not for Lasker. When Lasker died in January of 1884. Bismarck spoke out against Lasker in the *Landtag*. He could not be reconciled with Lasker, not even in the man's death.

With the gradual ending of the Great Depression, also the most vehement attacks on Judaism died out. The Government did not react with specific measures against Judaism, and the interpellations in the *Reichstag* diminished rapidly.

The anti-Semitic wave of the 1880s in Germany was a political-social movement. With the beginning of the economic crisis around 1873, also called the *Gründerkrach*, or the end of the *Gründerzeit*, the atmosphere in the newly founded German *Reich* started to change once more. Chancellor Bismarck reacted with a protectionist economic policy and changed his political course to appeal once more to the Conservative and Centre parties. The Jews were generally supporters of Liberalism and Social Democracy, so they found themselves on the side of the political enemies of Bismarck. They were accused of being responsible for the economic crisis and the ever more pressing social question.

The Jewish scholars tried to define the fundamental beliefs of the Jewish people. Moritz Lazarus, a professor in philosophy at the Universities of Basel and Berlin, wrote a *Grundsätze der jüdischen Sittenlehre*, fundamentals of the Jewish Ethics, agreed upon by more than 350 rabbis and teachers of the Jewish religion, and by 370 Jewish jurists from Germany and Austria. The fundamental points were published in 1885 by the *Deutsch-Israelitischen Gemeindebund*, the Association of the German-Israelite Communities. Hereafter the 14 main points of these Jewish ethics or morality rules. Judaism teaches: the unity of humanity, the love for one's neighbour, to respect the honour of others, to honour the faith of others, and to diminish the suffering of others. Judaism demands to honour work, the love of the truth, humility, tolerance, chastity, and correct morality, respect for the marriage of others, obedience to the authorities, to seek the welfare of others and love for the fatherland, to bring forth the bond of love within humanity entire. These were stances all the Vincius men could honour and uphold.

The anti-Semitic movement had its origins in Berlin. In other large cities, such as Hamburg, the city political parties and the merchant class continued to support Liberalism and free trade. They remained largely aloof of anti-Semitism. It was not until the 1890s that some of its citizens' associations began to respond to political anti-Semitism.

## **Bismarck's Social Welfare Bills and his Fall from Power. 1883-1890**

In the early spring of 1880, Bismarck's health began to deteriorate. He entered into a period of increasingly irrational behaviour, and broke out in irrepressible rages. In April of 1880, the Federal Council, the *Bundesrat*, rejected Bismarck's rather unimportant Stamp Duty Law. Bismarck once more flew into a thundering rage. He threatened with resignation, and forced the Stamp Duty Act through the *Bundesrat* in a rare reversal of decision by the honourable members of it.

Bismarck's erratic behaviour damaged the presentation of his projects. A final new note on Church Policy was for the largest part rejected. Bismarck also suffered from tensions in his own family. Herbert, Bismarck's son, wanted to marry a noble divorcee. Bismarck objected and forced his son to forego of the woman he loved. Herbert grew to a very bitter man.

In October of 1881, new *Reichstag* elections took place. The Conservative Party lost many seats. Bismarck's own *Reich* Party lost almost half of its voters. The Centre Party limited the damage and secured 100 seats. This defeat led to higher bitterness of Bismarck.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> January of 1882 opening of the Prussian *Landtag*, not Bismarck delivered a speech, but Bismarck's representative, Robert von Puttkamer. He proposed to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Pope of Rome. He announced the introduction of a bill to allow bishops to be pardoned, and to eliminate the German State examination of the priests. He talked of abolishing the *Anzeigepflicht*, the obligatory notification to the Prussian State of the Catholic clerical appointments. These proposals actually meant a compromise with the Catholics and one step further to the end of the *Kulturkampf*. Bismarck urgently needed the Catholic votes! The compromise between Ludwig Windthorst and Otto von Bismarck passed the *Landtag* end March 1882. The diplomatic relations between Germany and the Vatican were restored by the end of April 1882.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1882, an alliance was signed between Italy, Germany and Austria, the Triple Alliance. Italy would receive the help of the other two powers in case of a French aggression. This alliance would prove very important in the political developments after 1900. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1883, Rumania would secretly join this Triple Alliance.

In the meantime, Bismarck had met a new doctor, a man called Ernst Schweningen, born in the Upper Pfalz at Freystadt. Schweningen arrived from Munich. He treated the man Bismarck, not Bismarck's illness! He introduced regular periods of relaxing recreations for his patient, better sleep, exercise and rest periods, and he supervised Bismarck's glutton eating and drinking habits. Bismarck gradually grew better and saner of spirit under Schweningen's care.

Bismarck introduced his new social welfare program for workers. In June 1884, Bismarck's accident insurance system, was accepted by the *Reichstag*, and equally an old age and disability insurance bill. These formed the basis for the first modern social welfare system in Europe and in the world! In 1884, Bismarck also renewed the Three Emperors' League, and worked much on the German colonies, such as Namibia.

On the 26th April of 1886, the German *Reichstag* adopted a colonisation law for Posen. Germany wanted to germanise Posen. German peasants were advised to work lands in the

provinces of Posen and East Prussia, to compensate for the Polonisation of these territories since 1875. In 1885, 700,000 Germans lived in Posen and 1.7 million Poles.

In 1887, the *Reichstag* seemed to want to reject Bismarck's *Septenat*, his Seven-Years bill on the German military expenditure budget. Bismarck dissolved the *Reichstag* in anger. Once more, he had feared a new war with France. He wanted extra money for the military. Strangely, Pope Leo XIII supported the *Septenat* Bill with the Catholics of Germany, even though the Centre Party campaigned against it.

In February of that year 1878, the German Bishops Conference supported Ludwig Windthorst and the Centre Party against Pope Leo XIII. But on the next voting for the *Reichstag*, the Leftist Liberals got defeated, so that Bismarck didn't need the Centre Party anymore to support him. Internal strife tore the Centre Party apart, as Windthorst remained too honest a man to renege on his convictions. Bismarck pushed the new *Septenat* through parliament quite easily.

Equally in 1887, on the 23th of May, Pope Leo XIII officially declared the conflict between the Catholic Church and Germany closed.

From May to June 1887, Bismarck and the Russian ambassador in Berlin drew up the *Reinsurance Treaty*. This provided at least the moral support of Germany when the Russian court found it necessary to defend its rights on the entrance to the Black Sea.

Germany increased its military power. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1888, the German military service was brought at 2 years in times of peace, and 700,000 soldiers would from then on be held in weapons. This was only temporary. In mid-1893, another German military service law was voted for. Conscription soldiers had to serve 3 years instead of 2. The number of soldiers held under weapons in peace time was brought to 590,000.

In 1888, Emperor Wilhelm I succumbed to his wounds. His son, the gallant and courageous Friedrich III took the throne. He too died soon. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, Emperor Friedrich III, suffered from depressions. He had cancer of the throat, and remained in power only a few months. He died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June of 1888. His son, the 19-year old Wilhelm II became the new emperor of Germany.

Wilhelm II was not the intensely moral and very intelligent man his predecessors had been. Bismarck could no longer count so easily on royal favour. In the end, Bismarck would fall victim to people envious of his position of confidence.

His opponents at court were Emperor Wilhelm II himself, Friedrich von Holstein at the Foreign Office, and von Moltke's successor, General Count von Waldensee.

Waldensee could have been an anti-Semite. He blamed the Jews as the culprits for the deaths of the Emperors Wilhelm I and Friedrich III. He believed a conspiracy of World Jewry had defamed and undermined Friedrich III. In April of 1888, the then still in place Field Marshal von Moltke, who disliked Waldensee, had refused to follow up on a request of Emperor Wilhelm II to promote Waldensee to commander of an Army Corps! Von Moltke's aim had been to reduce Waldensee's malign influence on the emperor's son, and to send Waldensee to a remote post.

At court, also Philipp von Eulenburg was a dark personality. He was the nephew of Fritz von Eulenburg, Bismarck's lifelong Minister of the Interior. Fritz's first cousin, August von

Eulenburg, would also become the Household Minister to Emperor Wilhelm II. The relations of Philipp von Eulenburg to Wilhelm II remained ambiguous.

He was the first confidant of Emperor Wilhelm II in the years 1890. At court, Eulenburg was a very important person, and a born flatterer. His full name was Philipp Friedrich Karl Alexander Botho, Prince zu Eulenburg and Count Sandels.

Much later, in May of 1908, Philipp would be arrested on his grand estate of Liebenberg, accused of homosexual relations with two fishermen on the Starnberger See near Munich! In the summer started a trial against him of the most sensational scandal. He was accused of having introduced at court a number of persons, the names of which were mentioned in the lists of the Berlin Police of sexual perverts, or homosexuals.

The trial was stopped, because of the bad health of Eulenburg. It was the *Geheimrat* Friedrich von Holstein, head of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had assembled the evidence to topple Eulenburg, probably as a matter of revenge. Bismarck had never trusted Philipp von Eulenburg. Nevertheless, by 1888, Bismarck and his family had become openly too over-confident in their power.

Emperor Wilhelm I had been a man of strong sympathy for Russia. He had family links with the Romanovs. His instincts were nationalist and in favour of the absolutist monarchy. These views had always been defended by Bismarck.

Wilhelm II had been a young man when he ascended the throne of Germany, inexperienced, uncivil and insecure. He too shared most of Bismarck's views, but Wilhelm II was given over to irrationality, to showiness and uncertain feelings about the modern, industrialised society. He did not dominate that society. It developed without and despite him. This, he loathed.

Wilhelm II was a flamboyant monarch, who liked to show off in grand, gaudy uniforms. He often expressed himself in slogans, and had a rather bellicose character. He cared for his public image. Wilhelm could also be quick-witted though, and headstrong. To begin with, Wilhelm II wanted to rule in his own name, by himself, and not as one who docilely listened to what the great Otto von Bismarck told him to do. Wilhelm was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January of 1859, in a difficult birth. He had a damaged arm he could never properly use. Nevertheless, in sudden changes of mood, he could act impulsively, brutally, and imperatively. He could not bring up the cautious patience of Wilhelm I. His education had not been very thorough. He studied at the Gymnasium of Kassel, and had a few years of university. Despite his damaged arm, he did his military service. One might have called him intelligent and charming. His temper was quick, his humour often cruel. He did show some interest in the modern technologies. He looked down on the people, rather than be interested in them. Other character traits of Wilhelm II were his impolite, often bad manners. He could be ruthless. He remained hostile to both Catholics and Jews.

Bismarck continued to keep his interest on international affairs. In October of 1888, an International Conference of Constantinople took place on the Balkan matters. This was followed in December by the Convention of London on the free navigation of the Suez Canal.

In January of 1889, a few thousands of miners from the Ruhr Region went on strike. The strike spread to the Saar Region, then to Saxony and Silesia. A year later, in January of 1890, a Crown Council addressed the situation that had worsened. Bismarck submitted his resignation, which was then still refused by Emperor Wilhelm II. A little later, Bismarck's renewal of the anti-Socialist Bill got rejected in the Prussian *Landtag*. The previous bill

would expire on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September of 1890, unless a new bill was introduced in the *Reichstag*. In February of 1890, the voters' participation in the new German polls fell to below 70%. The pro-Socialist parties reached even a majority with a joint total of 207 seats. This proved sufficient to definitively stop anti-Socialist laws.

By March, Bismarck had developed a new plan. He wanted to push a new army bill through the *Reichstag*, and a new anti-Socialist law that was even more restrictive than the first one!

Bismarck turned to Windthorst for help, cajoled him, and offered his last concessions for the final abolition of the remaining restrictions on the Catholic Church in exchange for the votes to his army bill and anti-Socialist bill. The result was as Bismarck and Windthorst had negotiated.

Emperor Wilhelm II, however, was furious with his chancellor. He reproached Bismarck for having dealt with Catholics and Jews behind his back. Waldensee urged the emperor to dismiss Bismarck. Wilhelm II withdrew his support from Bismarck.

Everybody expected now Bismarck to send in his resignation letter. This time, the chancellor didn't, astonishing the emperor and the court. The emperor's chief of the civil cabinet then came to Bismarck with the overt question of why Bismarck had not yet resigned. Bismarck answered quite coldly, the emperor had the power to dismiss him at any time, at will.

Bismarck saw no need to write a resignation letter himself. Bismarck knew very well General Leo von Caprivi had already arrived in another room of the same building, to take over the chancellor's administration.

In the end, Bismarck did write his letter of resignation, his last and definite one. Bismarck's career thus ended on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March of 1890. After a farewell dinner, he left Berlin. Still, Bismarck's military bill passed the *Reichstag* in June of 1890. This would be his last victory.

The new chancellor would be Leo von Caprivi, indeed. Von Caprivi was an honest, competent man, a chancellor with a social conscience. The choice of a successor to Bismarck could have been worse. The new minister of foreign affairs would be Adolf Marshall von Biberstein.

## The Times after Bismarck's Resignation

The new Universal Exhibition of Paris was opened officially on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1889. The Tradition of setting up light houses during the world exhibitions was continued. This time, Paris built the huge, all-steel Eiffel Tower. The Eiffel Tower would become the foremost emblem of the French capital, and an enormous tourist attraction for the city.

Emperor Wilhelm II visited Turkey, Constantinople, in great pomp. The emperor obtained for a group of German industrials the building of the railroad from Constantinople to Ankara and Konya. This was the first element of the famous '*Bagdad Bahn*', the railroad to Bagdad, a triumph of German engineering.

In 1890 the anti-Socialist Laws, so dear to Bismarck, who understood the danger of leftist revolution better than most, were abolished. Workers Labour Organisations were formed. These counted merely 50,000 members in 1890, but they would grow to 2.5 million in 1913. They became the largest such associations in Europe. As of 1900, leading Left Liberals were Max Weber and Friedrich Naumann.

Germany did not seek domination on the European continent as long as Bismarck remained in function. The Congress in Berlin of 1878 was held according to Bismarck's ideas of practical measures of politics. Germany was the honest mediator at the Congress, which reassured peace on the continent.

After 1900, Emperor Wilhelm II ordered a new policy: world politics was the new aim, world power an objective, the fleet its instrument. In 1890 already, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, Germany refused to renew the Reinsurance Treaty, the *Rückversicherungsvertrag*. It was not signed anymore by Germany, Austria and Russia. This was an important change of policy for Germany. The result could be called disastrous, as would appear much later, for it forced Russia into French arms, and into a devastating war with Germany, finally destroying the Russian Empire. Bismarck was left to groan in his vast domain.

For a while, after 1890, all relations between Bismarck and the imperial court of Berlin were cut. Gradually, slowly, as of 1894, Bismarck was re-invited to official, special occasions at court. There would never be any cordiality between the former chancellor and the new emperor. As of the beginning of 1896, Bismarck became quite sick. He could not walk anymore. Bismarck's wife had died. In 1890, his son Herbert had finally moved to Schönhausen. In 1892, Herbert had married the very beautiful, 22-year old Marguerite Hoyos, daughter of the Hungarian Count Georg Hoyos.

As a last surge of bitterness, Bismarck had the secret Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia published in the newspaper the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, a National Liberal paper opened to him by Dr. Emil Hartmeyer. The publication caused a scandal and diplomatic issues for Germany. Right after the fall of Bismarck, the German Government had notified Russia it did not wish to continue the Reinsurance Pact of 1887 with Russia. Bismarck, obviously, had always resented this.

Bismarck died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July of 1896. With him seemed to end the political 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the meantime, in 1894, Emperor Wilhelm II had also already dismissed Leo von Caprivi. The new *Reichskanzler* would be Chlodwig Prince zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Prince of Ratibor and Corvey. He also became the minister-president of Prussia.

The long period of Prussian-Russian friendship ended with the disappearance of Emperor Wilhelm I and Bismarck from German politics. At the end of 1890, Germany closed its borders for Russian grain. This happened against all previous customs habits between Germany and Russia. Russia got in economic difficulties because of this decision, but it received financial help from France. Emperor Wilhelm II and his Chancellor von Caprivi had effectively driven Russia into the welcoming French arms! It was hard to imagine a worse diplomatic catastrophe for Germany.

On the 9th of April of 1891 was founded the Pan-German League, a movement in favour of the nationalist expansion of Germany. The League had only 20,000 members at most, but it was influential in the circles that mattered in German politics. It claimed the superiority of the German race and culture.

A little later, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May of 1891, the German Emperor signed the Triple Alliance between Italy, Germany and Austria, directed against French influence, but hence also against Russian interests.

A few months later, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1891, France and Russia signed a secret alliance in their turn. This was a military alliance, negotiated by the General de Boisdreffe for France and General Obrouchev for Russia. It was a defensive alliance, but France wanted more. Tzar Alexander III waited 16 months before ratifying it, but the alliance got signed.

Germany continued its program of social welfare after Bismarck's demise. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1891, more laws on the social protection for workers in Germany were published.

Henceforth, there would be an obligatory rest day on Sundays. Children less than 13 years old were forbidden to work, and children younger than sixteen when employed, had to work less than 10 hours a day. Women could not work more than 11 hours a day.

### The Vincius of Thorn. 1890-1900

The year 1890 was of particular importance to the Vincius Family of Thorn. In that year died the patriarch of the Thorn Jewish family, Max Vincius. And only two years later died his first wife, Sara Benavicius, the mother of Kurt, Haim and Mikhael. Max was 80 years old when he died, Sara 79. With Max and his father Asa gone, it seemed much of the Vincius memory of the original Vincevicius Lithuanian roots disappeared quickly. The links with Vilna were broken definitively. The Lithuanian relatives, the sisters of Max, had fled from their homes to the Americas. Nothing was ever heard of them in Thorn. They had found new lives, in which there was no place for relations with Thorn.

News of Max's uncle and aunt and their children had also stopped. The Vincius from Thorn wondered how these had done the last years in Russia. They knew the life of the Jews had toughened very much in the last decades. They also supposed these Vincevicius members had fled from Lithuania, into emigration. Max might have known, but he didn't. He too hadn't particularly maintained relations with Vilna after his marriage with Leandra von Chrapitz. Of Max's three sons, one only had remained in Thorn. That was Kurt. Also, Kurt's sons continued to live in Thorn. The youngest son of Max, Mikhael, had left Prussia for Denmark. News from Mikhael's family now arrived only very rarely in Thorn. Mikhael and his children lived another life! Mikhael had two girls. These would have founded families with other names by now. Max's third, the middle son, Haim, the former soldier, lived in Berlin. The relations between Kurt and his brother Haim remained the liveliest.

When Max Vincius died, he was buried in the cemetery of the main Evangelist Church of Thorn, the church in the central marketplace. His burial ceremony was a grand affair. The von Chrapitz children walked first in the procession that brought Max's coffin to the church. Sara Benavicius did not attend the ceremony. She was lying in her bed, lost in a drunken stupor. As well Kurt as Haim and their family, their children, followed somewhere at the end of the procession. As they were Jews, though nothing in their clothing could distinguish them from the other Prussian notables and citizens, they held humble places at the end of the crowd of mourning.

Max had been very popular in Thorn. Many, if not all the notables of the town knew Max Vincius well and had come to honour him a last time. Hundreds of men and women had come to pay respect. Max, by his conversion to Evangelism, was not anymore a Jew. The families of Kurt Vincius and of Haim Vincius were tolerated by the von Chrapitz, but without much warmth. The Vincius had been allowed to the church and to the funeral, but after the lowering of the coffin in the earth of the cemetery of Thorn, they returned to Kurt's house to start mourning. They felt not in their place at Castle Chrapitz.

In 1890 also, shortly after the death of Max Vincius, three marriages took place in the Vincius families. In that same year, in Denmark, married the two daughters of Mikhael Vincius and Fredia False. Naomi Vincius married Osyp Raisfeld and Rivka Vincius married Johann Handelmann. No Vincius of Thorn was present at the marriages in Aarhus. Yet, the Vincius of Thorn heard the two girls had married respected men and men of some wealth. Everybody wished them the best.

That same year, in autumn, married Avram Vincius, son of Haim, in Berlin. He married one Manyah Kalpern of Berlin. Avram and Manyah remained living in Berlin. Avram traded. Manyah brought a large dowry. Her family was rich. Haim later told his brother Kurt, something odd had happened before the marriage.

The marriage had been arranged between Haim and the Kalperns, the dowries established by go-betweens. When Manyah had been presented to Avram in the house of his parents, it seemed as if the story of their grandfather Asa and his wife Leah had been repeated! At first sight, the youngest son of Haim, David, had instantly fallen in love with Manyah. The same had happened to Manyah. There had been tears and cries. Still, Manyah did not have Leah's strong character. She had not escaped her family's grip. She married Avram docilely, though weeping all through the ceremony.

At the wedding, David had met Manyah's sister, Rosa. Rosa was three years younger than Manyah, one year only younger than David. It had taken quite a while, but at the end of the next year, David had asked the Vincius and Kalpern families of Berlin to marry Rosa. The marriage had taken place. Rosa was a bright, joyous girl, well-educated, a fine housewife, who also had many activities in the Jewish communities of Berlin, added to the *Oranienburg synagogue*. This marriage worried Haim much, and the reason, he told his brother, as if to finally outpour his sadness, was the question of why David had wanted to marry Rosa. The two liked each other, all right, but was there love between them? Had David merely married Rosa to get close to Manyah? At family feasts and reunions, Haim told, David could be seen about as much time, if not more, at the side of Manyah than with his own wife! The eyes of the two then shone brighter than when they walked with their own husband and wife. Manyah didn't send David away, on the contrary! Haim expected trouble.

In the meantime, at the wedding feasts, at which the Vincius of Thorn participated, ran two young boys between the tables, sometimes stopping to sit on one of the temporarily free chairs. These were Andreas's sons, the just 15 years old Julian Vincius and his 14-year old brother Johann. The girls of Julian the elder, Andreas's brother, and Julian the Elder's wife Hanna Altman, were still young, mostly safely held in their mother's arms. They were ten and eight years old. These children had come late. The son and girl of Max the younger and his spouse Maria Rosenthal, the one 17 and the latter 15, played with their cousins Julian and Johann. These four formed the next generation of the Vincius. What would be their fate in life?

## The Jews in Russia and in Poland. The Pogroms. 1880-1900

The Vincius of Thorn had less and less contacts with the rest of their family in Lithuania. Still, the older men of the family remembered their roots, and how they had actually moved from Vilna to come to live in the quiet, beautiful and prosperous city of Thorn. In 1880, large numbers of Jewish people still lived in Russia.

Max Vincius and his sons remained particularly interested in the fate of Lithuania, where their roots lay. Since the end of the previous, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Lithuania and the regions its kings formerly reigned over, were part of Russia. They now formed the western provinces of the Russian tzardoms.

The former Polish and especially the Larger-Lithuanian sovereigns had allowed the Jews to enter their territories. They had protected the Jews better, giving them more hospitality than other authorities in Europe. In the times of the Crusades, for instance, the Western-European knights passing through the territories lying between them and Constantinople, took hard on the Jews living along their routes. The Crusaders were avid for blood of heretics and for plunder. They attacked and killed the Jews en route, and pillaged them. They knew many Jews were well off.

Poland and Lithuania, which then included the regions of White Russia, New Russia and the Ukraine, were not situated directly on the way of the Crusaders. The Jews fleeing from the German-speaking lands, therefore fled in large numbers to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which then consisted of vast territories in northern and eastern Europe. The Jews settled there. These lands were fertile and huge in surface. They offered many opportunities for commerce, for trade, and for the smaller industries. When, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these countries had been conquered by the Tzarist Russian people, Russia had inherited in one blow the largest concentration of Jews anywhere in Europe.

In Russia, however, people who did not vow to the Russian Orthodox Christian Church, were not regarded as true Russian citizens. Jews were generally considered as heretics and foreigners, an alien people. The Jews did not belong to the Orthodox Faith. As a people, they had crucified Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Jews were foreigners in Russia.

Foreigners were not particularly loved and welcomed in any land. Though Russia also held a few thousand Jews, the newly inherited Russian Jews of Poland and Larger Lithuania were regarded as outlandish strangers, potentially harmful to the Russian Nation and its Christian religion. Yet, the newly absorbed Jews were too populous, too large in numbers to be expelled all in one simple movement. Such banishment also might have torn the Russian economy to disastrous imbalance. The Russian Court and the tzar – actually a tzarina - had therefore limited themselves to confine the Jews in their empire to a specified set of provinces, to what came to be called the Jewish Settlement Territories, later called the Pale Territories in English.

The Pale Settlement Areas comprised eight provinces of Western Russia and Poland, even though the Jews had already and generally not been very welcome in Poland itself. In Poland, the percentages of the population that were Jewish remained much lower than in the Pale. The Pale were the lands, mainly of the former Larger Lithuanian provinces. They comprised first three provinces or *gubernias* in White Russia, in Belarus. These were the provinces of Minsk, Moghilev and Vitebsk. The Pale also comprised the Bessarabia province in the south.

In Lithuania itself, the provinces of Vilna, Grodno and Kovno belonged to the Pale. New Russia Jewish were the provinces of Ekaterinoslav, Kherson and Taurida. Finally, in the Ukraine lay the Pale provinces of Kiev, Chernigov, Podolia, Poltava and Volhynia. As a 16<sup>th</sup> province, Kharkov had been added.

The ordinary Russian Jews had to live and die in these provinces. They were only allowed to travel through the other provinces of Russia for limited times and journeys, under special permission. In Orthodox Russia, in Finland, in the Baltic provinces not mentioned as belonging to the Pale, and in the tzardoms of Kazan and Astrakhan, the Jews were not allowed to set foot. That was so, in principle. For who had much, much money, could remain and live anywhere, anytime, for as long as he or she desired, by bribing officials.

In a rare period of increased tolerance, allowing a somewhat more enlightened attitude towards people of the non-Orthodox faiths, the Tzar of Russia Alexander II issued a decree in 1865 allowing Jewish artisans to settle also outside the Pale. The Russian Government then encouraged the education of Jewish youths, who as full graduates of the state-organised schools or as members of the learned professions, as scholars, were allowed to settle beyond the Pale. These measures were not withdrawn, but hardly enforced as of around 1880.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March of 1881, a group of terrorists hurled dynamite bombs in one of the thoroughfares of St Petersburg, aimed at the Tzar Alexander II, killing him. The group came to be arrested in due time. It comprised only one Jewish member, a woman called Hesia Helfman. She played only a minor role in the terrorist group. Nevertheless, the event and the name of Helfman were used by reactionary political groups in St Petersburg as the reason for further persecution of the Jews overall.

Tzar Alexander III succeeded on Alexander II. He was a military figure, having been in command of one of the Balkan Armies in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. Tzar Alexander III had his imperial manifesto, his first Crown Speech, promulgated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April of 1882, calling on his faithful and loyal subjects in Russia to help him eradicate all sedition. He appealed to re-establish faith and morality in the empire. Before that, in August of 1881, the Government published a new Police Constitution, called *The Statute concerning Enforced Public Safety*. This law gave the Russian authorities of St Petersburg and Moscow the power of issuing special enactments, setting aside normal laws, on citizens suspected of political unsafety. These persons could be placed under arrest and be deported to Siberia, outside of the due process of law. These decrees could be used discriminatingly on the Jews still present in Russia.

Among the high officials of the two capitals, a secret society was formed as of March 1881, right after the terrorist attempt on the Tzar Alexander II's life. It was called the *Sacred League*. The *League* aimed at defending the tzars and their autocratic regime. It engaged in the struggle against terrorism and against all enemies of the public order. Prominent members of the *Sacred League* were the anti-Jewish Minister Ignatiev and the Procurator of the Holy Synod Pobyedonostzev.

Nicholas Pavlovich Ignatiev became Minister of the Interior in May of 1881. He fought against Liberalism in general, and he was staunchly in favour of the absolutist regime of the tzars of Russia. He was a courtier, of course, his wealth and his power came directly from the imperial regime. He was very influential at the Tzarist Government and at the court of St

Petersburg. Still, he already fell from power in the autumn of 1882. He had the tzar agree with what have been called the *May Temporary Laws* or rules, the Ignatiev laws, published in May of 1882.

Constantin Petrovich Pobyedonostzev was the Procurator of the Holy Synod since 1880. He had been a former professor at the University of Moscow. A courtier also, he was convinced enlightenment and political freedom could only be harmful to Russia and the tzardom. He had been a teacher of the present tzar, had induced the tzar to religious intolerance, and wielded much influence in the Orthodox Church and at the court of St Petersburg. He proved in favour of oppressive and repressive laws directed against all people of non-Orthodox faith, as well against the Lutherans and Roman Catholics as against the Jews. The period of somewhat more tolerance towards the Jews ended with the death of Tzar Alexander II, under the influence of the *Sacred League* men.

For the Jews, the *May Temporary Laws* held three different articles, separate laws, which augmented the anti-Semitic feelings, and proved of great importance, a constant source of harassment and suffering for the Russian Jews.

The first law forbade henceforth the Jews to settle outside the towns and townlets – the *shtetls* – of the Pale. The only exceptions admitted on this law were the Jewish colonies that had existed long before 1882, and whose inhabitants were peasants.

The second law suspended the completion of all instruments of purchase of real property or mortgages in the name of Jews. It suspended the registration of the Jews as lessees of landed estates outside the towns and townlets or *shtetls*. It suspended the issue of powers of attorney to enable the Jews to manage and dispose of such, their property. This law blocked the Jews from owning distilleries, breweries and inns in the countryside.

The third law forbade the Jews to do business on Sundays and Christian holidays. The law on the closing of such days for places of business belonging to Christians, would from then on also apply to any such places owned by the Jews. As the Jews also did not work on Sabbath days, this restricted their businesses further.

In other words, the Jews were forbidden to own property in the countryside of Russia and of the Pale, and they were forbidden to live in the countryside. The Jews had to move to the towns and townlets.

When Minister Nicholas Ignatiev fell from power, a little after the publication of his *May Laws*, the laws got somewhat discredited. They were only partially carried into execution. In some places, such as in Vilna, the *May Laws* were regarded as having been suspended and under consideration by the Russian Senate. Nevertheless, the Jews were gradually harried from the villages and driven into the towns of the Pale. As a result of this, for instance, a town like Chernigov grew in a year and a half from 5,000 to about 20,000 souls!

In the years 1889 to 1890, when stricter anti-Semitism spread in Russia, the Government officials intended to extend and intensify the *May Laws*. The tzar and the Grand-Duke Michael did object to the repressive use of the laws. Most other governments of Europe thought the *May Laws* had been abrogated and had fallen into disuse. They were suddenly called back to active operation in those years of 1889 and 1890. Also, the interpretation of the

laws was often, if not always, taken by the Russian Senate and by the Russian Supreme Court of Appeal in a sense invariably adverse to the Jewish people.

The Jews who had not resided in the villages of the Pale from long before 1882, were expelled from them. Even people who had been living in the villages for ten to fifteen years, were in some instances expelled from their homes, quite suddenly, and even in the middle of the winter. All subterfuges could suddenly be applied by the imperial courts to harass the Jews.

In Vilna, the suburbs of the town came suddenly to be considered as villages! The Jewish families living in them were driven out of the suburbs, into the already overcrowded town, or they had to move to other towns. Families whose names did not appear in the village registries of way before 1882, were expelled, and that even when no such special registers existed at all! Every means was thus adopted in the Russian Pale provinces, to carry out the policy of internment of the Jews in the towns, and that with utmost strictness.

Of course, there was the Imperial Law of 1865, allowing Jewish artisans to reside everywhere in the countryside! Some provinces, however, decided that Jewish bakers, butchers, glaziers of vinegar makers, for instance, should not be regarded as artisans. Hence, these people too were expelled from the villages. The right of residence in the Pale did not automatically pass on to the children. Unless they qualified as artisans too, they were expelled from their homes. Also, printers were not considered to be artisans. A tailor's cutter was not a tailor, hence could be expelled. Who decided on the qualification of artisan? Mostly, these men were the Guild Masters of the villages. The masters of the guilds came under many, various pressures from the civil or ecclesiastical authorities to choose what Jew was an artisan, and who not. When there was some competition among Jewish and Christian artisans, the Jewish one got expelled.

The Jewish merchants could travel in Russia. This liberty of movement had been granted to only three classes of people. It was granted to young men who had by 1890 reached the higher classes of education in the Russian universities, to certain classes of professional men – which meant to recognised artisans -, and to merchants of the First Guild, which were to the richest Jewish traders, and that on payment of special taxes.

Tzar Alexander II had encouraged his Jewish subjects to attend the government-organised public schools. In the 1890s, the proportion of Jewish scholars studying at the gymnasiums and at the universities, was defined and limited. It became limited to 10% in the Pale, to 5% outside the Pale, and to 3% in Moscow and in St Petersburg. In most towns of the Pale Settlement Areas, the Jewish population was much higher than the 10%. The student percentages from before the new law were much higher than now allowed. In the Pale itself, only the provinces of New Russia and of the Ukraine fell below 10%, the Ukraine being at about 9.7%! The law was clearly discriminatory.

The income from the special tax on animals slaughtered in accordance with the Jewish *kosher* rules, were in principle and by law to be used for the higher scholarship of the Jews.

Generally, this money was squandered by the Russian authorities.

At one time, the wealthy and Jewish Baron Hirsch proposed a gift of two million pounds to the Russian State for the higher education of the Jews. The gift was simply refused.

A few higher education professions remained closed to the Jews: army doctors, veterinarians, as well as lawyers were in that case. Jews could study law, but not practise it at the bars.

By 1888, more than 2,400,000 Jews lived, worked and survived in the Pale Settlement Areas. By the May Laws, about 1,500,000 Jews were expelled out of Russia proper, sent to the towns and townlets within the Pale. And from 1890 to 1900, more than 270,000 Russian Jews emigrated to the American continents!

The Russian Jews emigrated to the Americas, because it had become more and more difficult to earn a living in the towns of the Pale. The Jews found themselves persecuted, as ever new repressive measures and rules were invented by the Russian authorities to harass them. This long economic persecution of the Jews, who had once been received friendly in the Lithuanian territories, created enormous poverty in the towns. Nevertheless, the Russian Governments claimed obedience from the Jews, despite the sacrifices. None of the rules inferred offered more safety for the Jewish families and communities.

By 1900, there lived about 3 million Jews in Russia. The Pale counted 114 towns and *shtetls*, in which the Jews were allowed to reside. In the Pale Settlement Areas, 4 towns held more than 80% Jewish population. 14 towns held between 70% and 80% of Jews, 68 towns between 50% and 70%, and 28 towns had between 20% to 40% Jews. Yet, the percentages for scholars, less than 10% in the Pale, were in application!

The *May Laws* of Ignatiev were gradually not abrogated, but applied with increased severity. The Jews remained a patient and loyal people. They did not easily renege on their broader family bonds. The cause of the slowly growing and steady persecution of the Jews was the determination shown by the leading Russian classes to not allow the Jews to become superior or even only equal to the Russian higher classes themselves.

Due to the persecution, the position of the Jews was rapidly becoming worse than that of serfs. The Jews were definitely not welcome in Russia, also not in Poland under Russian domination, and they were considered as foreigners, who could turn into a danger to the State when given the same freedom as the other citizens of the empire. And still, some Jews prospered.

The resentment against the Jews, encouraged by the higher classes, were considered by the Russian peasants and by the poor as the reason for their own dire situation. Were the Jews not predominantly traders, and was trade not an unproductive profession? Traders always sought low prices for goods and services. Was this not the reason why so many Russian people remained poor?

## The Pogroms

The word *pogrom* is a Russian word, a term derived from a verb meaning to destroy, to wreak havoc, to demolish with violence. It entered the English language to denote attacks on Jews in the Russian empire, starting from about 1881, mostly though not exclusively in the Pale of Settlement provinces. The pogroms denoted violent riots, aimed at the massacre or at the violent persecution of the Jews.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April of 1881, in the town of Elizavetgrad, Elisabethgrad or Kirovograd of New Russia, happened what may be called the first pogrom against the Jews in the era we describe. Elizavetgrad was a town of then about 15,000 inhabitants. A crowd threw itself on a Jew after a row in an inn. Afterwards, the crowd attacked Jewish residences. Houses and stores, typically primarily liquor stores, were destroyed.

Two days later, in the morning, soldiers entered the town and stopped the riots. This was a common pattern of intervention in later such pogroms. The army rode in when the harm had been done. In neighbouring townlets, similar attacks then happened. In April and May of 1881, further attacks, perpetrated by savage and drunken mobs, happened in Kiev, in more than fifty villages and townlets of southern Russia, and at Odessa.

An eye witness of Kiev described the pogroms. He wrote how, around noon, suddenly cries could be heard in the city, as a large mob of unskilled labourers drew into the streets. They began to destroy Jewish houses. Windows and doors were stamped in. Everything valuable from the houses the mob could lay hands on, was thrown out of the windows. The mob soon drew to the synagogue and destroyed the building. The men tore up the Torah rolls, trampled them under their feet and utterly destroyed them. Soon, the labourers appeared literally much thicker than before, because they had pillaged shops of clothing. The labourers had taken on three, four suits, and paraded thus dressed in the streets. Many wore sacks, filled with plunder, on their shoulders. The Christian population hastily placed crucifixes and images of saints at their windows, to not be taken for the houses of Jews. Later, in the part of the city where most of the Jews lived, called Podol, Cossacks rode here and there, and troops on foot and on horse patrolled. Officers rode in. The soldiers surrounded the mob and ordered it to leave. The mob indeed dispersed, but only to continue their destructions elsewhere in the city. The violence lasted until 3 o'clock in the night. Although the Russian soldiers did their best to disperse the drunken and rioting men, the mob multiplied its anger and continued the pillaging assaults. The mobs beat the Jews, killed also, maimed, threw Jews in the flames of houses set to fire, and violated women.

In Odessa, the fights became particularly cruel, as the Jews defended themselves. The students of the University of Odessa had organised the Jewish self-defence in the city. The mobs everywhere committed atrocious outrages on the Jewish population. In the majority of cases, the Russian officials and the Courts of Justice treated the acts of overt pillage and violence as mere petty street brawls, or as common disturbances of the peace. On the perpetrators, the judges imposed ridiculously light penalties. This, of course, encouraged more violence elsewhere.

The pogroms could be regarded as expressions of the resentment of the Russian Orthodox population against the Jews. Even the tzar mentioned the hatred against the Jews could be

caused by the economic domination of the wealthier Jews and by the exploitation of the Russian population by them.

As official reason for the riots, the Russian authorities mentioned that the Jewish communities, as pre-eminently engaged in the mercantile class, as traders, were occupied in unproductive labour, thereby exploiting the productive classes of the Christian Orthodox population, and particularly the peasants. Such reasoning seems absurd, but it was officially mentioned and used as an excuse in courts of justice. The opposers to the Jews equally claimed the Jews had captured the commerce and industry of Russia. The Jews competed with the Christian urban estates, interfering with them in their own exploitation of the people.

A report of an imperial investigation committee established under Count Kutayrov, concluded vengeance was wrought upon the Jews, mostly by the Russian peasants, who were the victims of the exploitation by the Jews. The vengeance was also forced upon the Jews by the wealthier burghers, candidates themselves for the role of exploiters!

Another report of the Minister Ignatiev of August of 1881, told the recent pogroms had shown that the injurious influence of the Jews could not be suppressed by more liberal measures on them. The Russian Government recognised it was justified in adopting more energetic measures to remove the abnormal relations existing between the original Russian inhabitants and the Jews. It concluded the State should rather and more shield, protect the Russian population from the harmful Jewish activities. Such activities, ultimately, had been responsible for the disturbances against the Jews.

By an imperial decree of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August of 1882, the Tzarist Government decided to set in place in the Pale a special commission, to be presided over by the governors of the provinces, of the *gubernias*, charged with the task of finding out exactly which aspects of the economic activity of the Jews had exerted an injurious influence on the life of the Russian population. As nothing concrete was done in the meantime, the *pogroms* continued. Moreover, the pillaged, wounded, killed, raped Jewish population itself was put on trial! Was it their fault they were attacked by angry men? Probably yes, the courts ruled. In September and October of 1881, 16 such committees were established, in the 25 provinces of the Pale and in Kharkov.

Later on, a particularly violent three-day *pogrom* fight took place in Warsaw. Still later, ever more frightful persecutions happened in Balta, a large, Jewish centre of Podolia. Women were violated, men killed or maimed. Only on the third day were Russian troops called in to stop the violence.

The resolutions of the various committees and conferences on the violent disturbances came with the May 1882 *Temporary Laws* of Minister Ignatiev. Nevertheless, as early as the 10th of May 1881, the Russian senators sent a decree to the governors of the Pale provinces, holding them responsible for the adoption of timely measures to prevent the disorders of the *pogroms*.

At the end of May 1882, Count Ignatiev was forced to resign. Count Demetrius Tolstoy was appointed as the new Minister for the Interior. The count began to adopt a stricter, rigorous attitude towards the *pogroms*. The *pogroms* by that time assumed a more sporadic character. Nevertheless, they continued until 1884.

The Jews could feel the Russian courts took more seriously in hand the acts of violence. Nevertheless, in all, the Jews suffered from *pogroms* in hundreds of villages, towns and townlets.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February of 1883, the tzar and his Government issued a decree calling for the formation of the *High Commission for the Revision of the current Laws against the Jews*. This commission existed for about 5 years. Its president was the Count von Pahlen, a former Minister of Justice, an integer man. The committee became known as the *von Pahlen Commission*.

In the meantime, further administrative measures were ordained to make the life of the Jews in the villages unbearable. The Jews of the countryside were practically placed in the position of serfs, as by the prohibition of them moving from one village to the other, they remained fixed to their current places of residence. A Jew marrying a girl from another village, could not move to that village, for instance, to take over the workshop from his father-in-law. Other rules included the barring from civil service and from academic careers of all Jewish physicians and lawyers, so that the doctors and lawyers were limited to private and local practice.

Jews serving as soldiers in the army, could never be promoted to the officers' ranks. The Jewish soldiers were not allowed the right of residence in the localities outside the Pale where they had been stationed, and had sometimes married.

The pogroms continued in 1883, with particular violent instances in Rostov-on-the Don, and in several outbreaks in Ekaterinoslav and environs. The last pogrom of that period may have happened outside the Pale, in Nizhniy-Novgorod. It happened on a small Jewish community of about 20 families. Murders were committed. The Governor Baranov tried the murders by court-martial. The perpetrators suffered heavy punishments. Such measures diminished the outbreaks and violent acts. They finished the sense of impunity of the attackers.

When the von Pahlen Commission finally published the results of its investigations, a bomb exploded in the world of St Petersburg! The Commission stated it had found no less than 650 restrictive laws directed against the Jews, all duly enumerated in the Russian Code of Law. The Commission concluded that the prohibitive laws had not improved the Jews. They had developed in the Jewish people only a spirit of opposition! The laws prompted the Jews into devising ever more dexterous means of evading the laws, and thereby also corrupting the lower executives of the State. The Commission denied the Jews were foreigners in Russia. It concluded the current system of repressive and discriminating measures in Russia had to give way to a gradual system of emancipatory and equalising laws.

The reaction of the Count Tolstoy, the Minister of the Interior, was to block all further progress of the plans formulated by the von Pahlen Commission. The publication of the results in the newspapers was forbidden. Thus, the work of five years was buried in the Russian state archives. Anti-Semitism could continue to spread widely in the highest Government circles.

In 1889, after the demise of Count Tolstoy, Ivan Durnovo was appointed as the new Minister of the Interior.

Ivan Nikolayevich Durnovo, born in 1834 and deceased in 1903, had been governor of the provinces of Tchernigov (1863-1870) and Yekaterinoslav (1870-1880). He had been Minister of the Interior from 1882 to 1886 and from 1889 to 1895, and he was Minister-President from

1895 to 1903. Durnovo was an amiable man, nor too much cultivated nor very intelligent, but an agreeable, diplomatic person. The imperial court reproached him for not having taken adequate measures to stem the famine in Russia from 1891 to 1892. Von Plehve was his Assistant-Minister and Chief of the Police. Both men showed anti-Semitic tendencies. They developed a new plan for the Jews, as restrictive as before. Their plan was aimed at curtailing further the economic activities of the Jews, at increasing yet again the rigour of the *May Temporary Laws*, at restricting further the remaining privileges granted to certain categories of Jews outside the Pale, to establish Jewish ghettos in St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and by defining other oppressive measures.

The repressive measures continued to be ordained. All sorts of smart rules were invented to harass the Jews. One means was to downgrade the status of the smaller townlets, the Jewish *shtetls*, to villages or rural settlements, thus driving the Jews who had lived there since ages to the larger towns, into utter misery. The higher officials of around the year 1890, showed consistent opinions of hostility against the Jewish communities.

Some protest rose from the Russian, more compassionate-minded population. Vladimir Solovyov wrote a protest against the anti-Semitic movements in the Russian press. The writer Leon Tolstoy and 50 notable persons of St Petersburg, joined by 66 other such persons of Moscow, co-signed the protest. But all the Russian newspapers received orders from the Russian Press Department not to publish such collective pronouncements on the Jewish question!

Particularly harsh, devious measures to drive away the Jews, were taken in St Petersburg and Moscow, the capitals of the empire.

In 1890 still, the Governor Gresser of St Petersburg issued a decree prescribing that the signs on stores and workshops belonging to Jews should indicate the family names of the owners, their full first names, and the names of their fathers. It was thus quite easier for potential customers to detect the Jewish shops. The Christian buyers could more easily boycott these Jewish stores.

In 1891, the governor of St Petersburg ordered the police to examine the shops of the Jewish artisans and to confiscate the goods not manufactured by themselves. Artisans were allowed by law in St Petersburg, not traders. Such measures drew many Jewish artisans into poverty, so that they had to leave the capital.

In Moscow too, the rules against the Jews toughened. In Moscow then lived about 30,000 Jews. When a brother of the czar, Grand Duke Sergius, was appointed to governor-general of the city, the mayor of Moscow, a merchant called Alexeyev, with the support of the Procurator Pobyedonostzev, ordained the evacuation of all Jews from the city during the glorious, solemn entrance of the Grand Duke into Moscow.

Other measures for Moscow forbade all Jewish mechanics, distillers and brewers, master workmen in general, to come over from the Pale or other Russian places to work in the city.

More measures were taken to have the Jews gradually leave Moscow. Families got expelled for the slightest reason. More than 20,000 Jews, living in Moscow, were thus forcibly removed and sent to the Jewish Pale of Settlement. Of course, this was in contradiction to the

1865 Imperial Law that had conferred the right of universal residence on the Jewish artisans. That law was conveniently ignored.

*Pogroms* continued to happen in other Russian cities, though in lesser numbers than in the years 1881 and 1882.

The Russian Government told the Jews they could only tolerate a building such as the magnificent and grand Moscow synagogue, if it would be used for charitable purposes. All Jewish rituals and ceremonies were prohibited in the building. The Jewish community of Moscow closed the synagogue, to use it as a Jewish school, then as a kind of hospital, and later they had to close the site altogether. Only when the Governor-General of Moscow, the Grand Duke, was assassinated in 1911, was the synagogue humbly re-opened.

In October of 1891, the Russian Government entered into negotiations with the Baron Hirsch to remove more than 3 million Jews from Russia to Argentina. A plan was drawn up to stimulate the emigration of 3.3 million Jews. The Russian Government wanted the money for the operation not to be handed over to the Jewish public agencies founded for the emigration, but to the Russian Government, which would use it as it saw fit. Hirsch knew what would happen to the money if he just handed it over to a few Russian authorities.

Hirsch refused, and the whole scheme fell through. From 1892 to 1894, only about 6,000 Jews emigrated to Argentina, and by the end of the century only 10,000. Still, in the period of from 1881 to 1890, more than 135,000 Jews emigrated to the United States alone. The Jewish families sailed from Königsberg or Danzig over Hamburg to Antwerp, where the famous White Star Lines brought them in ships over the ocean to New York, to the immigration centre of Ellis Island.

The Jewish scholars did not remain untouched by the suffering of the Jewish communities. In December of 1890, Rudolf von Gneist and others founded the *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus*, the Association for the defence against anti-Semitism, of which soon also many Christians became members.

At the end of January of 1891, 535 Christian men published papers asking for the maintaining of the equality between all citizens, also Jewish citizens, in Germany.

In 1893, was founded the *Zentralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens*. It called for all powers of self-defence to unite in the battle against anti-Semitism.

We must not forget Bismarck once wrote very clearly he was against any struggle against the Jews. Also, Emil du Bois-Reymond, Friedrich Nietzsche, Emile Zola, Theobald Ziegler, Peter Rosegger, Karl Schurz, Max Müller, Leon Tolstoy, General von Deimling, Prof. Dr. Ernst von Aster, Prof. Dr. Heinrich Frick, Herbert Eulenberg and many other scholars of that period wrote against anti-Semitism, calling it a national shame.

Due to the persecution of the Jews in Lithuania, all the members of the Vincius and Vincevicius families living there, emigrated to the Americas. They sold what they could, turned their money into small gold bars and in jewellery, and left. The Vincius of Thorn lost all contact with them.

The Lithuanian roots of the Vincius of Thorn, of the Prussian Jews of the family, were thus reduced to memories of the far past, almost of times of legends. The Vincevicius of Vilna were extinct. They continued in other continents, in another world, and contacts with the Vincius of Prussia were lost.

## The young Julian Vincius. 1890-1898

Julian Vincius the Younger was the first child of Andreas Vincius and his wife, Lore Kremer. Andreas and Lore were still quite young people when Julian entered the world. His parents were pious Jews both. Julian was born very early in the married life of his parents. Almost everybody counted and knew he had come way too early from the date of the official marriage ceremony. Still, nobody formulated that remark in the house of the Vincius in the *Breite Strasse* of Thorn, for the Vincius were decent people, wealthy, and a prominent family present in several associations for the well-being of the community. Early births were quite common in Thorn.

When the baby was due to come, Lore Kremer laid in a wide, fine bed upstairs, in her cosy bedroom, the largest in the house. She would be assisted in her birth-pangs by several other women, who ran about in eager expectancy. The women were diligent and intelligent, though none of them professional nurses.

In Lore's bedroom stood and worked Hannah Sonnenfeld, the 40-year old grandmother of the child to come. As she was the oldest present, she ordered everybody about. She was good at taking the helm.

There was also the 19-year old Maria Rosenthal, the wife of the Julian-to-be's uncle Max, married only a few years ago and not yet a mother. With her was the 15-year old Hanne Altman, the promised of Julian already called the Elder, the other uncle-to-be of the young child, and, quite astonishingly, the 18-year old Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius, married von Gomolenski last year. She was the only non-Jewish girl present, and nobody cared about the difference. Maria was a Prussian Evangelic by faith, her husband was Catholic.

Now, 40, 19, 18 and 15-year old young women could not claim the experience needed to cope with complications that might happen at any birth. Hannah Sonnenfeld had therefore called in an experienced lying-in woman. Emma Graben was in her sixties. She was a nurse of great experience. According to common knowledge, she had helped to give birth to more than thirty babies in good health. The Vincius house-doctor, Samuel Statten, just over 70 years old, had recommended Emma warmly. The doctor had told that with Emma around, he would only have to be called upon in case of extreme urgency. He had had a good look at Lore Kremer, knew her family, and thought really he would not be needed. He knew Emma very well too, a little too much and too intimately, bad tongues told, and trusted in her. The arrangement had satisfied the Vincius women. After all, birth-giving was painful, nerves were strained, but a lusty, strong woman and as smart as Lore Kremer, was not bound to develop complications. In that judgement, they were right, too.

The men sat downstairs in Andreas's new hall, comfortable with each other's presence, laughing at the jokes they cracked one after the other, a little nervous nevertheless, but confident, as the women cared for everything.

The birth proceeded nicely and quickly, more rapidly than expected. Julian Vincius popped out of his mother without much fuss, mostly on his own, at the time of his choosing, wet and slimy, yet rosy, and with a mouth that opened straight away, hard and clear.

He cried, 'I'm hungry. Give me my milk!'

Untypically, the baby boy had waited until two in the afternoon, whereas most of the Vincius children had mostly dropped out or be ejected with force early in the morning. Had he waited

till dinner-time? The baby had taken his time, showed a quite relaxed, unwrinkled face and body, and shouted as soon as he was out. He smiled at the same time.

‘Wow, this one is a great charmer,’ Emma Graben exclaimed.

Julian had obtained at once a nickname, ‘the Charmer’! It stayed that way the first years of his life. After those years, he became too formidable a young man for the nickname.

After his first ten minutes however, washed clean in warm water, and placed in white swindles, saturated from the heavy milk of his mother, he looked as handsome as the finest young boys of Thorn.

The women brought Julian downstairs. He was handed over from hand to hand. Several bottles of vodka stood on the tables in the hall. The vodka, not the bottles, now disappeared even faster than before. One should feast and congratulate the father with such a fine boy, did one not? Andreas Vincius was the first man to take the baby out of the hands of Emma Graben. His long, black beard, seemed to impress the child. Julian Vincius, looked at the creature that bowed above him, so different from the faces he had vaguely noticed in shadows so far. His eyes looked wide open! He stopped crying for a while, as if wanting to study the new experience. His uncles, Max the Younger, and Julian the Elder wore no beard. He recognised them better, started smiling, which ravished both the men. Julian’s grandfather Kurt Vincius stood in the hall.

At that time, also entered Max the Elder, the patriarch of the Vincius Family. He too wore a beard, a black and close-cropped, sophisticated, aristocratic beard, showing his erudition, elegance and dignity. He was Julian’s great-grandfather. In his hands, Julian seemed to calm. The hands that held him were warm, the man’s breadth sober and smelling fine. The baby smiled once more, an easy, confident smile. With Max had entered his wife, the noble, warm-feeling and gentle Leandra von Chrapitz, young Maria’s mother. Maria had come down, too, and ran to her mother. Both smiled and held hands. Here was one more child who loved her mother. Only smiling faces then could be seen in the hall. The laughter and the cheers took up again. Amidst the cheers, Doctor Samuel Statten pushed his head in, although no urgency had happened. He simply wanted to make certain everything had happened without fuss. A glass of vodka, of the best, was pushed into his hands. Was that not the first reason the doctor had shown himself?

The men and women soon could eat and drink on. The women brought in a meal of several stages. Songs of praise and of glory were sung in Hebrew and in Yiddish. Praise be the lord! Praise be the Lord was also what the Rabbi heard, the Rabbi of the Thorn centre synagogue, when he too entered to have a look at the new-born. The Rabbi was pushed down at the table, plates shoved in front of him. He had to stay! He too ate and drank, and sang. The joy was complete. Young Julian could not have been born in a happier home! Julian enjoyed thus, and maybe suffered a little of too much attention so soon, at a typical Jewish birth in prosperous Thorn.

A year after Julian was born, his brother Johan threw himself into the world and out of his mother. Julian was too small to realise any difference in the way his parents treated him. His father anyway didn’t seem to bother about any of his offspring.

Julian remained in the care of his mother. He was a mother’s child. As well as his brother, he had much stronger links with his mother. His father was often absent, and when at home ever more absent in mind. Julian later heard his father was subject to fits of depression, and liked to travel far and wide.

Julian developed into a bright boy with a firm head, an observative and inquisitive brain. He showed a great curiosity for all things of the world, and proved very apt at learning from others. He picked up languages at a very young age, without even realising. He spoke Yiddish and German quite naturally, though soon he mixed the words with Polish terms. Many people in town and in the harbour spoke rather Polish than German. Julian hung around quite much in places he shouldn't at his age. He roamed along the Weichsel. As he mixed up his languages, it was often difficult to follow him in what he was trying to explain or ask. When he was but three years old, he could express himself in those 3 languages quite well, and separately. The Jews of his larger family considered him a prodigy.

When he was six years old, his mother sent Julian to the *heder*, the Jewish primary school. A new world opened there to him, the world that had been, the history of the Jewish people. He began to understand he was not exactly the same as the boys he met in the street, the German-speaking Prussian boys of Thorn. He was of another breed, of another tribe, of other origins. He was neither truly German, nor Polish! His parents sent him off to school on his own. He had not far to go. They did not quite know where he hung out when he arrived late from school, but they showed no worry either. The boy said he had loitered on the way, never explained where he had really been. Strangely, though, his mother recognised he had picked up some Russian, and the Old Rus language of the neighbouring lands of Lithuania. Surely, he had been wandering in the harbours of Thorn! Julian loved to look at the boats. He heard the shippers and the sailors along the Weichsel talk. The dockworkers spoke Polish. He answered them in their own language.

In those years, Julian's mother Lore read a lot to him and to his brother. The two boys loved stories in which marvellous things happened. The Bible was full of such stories. Julian learned the Torah better from his mother's readings than from his *heder* teachers. Still, in the *heder*, he understood the true meaning of the content. He learnt the implacable logic inherent in them. He started reading the *Talmud* and the commentaries of the Rabbis on the *Torah*, long before his teacher at school started to explain to him. He seemed to possess the talent of a prodigious memory by then, which astonished everybody. Nothing needed to be said to him twice.

Julian's great-grandfather Kurt still organised family reunions. Julian was still quite young when he met in those meetings the 'other' members of the family, the von Chrapitz children and adults. He met the young girl called Dorothea. Dorothea was the eldest daughter of Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius. Maria had married the Prussian-Polish nobleman Andrej von Gomolenski. The Gomolenski were wealthy landowners, living in the district of Thorn, but at the far northern outskirts of the city. Their ancestors, as the name indicated, had been Polish men of the *szlachta*, the Polish nobility. Maria and Andrej lived in a castle. Little Dorothea, however, lived in Thorn, in the family of the Gomolenski, in her aunt's house. This was easier for her to go to school. Her aunt on her father's side was not married. The Gomolenski were no Jews. They were of the Polish Catholic, whereas the von Chrapitz-Vincius were Protestant Prussian Evangelics. Other members of the wide family of the Gomolenski were Catholic, like their Polish forefathers. Julian saw little of Dorothea then, for she was 2 years younger than he, went to another kind of school, and rarely wandered in the centre of the city.

After the *heder* years, Julian refused to go to the *besmedresh*, and continue studies of the *Talmud*. He entered the German Gymnasium when he was just 13 years old. He wanted to study in German, had already a very precise idea in his head why he wanted that, but told nothing of it, even to his mother. He had it difficult in the pre-Gymnasium at first, the difference between the *heder* and the Gymnasium being so large. In the Gymnasium, he had quite another way of learning to cope with, and his German was adequate, but not great. He

persevered, studied by himself in books of the Thorn library, caught up after about three months, and ended first of his class. He remained that for all the subsequent years! In a larger town, such as Danzig, Königsberg or Leipzig or Berlin, he would have been called a prodigious child and maybe be followed in another way by his teachers. It was true, he possessed a vast memory. He had only to hear something once to retain it for the rest of his life, and his mind was very quick.

Nothing special happened to him in those years. He was a very dedicated boy. He studied maybe a little too effortlessly, superficially, in most courses, but he succeeded well in the examinations for most of his subjects. Everything came easy to him in the Gymnasium. He had a ferocious curiosity for all sciences. His teachers called him a true Prussian. His mother began to complain everything came too easy to her older boy. Life was not as her son perceived, for he had all coming his way without hurrying and without scares. His mood remained always equal, without dark depressions or great enthusiasms. Julian was a docile child, did as he was told, talked little and thought no less. He rarely answered harshly to an order, obeyed as quickly as he could, and then did what pleased him. It was far easier and more rapid to do as adults demanded, than to protest. His face often showed otherwise, though. He was as polite as politeness could be. He passed thus his Gymnasium years, and amassed knowledge more than wisdom.

In his Gymnasium years, Julian discovered or re-discovered his far cousin Dorothea von Gomolenski. She was the somewhat haughty daughter of the Count von Gomolenski. She was commonly called von Gomolenski now, in Thorn, the Prussian nobility title added to her name. In 1904, when Julian was 19 years old, she was 17, and a rare beauty. Why she used to hang out with Julian Vincius, was one of the mysteries of Thorn. Nobody quite understood why the young Dorothea rarely left the side of Julian. He was less tall than most other boys of their age, handsome, but not as sharply male and strong of body as his friends of the Gymnasium. He was not particularly attractive as a boy. Women did not turn their heads at him. He was also not especially ugly in such a way one might call him a character youth. He was gentle. Maybe he was smarter and warmer, understood instinctively what girls wanted to hear, though his charisma was not great in company. Maybe also, his character particularly appealed to the Gomolenski girl?

If there was one youth, who remained totally inconspicuous at the Gymnasium, it was Julian Vincius. He agreed with what anybody asserted, never objected to opinions proffered. He never played first violin, except at examination results. In a group, nobody would single him out for any reason, his appeal to be pushed forward remained non-existent. But the girl Dorothea Gomolenski, that wonderful girl, tall and Madonna-looking, with the bright eyes, almost transparent green-grey irises, the girl with the long, ample, dark, almost black hair, hung out with him and with nobody else.

Several people warned Lore Kremer they had noticed her son walk hand in hand with a girl, and that even unashamed, in the middle of town. Lore didn't worry much about her Julian. When she found out who the girl was, she worried even less. Dorothea was not really a Vincius, no direct relative of her son, no slut, but a well brought up and sensible young woman. The girl was a von Gomolenski, and Gomolenski was a very respectable name in Thorn. The girl was rather of good Polish descent than of Russian or Lithuanian stock. She was known as a quiet girl, though not a Jew. Lore Kremer was a practising and pious Jewish woman. She had an open mind, though. Other women could be decent, too. Wasn't it too soon to draw any conclusions about the relations of her son and the Gomolenski girl? Lore kept her silence and had confidence in her son. In fact, she was glad her Julian was quite a normal boy with the right appetites for the other sex.

When Julian began his last Gymnasium year, Lore Kremer started interrogating the boy about his intentions in general. She asked him what he wanted to do next with his life. Normally, a father should ask these questions of his son. In the Vincius-Kremer household, the mother arranged all practical matters.

Lore expected the worse. Would the youngster answer he wanted to study on in a *yeshiva* and evolve to a dried-out scholar or perhaps a Rabbi? In that case, he could say goodbye to the Gomolenski lass. Or would he want to become a soldier, or a trader? Julian liked his great-uncle Haim much. He admired the stories Haim Vincius told him of the great battles in which he had fought against the enemies of Prussia, Austria and France. Or would the boy want to continue the long-time Vincius tradition of making hard money in trade? She preferred the latter!

Julian was writing in a notebook in his room, working on a text he had to deliver to the Gymnasium the next day. The question of his mother didn't surprise him.

Julian answered nonchalantly, immediately, 'oh no, mother, not anything of that! I want to become a doctor in medicine. I only don't really know yet to which university I would go to study. I could go to Königsberg, or to Berlin. Possibly to Dresden or Leipzig. I heard of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, of a fine university there. It seems an open-minded, very dedicated school. I shall need money, though, much money, for a period of six to eight years. I have been wondering whether our family could afford letting me study on, for so many years. I can promise to do my best, not much more. It is not just the cost of the university, mind you! I would need a room, an apartment really, money for books and food, money for transport and for the laboratories. I will travel by train. I don't need servants. I may have a need for a horse and cart, but those can be rented whenever I might need them. There would be the inscription fees. I would need money for all of that, before I could make any money on my own.'

Lore Kremer remained quite astonished by this answer. She saw the obvious. The boy knew very well what he wanted. He thought and projected himself far into the future. No doubt, he would become a fine doctor.

Lore Kremer mentioned, 'the money, we have. You should not worry about that. Your father is a strange man, but he makes money. Much money, too! I make money. We trade well. Money flows in steadily. But a place like Freiburg! That is a town on the other side of the world! On the Rhine! Why go so far away? Do you want to escape from us? You would only see us at rare occasions. How could we help you when you are so far away? You shall feel lonely out there. The region is called the Black Forest. That says it all! I don't know the least about that town. How large is it, actually? And what about that girl, Dorothea Gomolenski? Yes, I know all about her and you. You hang out with her, and quite a lot from what I heard. Won't you miss her?'

'Oh, mother, Dora says we are brother and sister. We are co-sanguineous. It shall never come to anything serious between us. She doesn't want someone like me. I am everything but an exciting catch for girls! Freiburg is a small town. It is far from Thorn, yes. The university there has an excellent reputation, though. Actually, I also think I need to learn to stand on my own feet for a while. The family weighs heavily on me. The frictions around grandfather Kurt and his Kleinberger mistress, the entire side of the von Chrapitz Family and of the Kleinberger Family, sent a heavy veil of tension over our families. The Kleinbergers and the von Chrapitz Vincius are no Jews. They have not our sensibility, nor our view of religion and of the world. Father is not a family man. Has he spoken more than two words to me the last year? I think not! You have Johann! You don't particularly need me. Johann wants to be a trader, so the family will help him and protect him. He will be able to freely talk to the men in

our family, and they will council him well, because he will be one of them. I will be on my own. You'll have to teach Johann. He will need you so much. You shall have your mind and your hands filled with him. I know very well our family depends on you. So, I have to ask the question of the funds for my continued studies. It is quite a relevant question! The money matter worries me most. If necessary, of course, I too can become a trader. But I doubt I have the talent. Grandfather Kurt has loads of money, and he inherited large sums from his father, from Max. I could talk to him, if necessary! Moneywise, we have been quite more modestly endowed. My question to you is a truly fundamental one. If I would want to study on for doctor of medicine, do you have the funds? I can provide you with an account of what would be needed, and I promise to keep to a budget.'

Lore Kremer felt a little piqued by her son's question.

'I answered you,' Lore went on. 'I said not to worry about the money. There is enough of that. Why not Berlin, then? Berlin is a very large city, the capital of Germany, and the family of your great-uncle Haim might help you get around.'

'Berlin is a very large city, I know, mother. There is a medicinal faculty in Berlin. I heard being a Jew is a little awkward in Berlin. I don't intend to make waves. I want to study at peace. Afterwards, maybe, probably, I would like to return to Berlin and work there. Yes, later, I'd like to find a job in Berlin. I am sure great-uncle Haim's family will help me out there. I reckon, too, I will be old enough by then to stand firmly on my own feet. I would like to develop my own list of clients. But all of that lays far in the future! No, for my studies, Freiburg seems all right for me.'

'You haven't truly answered my question concerning Dorothea Gomolenski. She is but a little co-sanguineous. I wouldn't bother about that issue.'

This time, it took quite some time before Julian responded. Then the words came out in some pain.

'I call her Dora Gomol. Most of her friends do so too. She has many friends, not just me. I know there should be no medical obstacle to us marrying. I sure am in love with Dora.'

Lore Kremer gasped. Once more, she remained quite astonished by what she had to hear. She hadn't expected such a statement, laden with sentiment, yet so coldly expressed, so clear and definite.

Of course, Julian noticed the surprise.

'Yes mother, I'm in love with Dora. Of that much, I am sure. Does Dora love me? I wonder! She calls us brother and sister, and that inserts quite a distance between us. Something strange binds us. Yes, she goes around with me a lot, much more than with any other boy I know. Nevertheless, I truly doubt she loves me. Why does she go around with other boys? Am I just convenient for her? Am I too Jewish for her tastes, for her class of people? Am I just convenient to her, somebody she can talk to and be listened to? Does she only think of me as a brother? Maybe I am indeed merely a confidant to her, a brother. I may be just the only person around she can talk to in full confidence. I never betrayed her, and I never will. She knows that. But does she love me? I think she seeks something else but what binds us. At the moment, she just seems to feel comfortable with me. Does she just like to talk to me for advice? I seem to know she has no other confidant in her family. Am I her intimate diary? She never speaks about her feelings. She remains calm and quiet with me, and then sometimes explodes on one or other subject, with a passion I didn't believe could possess her or could come out of her. We are very different of character. Maybe we have experienced very different situations in our lives.

Therefore, I also want to leave a distance between the two of us. I am too linked to her, and she too little to me. If she loves me, she will either start shouting at me and cursing at me

because I'm leaving her alone, or she may want to follow me, or she may just say very little, and consider my leaving only a slight inconvenience. I'd like to find out which of those options she might want to choose! You see, for that too, I need the distance between me and Thorn. Freiburg would probably be a good thing for me. It would allow me to think about my relations with Dora. I need the distance. Please understand.'

'You would also cut yourself off from the people who love you. From your parents, from the rest of the family, and entirely from Dora, as you call her, then?'

'I would, mother. I do love you most, though!'

Lore Kremer began to cry. She did so only very rarely. She felt the distress and the coldness in Julian's declarations. How could one so young be so ruthlessly logical? Why did he not fight for Dora, then, to the last word? She lacked many feelings in her son, even though Julian had asserted his love for Dora and for her. What kind of being could talk so coldly about feelings of love? She sensed a terrible lack of affection in her son. Was that because his father had never taken him in? Julian counted not on the affection of his family, not on the affection of Dora. He counted on the affection of his mother, but that was all. Her son would be very lonely in Freiburg, she knew. In that state of mind, he might throw himself on the first filly who would whisper in his ear she truly loved him! And what would those words mean? Yes, Lore thought, it had been very convenient for the boy's father not to show any affection for Julian. Andreas would have no issues with his son. He would never see any issues. He would have his peace. How cowardly of him! The boy was right. The Vincius Family had not given him much in that way, maybe excepted his great-grandfather Max, who had passed away. Max had died too soon. Only with Max would Julian have been truly able to talk. Well then, let the boy find his own way. Wasn't he a very intelligent, strong boy? Lore Kremer had a new aim in life: she should provide for her son with all the resources, all the means he needed to go his way. Yes, he needed money, and not the feelings money couldn't buy anyway.

'All right,' Lore concluded. 'You can get to any academy or university in Germany you would like to go, even to Freiburg. Tell me, who pointed out that town and university to you?'

'I asked two of my teachers at the Gymnasium. They found out about some of the best schools for doctors in medicine. They gave me consistent answers, especially when I said I would probably consider converting to Christianity before going to study there.'

Lore Kremer once more trembled on her legs. She had received sufficient surprises for one day from this one son! Aversion appeared on her face. Julian noticed. Her son wanted to leave the faith of his forefathers? Jewishness was not just a religion! It was a way of being you were born into and remained all your life, and bound your progeniture with! Being a Jew was a lot more than being a Christian, a lot more than vowing to any religion! Didn't Julian know that? Jewishness was nothing one could escape from! One was born a Jew, one could not become it, and one could not leave it! She had heard, and knew Max Vincius had converted. She had talked to Max about that decision, and sensed the Jewishness had always remained strongly in him, despite the appearances. How could any man or woman live, the contradictions of such amplitude inside the mind?

'You want to change religion,' Lore asked to her son. 'Why would you do that? Just to enhance a career? To get closer yet to Dora?'

'Well, frankly, maybe all of that, yes. Even as a doctor in medicine, I shall never get as rich as the traders in our family. I shall have their consideration, of course, for becoming a doctor is difficult, and one has to have a rare talent. I shall enjoy consideration and respect because

of how difficult studies for doctor are. But wealthy, truly wealthy, I shall never be. Being a Christian, an Evangelic man, might help. As a Jew, I shall remain everywhere an odd-man-out.'

'Wouldn't the change be against your most deep convictions? Don't be a traitor to yourself!' 'No, no, mother! That certainly not. I do believe a God exists. As any Jew, I have no idea of what nature such a creature might be. There can be only one God, so it must be the same God Christians and Jews venerate in their own ways, in different ways. Why would such an unfathomable being have taken special interest in one privileged people? Why would there exist only one covenant with one, at the times, desert tribe, as the Jews were? By some unexplainable whim or sudden impulse? Was it merely because God said so? Are those lines in the Bible really true? The peoples have evolved. They have not yet evolved all enough to be able to understand the most important is, of course, to live by the rules that have been disclosed, revealed, to us all in various forms, as suited us best. The ten commandments are so simple! Is it not time for all those religions to consolidate and converge? The differences are merely written by humans! The rules must have the same meaning. Glorifying and adoring God can be realised by different people in different ways. We have all lived through different experiences in our long history. By converting, I shall remain as much Jewish as before! When the Rabbis state we, Jews, are the chosen ones, don't we say the same, arrogant words, as other people do about their religion, which have as subject the one and same God? Why would we be better or closer to the God of the universe than anyone else? We all live differently. Is it then not logical to say we all serve the same God differently? I don't believe anymore our own, Jewish, ways, are better, more earnest, truer than anybody else's ways, as long as they are honest and dearly felt. So then why couldn't I become a Christian, if that makes it easier to live in the community of Germany? I do honour and grant respect to the persons who want to continue living their faith as our grandfathers have done. I just feel the times have changed, have evolved, to allow us to understand all men and women on earth long for the same. We should take a more mature, modern, open-minded, non-exclusive stand in matters of religion. Rituals that have existed for thousands of years are, for sure, very venerable. Yet, they seem old, ancient, inappropriate to me and for our times! They push us in isolated corners, limit our views on the concept of God, limit our investigations into the nature of God.'

Julian paused, looked at his mother, saw how eagerly she was listening, and then continued. 'Mother, we study the *Torah* for years, for half a lifetime, ever more smartly discussing matters that have been put to stone thousands of years ago, and that are really very simple in message. There is no more anything to learn, really, as the best minds have already told it all. The last percentile isn't worth expending so much energy over. Stagnation is death, mother. It numbs the mind. Worse, it numbs the hearts too, and particularly for us, Jews, it has shut us off from the world and brought us into thinking we are a lot better than any other people. Oh yes, we have a covenant with God. I rather want to believe each man and woman has a covenant with God. Isn't that why we pray, to be heard by God? Why would a poor beggar Muslim not be heard by God? So, we Jews, we should do good to show some more humility. I have my doubts about staying in a community that continually declares and thinks it is better than other communities. I know the most intelligent Jews don't do that, but how many are they? I don't care to which true religion I belong in the eyes of the world! In the eyes of God, I shall be the same man, anyway, and if I do wrong, then let God punish me. I need to be honest with God, not a hypocrite!'

Lore Kremer remained speechless. She continued talking to her son, but could not and wanted not to attack his logic. He was superior in that. Lore was an intelligent woman, but not hardy enough to impose on her son, now, and not enough to force him into accepting her

own views. He had become a man. Lore didn't think it wise to create more waves, to tempt her son into bringing out his most private ideas on the Vincius Family. He was the kind of man the former patriarch, Max, had been. Would Julian even speak out so openly to others about his convictions? Lore didn't think so. He would to his wife and to his mother, to no one else. She did begin to wonder how much Dorothea Gomolenski, Julian's 'sister' had influenced her son.

In that, at least, Lore was utterly right. Before loving Dora Gomol, Julian had been enamoured, smitten, by her. Dora was a girl, and not an imposing one either. Nobody else but Julian had ever asked her how she thought about religion. To Julian, she had explained her doubts. She was a Roman Catholic, as her father's family had been, even though her mother had remained Prussian Evangelic. Dora was a Christian, but she didn't care much about religion, as to some extent also Julian didn't. Much of what Julian had told his mother, were the conclusions to which Dora had led him. Still, Dora's logic was right. Dora's conclusion was to be a totally free woman in mind and actions. She claimed any God who had put humanity on the earth, would grant so much. Dora had explained her feelings to him, and he had added the rationale more clearly. He had thought, and convinced himself that what he had now said to his mother, was right. Or, at least, it was not as wrong as what any religion would assert, that its word was the only right one. Julian would remain ever rather bitter about the fact God would not reveal himself to him.

Julian had proceeded much farther with Dora than his mother could imagine. He and Dora looked the innocent youths at 19 and 17. They had never made love, as Dora told this was forbidden between brother and sister. Yet, Dora and Julian had often escaped to the old warehouse that had belonged to his great-grandfather Max near the summer harbour of Thorn. There, on top of a heap of stacks of straw, he had lain often with Dora, as 'brother and sister', up high, almost to the ceiling.

Dora lay naked now too, naked to lower than her waist, shirts and robe open. Julian's naked breast bowed over her. He knew by now every inch of her body, how tight or soft her skin felt when he ran his fingers over her. He knew how her breasts and nipples tightened and tasted. His tongue had worked on her belly and lower. She was not as clean and fragrant as he would have wished there, as he desired to smell and taste. Yet, it satisfied his hottest desires. And hers! Dora's hands had dwelled over every place of his body too. Dora knew his member, had already squeezed it to full length and firmness, touched it with her lips. She too had sought to discover much farther. No, they were no innocent sister and brother together.

Julian could not imagine Dora ever wanting to touch anybody else the same way. Yet, he understood she was able to do just that. How many times had she not told him she was a totally free creature? That statement had set him off more than once. She must have noticed it, but she didn't seem to care. Julian was too exclusive in his choice. Julian nurtured other views, opinions, feelings indeed, about what they were doing. Dora was right, of course, Julian knew very well. His own views were far more possessive and exclusive than she could fathom. Her liberty was what he rejected in love. His exclusive, possessive love was what she rejected in love. Yet, for him, the possession was all-important. He was often, if not each time, very angry when she told him how she admired other youths. She couldn't even think he might be jealous about that! He experienced stringent pain when she talked of the qualities of other young men, as if he didn't exist.

This pain had made Julian decide to go far from such worries and pains, and to hide in the Black Forest. Once, only once, Dora had expressed the wish to follow him to there. She would become a doctor too, or a nurse, at Freiburg. Julian didn't believe her. He also didn't know how to react. He resented her to want to continue to tie him to her, yet declaring herself

a free woman. He had so often had to refuse his exclusive thoughts about her! Julian needed as much to leave Thorn for Freiburg to break the bonds with Dora. He felt she would not be faithful to him. He wasn't sure he could live with a woman without the strong bonds of marriage, as still made an example in the Jewish faith. He could not live without those bonds. So, what they both wanted was contradictory. How to solve the conflict? Could it be solved? He could not remain a fine person, study for long days from dawn to sunset, make his own decisions, with the lovely, smart, exiting Dora around! She obsessed him too much.

Finally, at the end of Julian's last year at the German Gymnasium of Thorn, Julian converted to the Evangelic Faith in Thorn, and then left for Freiburg. His doings became a scandal in the Jewish community, but he went through with a simple ceremony in the Evangelic church of the centre, and got his way. Did he realise, actually, it drew him closer to Dora?

Julian boarded a train in Thorn, direction Warsaw. Gold coins had been sown into the linings of his coats, letters of promise of bankers lay behind the lining of his suitcase. He didn't tell Dora when exactly he would leave, but he had told her he would go. When the train set to move, he was alone in the station and in the train. Nobody had accompanied him. He felt very sad, miserable and lonely, but he sat in the compartment he had to himself and closed his eyes. He forced himself to think of nothing. He looked blankly at the unrolling landscape of the beloved Thorn he left forever.

## Julian Vincius in Freiburg. 1906-1912

Julian Vincius arrived in Freiburg before the end of spring of 1906. He was 20 years old, nearing on 21. He had travelled all alone, from Thorn to Warsaw, to Lodz and Breslau, the town usually called Wroclaw in Polish. From there he took a train to Leipzig and continued his trip over Frankfurt to Strasbourg in the Alsace region. He never left German territory, as the Alsace, and Lorraine, were German territory since 1871. He passed the Rhine again from Strasbourg to Freiburg-im-Breisgau. He did not make any mistake in taking the next train, and learned the first and most important lesson when travelling: never be afraid to ask your way, and check at least twice.

He arrived in Freiburg as tired as a deadbeat donkey, trailing behind him two large travelling cases, true trunks actually. He found a coach on hire at the station, and cried for the driver to help him with his trunks, as well as to bring him to a fine hotel. The driver noticed he had a new student in front of him, one who had never been at Freiburg before. He took pity on the young man, and put the whip on his horse to bring Julian to the best hotel in town. That was the famous *Zum roten Bären* in *Oberlinden Strasse*. It was a fine establishment indeed, situated in the old city centre, near the *Schwabentor*, the picturesque Schwaben Gate. Oberlinden was but a short street. It ended into the *Salzstrasse*, the Salt Street, which led immediately to the very centre of the city.

Julian entered the hotel, found at the desk a sympathetic fellow, and took a modest room for a week high up, far from the noise in the street. The first day he stayed in Freiburg, he emerged out of his room only to have dinner downstairs in a fine dining-room. He had fish, and found the food delicious. The second day, he put his nose outside. It was calm, sunny weather, though still fresh. He dressed up in his fur coat and decided to have a walk and look around. He noticed the fine, large, open street before him, lined by splendid houses, in which much wood was used.

The main difference with Thorn was, that many old houses were painted with all sorts of figures, animals and trees, plants and flowers, which was not usual in his home town. Freiburg looked more colourful than Thorn. Many people and coaches hurried under a little rain to the city centre. The *Schwabentor*, which he had not so well noticed two days ago, when he had arrived rather late, was a fine stone building, equally agreeably decorated. So far, so good. He found himself nicely surprised by the pleasant street and its painted houses. On the other side, far in front of the hotel façade, behind the houses, rose high, already bright green hills. He loved the rustic character of what promised to be a nice, country town with many people still hurrying by clad in traditional mountain clothing. The women and men wore more leather and leather patches on robes and vests than in Thorn. Julian first disappeared back inside. He rested a while, and then forced his body up and on. He boldly walked into town, in *Oberlinden* and in the *Salz*. At least, that was where the finger of a young boy pointed to when he asked where the university of Freiburg lay.

Julian discovered much more of the centre of Freiburg in the next days. He walked for hours, until he had seen most and had formed a map of the city centre in his mind. He also looked for an apartment to live in. He found a large one, not too expensive, in the *Salz*. This long street led from the *Schwabentor* to the very centre, and there to the Inscription Hall of the Albert Ludwig University. While he walked, he found a library, where he bought a small book with an outlay of the town, and a few notes on the history of the town he would be living in for the following several years.

Freiburg had been founded in 1120, as a free market town, by the Duke Berthold II of Zähringen. The street in which Julian found the university was therefore called the *Berthold*

*Strasse!* Much was linked in Freiburg. The city's name meant Free Fortified City, easy to remember. Freiburg indeed was a *Burg*, a fortified place. The central *Münster*, the cathedral, was begun under Berthold V, the last Duke of Zähringen, on the site of an older parish church. The Münster was only completed at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which was why Julian admired a building in the Gothic style. When Berthold V died in 1218, the Count of Urach assumed the title of Count of Freiburg, and called himself Eginio I of Freiburg. This was not much to the taste of the burghers of Freiburg, who had to pay heavy taxes to the greedy count.

By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Eginio II raised taxes so high his citizens revolted. The Freiburgers used catapults and very heavy stones to destroy the count's castle, built on top of the *Schlossberg*, on Castle Mountain, which lay quite close to the *Schwabentor*. As the Freiburgers were bound to win a conflict, the count appealed to the help of his powerful brother-in-law, the then Bishop of Strasbourg, Konrad von Lichtenberg. Lichtenberg hurried to Eginio's aid with an army. He had luck, entered the city after a short fight, but a butcher of Freiburg stabbed the bishop to death in July of 1299. Julian decided he had better remain polite and friendly with the Freiburgers. With that crime, the citizens of Freiburg had henceforth to pay an annual expiation amount of money of 300 marks in silver. They did that until in 1368. They could pay such a sum, for Freiburg was a town far richer than count and bishop had known. They became even richer, and finally bought their freedom from the counts that same year of 1368. They were free again, but needed better protection from counts and greedy bishops. They turned to the Habsburg Family!

In that year of 1368 also, happened the Battle of Sempach. This battle was fought on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1368, between Leopold III, the Duke of Austria, and the Old Swiss Confederacy. Switzerland lay not far off from Freiburg. The battle was a decisive Swiss victory in which Duke Leopold and numerous Austrian nobles died. The victory helped turn the Swiss Confederation into a more unified state. The battle was also a turning point in the making of Switzerland. Most of the nobles of Freiburg got killed at Sempach. The Schnewlin Family tried to take control of Freiburg. This succeeded for a while, until the Freiburg guilds revolted and won. Julian surmised the Freiburgers must have had shared the Swiss mentality of freedom.

One of the most important sources of income for Freiburg were the silver mines in Mount Schauinland. As of 1327 already, Freiburg could mint its own coins, called the *Rappenpfennig*. Later, Freiburg, Colmar on the other side of the Rhine and Breisach, formed a monetary coalition, the *Gemeinschaft des Rappenpfennigs*, the association on that coin, which facilitated commerce between the cities. The association lasted until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century! But by the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the silver mines of Freiburg were exhausted. In 1460 therefore, the population of the city fell to about 6,000 people living within its walls, down by more than one third from previous centuries. Nevertheless, the town remained an important centre of trade in the region. It was in Freiburg that the Alsacians came to sell their products, or to barter them against goods from the *Schwarzwald* Region, from the vast Black Forest east of Freiburg.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September of 1457, Albrecht VI, the Regent of Further Austria, established the Albert-Ludwig University, then appropriately called only the Albertina University. This was one of Germany's oldest such establishments. It was the second Habsburg university after the one in Vienna, and it was founded already with a faculty of medicine.

In 1520, the City Council ratified an ensemble of legal reforms, which were considered among the most progressive of the times. That same year, Freiburg decided not to take part in the Reformation, but to remain Catholic at heart. When the city of Basel accepted the

reformation and became Protestant, the great scholar and writer Erasmus moved from that town to Freiburg. He stayed in Freiburg for many years.

In 1564, the city lost about a quarter of its inhabitants to an outbreak of the Black Plague. Also, in the Thirty Years' War, the city suffered greatly. At the end of this war, during which the Austrians, the Swedes, the Spaniards and the men from other Lands of Germany captured the city and plundered it, merely about 2,000 citizens remained living within the walls. Between 1648 and 1805, Freiburg was not under French administration. It was the administrative centre of Further Austria, the Habsburg territories in the southwest of Germany. Then, in 1805, Freiburg became a part of the German Land of Baden. Freiburg had remained Catholic. In 1827, a Catholic Archbishop took his seat in the city.

In 1906, Catholic Freiburg also tolerated a small but thriving Jewish community of about 300 Jews, and a fine synagogue. Jews had settled in Freiburg since as early as the 1300s. In 1348, the plague spread into Germany. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of 1349, the Jews were arrested by the local militia, allegedly for having poisoned the city wells. This was a common accusation addressed to the Jews in those times, based entirely on ignorance. The Jews were tortured. They confessed to any crime brought before them. Around the same time, a *pogrom* took place in Basel. Maybe incited by those events, all the Jews living in Freiburg, with the exception of a few pregnant women, were burned at the stake. This happened on the Friday before the last day of January. The Jews were executed thus due to their misdeeds and murders, which they had instigated and admitted to under torture. The children of the dead Jews were saved, but baptised into Christianity.

Jewish families returned already after 1360, for Freiburg was a prosperous city. In July of 1401, the City Council reacted, ordering the expulsion of all Jews. No Jew was allowed to set foot again in the city. As history repeats itself, from 1411 on, the Jews were once more accepted in Freiburg. Then, from 1415 on, King Sigismund confirmed the Freiburg Decree of 1401. In 1424, he proclaimed an *Eternal Expulsion* of the Jews from the city.

Later, in 1782, Emperor Joseph II ordained the Patent of Toleration in Austria. The existing anti-Jewish laws were formally ended. Nevertheless, the Jews were still not considered by the inhabitants as full, equal citizens of Freiburg. They were, however, allowed to attend the Gymnasiums and the university. To ease the tensions, in 1809, the City Council assigned an inn to the Jews in the *Grünwälderstrasse*. It was a form of segregation of course, but the Jews could drink and eat at peace in the establishment. The inn's first tenant was the first acknowledged Jewish citizen of Freiburg.

In 1830, Leopold, Grand Duke of Baden took office. After long debates in the Baden parliament, the Grand Duke could abolish all discriminatory laws against the Jews.

The old Jewish synagogue was built between 1869 and 1870. It was situated in the *Rempartstrasse*, later called the *Werthmannplatz*. Julian was astonished to find the Jewish synagogue practically in the middle, or very near to the Freiburg University buildings. From those years on, equally, the Jewish Cemetery of Freiburg had been established and used. It lay in the *Elsässer Strasse*. Julian considered this a form of conciliation between the Freiburgers and the Jews.

Had he known the history of Freiburg and of its Jews, Julian might have wondered whether it was right for him to study here. He was not sure whether Jews were so welcome in this town. He had converted to Christianity to avoid problems connected to the faith he had been born in, but he realised many people would still consider him a Jew. Yet, he was here, and it was too late, really to back away. Leaving now and returning to Thorn, maybe seeking medicinal studies in Berlin, would make of him the laughing clown of the family. He sighed, and

persevered in his choice. He convinced himself those issues of the Jews and of this city were a matter of the past.

Julian continued his many walks, aimed at discovering the city. He visited and admired the old City Hall, the *Altes Rathaus*, which had survived, though built in 1559. He saw the historical Merchants' Hall, the *Historisches Kaufhaus* on the *Münsterplatz*, the Cathedral Square with its frequent markets, and the *Siegesdenkmal*, the inevitable monument erected to the honour of the German victory in the Franco-German War of 1871. He sauntered peacefully in the fine woods on the *Schlossberg*, the hill of the old castle, of which now only ruins remained. The castle had been demolished in 1740.

In those woods, Julian stumbled upon a small monument, a kind of chapel-like structure, set up by the Freiburg University *Burschenschaften*, the Student Associations, hidden among the trees and seemingly utterly forgotten. The monument had been erected to the glorious idea of a united Germany, now realised in the empire.

Freiburg lay at the eastern end of the Rhine valley, hugged against the Black Forest mountains Roskopf and Bromberg to the east, Schönberg and Tuniberg to the south, and with the hilly region of the *Kaiserstuhl* to the west. On the opposite side of the Rhine lay the very beautiful city of Colmar. To get to that town, one had either to hire a boat over the great stream, or ride either to Strasbourg or to Basel, to pass over the bridges there. As Freiburg lay protected by high hills, it could become quite hot in the summer. The winters remained generally mild, though with frequent frosts.

The Archbishop of Freiburg held the title of Metropolitan. The flag of Freiburg showed the cross of Saint George. Saint George thus was the patron saint of the city, as were Saint Lambert of Maastricht and the catacomb Saint Alexander. The city was not wholly Catholic. Many Protestants had moved into the city in 1805. Julian attended the Protestant ceremonies in a church not far from the *Schwabentor*. The seat of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Baden, a free Lutheran Church, was situated in Freiburg. Julian sought not any active membership in that community, but whenever he felt like it, he did pray in that church. People noticed, and counted him as one of theirs.

There were quite a few Jewish people in the city, now. They remained very discreet. The Jews were allowed permanent residence within the city in 1809. They founded a true Jewish community only in 1836. Julian had practically no contacts with this community.

In 1820, the name of the Albertina University was completed with the name of its second founder, Grand Duke Ludwig von Baden. The name then became final as the Albert Ludwig University. Until 1900, the university remained reserved to male students. The first female student entered the university on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February of 1900.

Julian inscribed himself at the main building of the university, the original building along the *Bertholdstrasse*, on number 30. The building he found truly imposing. He was thrilled to study at an establishment of the fame as this one. He was proud to state his address as being in the *Salzstrasse*.

He had found an apartment there, just a few hours ago. He had been inquiring after an apartment, or a small house, and had found it not far from his hotel, a little farther than the Augustines' Convent in that street. He noticed a sign at the window of a large house, knocked, and spoke to the landlords. He got a main room, large, and with a high ceiling, a room full of air, large windows, a bedroom, a small kitchen, a washing room with an iron bath, and a little room he could use as his study or office. He could even place a small bed in there for guests. The rooms were connected by a long corridor. He paid a first year of rent,

but finally would remain living there quite agreeably during all the years he stayed at Freiburg.

He was lucky. The apartment had just been freed from its former occupants. His apartment lay on the second floor. A broad staircase led to it. The environs of the *Salzstrasse* were very nice in his opinion, after he had discovered them. Restaurants and beer bars were close, a butcher, a baker, a library, a shop of legumes and fruit. Behind the house was another street, in which a small river flowed. It was agreeable to stroll along the water there, in the summer. What more did he need to survive?

The *Salzstrasse* was one of the main streets of the inner city. Julian didn't mind the noise downstairs. He might have paid too much for the rent. Actually, he never found out. His landlords, the proprietors of the house, lived beneath. They exploited a shop where one could buy almost anything, which came in quite handy. He could find all sorts of victuals quite nearby. In the morning and in the evening, he heard almost nothing of the customers in the shop downstairs. The proprietors of his apartment, at his demand, found him an older woman to clean his rooms. She also worked in the shop. He accepted cleaning on Tuesdays and Fridays. The price was decent. He could either pass through the shop to reach his apartment, or use a side door. He got the keys to this door.

Julian had no furniture. Only a few pieces of furniture came with the apartment. Once more, his landlords rushed to his rescue. They proposed to him, free of charges, various pieces of furniture, cupboards, a large bed, tables, chairs, a beautiful sofa, comfortable seats, practically everything he might need. The furniture was made of solid wood, nicely carved, objects the landlords had stacked somewhere in a warehouse and might even have paid for to be guarded there. They had a new guard now, for their older stuff, which served Julian perfectly. His landlords even came up with pieces of decoration, old paintings, framed pictures. He could choose among such pieces. He hung them along his walls and especially in his corridor. Julian liked to have paintings, engravings and drawing, watercolours around him. He didn't like empty cupboards, and empty walls. Instinctively, his decorations made him feel at home and less lonely. He was grateful to the couple of elderlies who seemed to care for him. With time, these two people proved nice and helpful. They cared for him as if he was their son. They cared for their student. They invited him several times per month to dine with them. He offered them company and news, true news, and gossip from the university.

Julian thus settled comfortably in his new life. He bought books of medicine, books of literature and of poetry from the bookshop near the *Schwabentor*. He went regularly to his classes, heard what the professors wanted to teach, and checked with books. He studied conscientiously. He was not a wild student, given to beer and schnapps. In those years, he only returned to Thorn for about a month in the summer, and for a few weeks around the New Year and Christmas. He often remarked to himself he became each year a little more estranged from the life in the Jewish community of Thorn. His mother sighed each year, but she had to acknowledge he seemed happy, and she took her satisfaction from that knowledge.

Freiburg had a feature Julian Vincius had never seen before in any town: the *Bächle*, the brooklets. This was an unusual system of open gutters, running along both sides of the streets throughout the centre. The brooklets were not deep, not more than one stone deep, and a stone wide. These small gutters had constantly flowing water in them, water diverted from the Dreisam River. In ancient times, this perpetually flowing small stream of water was used to fight fires and feed livestock in the streets. The *Bächle* were never intended to be used for sewage. Such use would lead to harsh penalties from the police officers wandering in the streets, all too keen on doing something useful to the town. Freiburg was a very clean town!

During the hot summer months, the *Bächle* provided an agreeable natural cooling of the air. They humidified the streets, diminished dust, and they offered continuously a pleasant, gurgling sound. The sound pleased Julian most in the evenings, when the noise of the street had stopped. He could open his windows and let the refreshing air stream in. It was said among the students, that if one accidentally fell or even tripped in a *Bächle*, one would marry a Freiburg lass, a *Bobbele*! Julian avoided the *Bächle* with his feet.

Around the middle of that first year, Julian thought he had better choose a student association to become a member of. Several other students had entreated him to do so. Julian wanted to alleviate his loneliness by forging new social contacts. He might make some friends. There were several of such organisations or *Burschenschaften* in Freiburg. He chose for the obvious one, for the *Teutonia*. This student association held its meetings in its house in the *Bismarckstrasse*. It was an organisation that harboured its own colours, of course black, gold and red. It was exclusively male, a duelling association, with as motto *Voran und beharrlich für Freiheit, Ehre und Vaterland*, meaning: in front, steadfast, for freedom, honour and country. That was really nothing special, as many such associations had most of these terms in their motto. Still, he repeated the words often while walking in the streets of Freiburg, or in his room. The *Teutonia* was practically the oldest student association of Freiburg, founded in 1851. As of 1856, the association held friendly relations with the *Burschenschaften Germania* of Giessen, the *Arminia* of Breslau, the *Germania* of Jena, and later with the *Teutonia* of Würzburg, as well as with the *Saxonia* of Heidelberg.

The *Teutonia* was a member of the *Deutsche Burschenschaft*. Over 250 students were members of the *Teutonia* in Freiburg. They all wore a red cap. Other such organisations at the Freiburg University were the *Franconia* and the *Alemannia*. Some of the meetings of the *Teutonia* ended raucously in beer orgies. Julian avoided these, and slipped away when he thought he would be sucked into excesses soon. He was not one who supported beer well. He liked wine. He got easily sick from heavy beers.

Most of the student organisations in Germany and Austria were rather inclined to the political right. They were all the descendants of the first such associations, organised as of 1813 at the famous *Wartburgfest*. The Catholic Church did not like student associations such as those of Freiburg. The Catholics considered the corporations a danger for the morals and the faith. The Catholic Church even threatened the corporations with excommunication. With time, however, also Catholic organisations were founded, which shared then about the same values as the Protestant organisations. In 1881, in Eisenach, the mostly right-wing German student organisations coalesced in the *Allgemeine Deputierten Convent*, the ADC, which got called as of 1902 the *Deutsche Burschenschaft* or DB. They had some leftist competition in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Burschenbund*, the ADB.

The *Teutonia* was a *schlagende Burschenschaft*, a student association that accepted duels and even welcomed them. The *Teutonia* admitted duels to solve conflicts of honour between individual students and between the various associations. The duels were strictly regulated. They were called in German the *Mensur*, for measuring one's power, after the Latin word of *mensura*, taking one's measure. In *mensurs*, no straight forward attacks with swords pushing, were allowed. One was not allowed to pierce, to stick one's sword into the adversary's body. One was only allowed to slash, to cut with swords or foils. A student association could allow duelling, or make it obligatory to duel, or refuse duelling. The Catholic associations were *nicht-schlagende*; they refused duelling.

The *Mensur* rules stipulated the distance between the fighters, the *Paukanten*. At a duel, one had to choose for a short distance fight, a middle or a long distance one. The distances were defined in the *Mensur* rules. For students of universities, the short distance was usually

applied. The duellists stood closely together. In a long *Mensur*, the duellists had to take a step forward to reach with outstretched arm the sword of the adversary. This distance favoured straight pushes, and piercing of the bodies, clearly not what was preferred in student *Mensurs*. A *Mensur* lasted a certain, predetermined time, measured in minutes.

The *Mensur* was neither a sport nor a real fight on life or death! There was no winner and no loser, though generally, one might be declared. More important than to win was the correct, fair participation in the fight, the way the *Paukanten* could control their emotions, not let them be swept by a feeling of revenge, and how they held their countenance in the fight overall. The way one appreciated a fighter was independent from his adversary. One had to keep one's stance courageously, energetically, even despite wounds, with discipline and without showing fear. Stepping backwards was considered a sign of weakness. This was regarded as a defeat, not necessarily was a wound, a painful slash received. The *Mensur* was definitely not a fight on life or death, though occasionally, this could happen. Deaths were very rare.

The student organisations, and especially the ones who made duelling obligatory, forced the students to take training, often as much as one hour a day. The German laws recognised a *Mensur* not as a crime. Killing was forbidden by law. The *Mensur* was rather a part of the growing of one's character, of one's personality. A student with the scar of a slash in his face, was regarded as a courageous fellow. One fought for honour of one's fatherland, for one's city and university, for insults, generally not for matters of conflicts over girls. These last were fought out in the beer houses, with bare fists.

Several people assisted at a *Mensur*. It happened always between members of different student organisations, not within the same *Burschenschaft*. The secundants were responsible for the protection of their *Paukant*, their fighter, not really as referees. Other men were present. The *Paukarzt* was the doctor of medicine, always present.

Julian Vincius avoided all *Mensur* fighting. After two and a half year at university, however, he accepted being called in to assist as *Paukarzt*, as doctor. He had a case filled with everything needed to treat wounds. His advice could stop a fight. Each month, he was called upon one or two times to assist to a fight. He never crossed swords himself. He did not approve of duels, but understood and tolerated the tradition. His face and body remained unblemished from sword slashes. He was appreciated as an assistant to *Mensurs* by the *Teutonia* members.

Besides the *Mensur* duels, Julian had his share of the feasts of his *Burschenschaft*, of the drinking bouts and of the student events in the town of Freiburg. He made few real friends, though. He remained a lonely man.

## **Dora Gomol. Freiburg and Berlin. 1908-1911**

Julian Vincius studied and worked in Freiburg-im-Breisgau. He showed much interest both in laboratory research and in surgical subjects. A few of his professors began to take a special notice of him after his second year at Freiburg. He assisted often at the university hospital of Freiburg, then. He was known as a very serious young man and an excellent student. He remained a little taciturn maybe, answering in short phrases at his exams, but he proved to have a fine judgement in diagnoses. He seemed to care much for his patients, giving them more attention than the common student in medicine. He showed much empathy for his patients, the first quality the professors sought in a new doctor, the sign of true talent.

With his patients, Julian did talk more, a lot more. He could explain the illness in clear words they understood. He told what the causes of the sickness were, how far he knew to deal with the issue, how the treatment would evolve, and how and when salvation would come.

Julian was not the absolute charismatic type of doctor. He did not impose by height, by allure, by movements of arms, by language, by fancy words laden with Latin erudition. Erudite he was, one of the most read doctors his professors had met.

He spoke the language of his patients, whoever they were, whether rich or poor, highly intellectual or not. He knew how to talk to women. He asked them about their children. The way he explained matters, sometimes crudely, was familiar to his patients. He spoke the truth, yet calmed the sick and inspired confidence, so that they believed him when he told also they were in the best of hands and would heal. He cared! It was as if he knew very well the physical and psychological pain of his patients, as if he felt the pain, and recognised the need for hope in each particular situation.

In hospital, the professors walked from bed to bed followed by a group of doctors-to-be. The professors explained to their students, which case lay in the bed. Julian stayed when the group had moved, and consoled, sometimes re-explaining. He talked literally as if he himself lay there, in the place of the patients. He told them of the future issues they might experience with their illness or handicap. He told beforehand how the issues would be handled, or not, and what the alternatives were. His words came out slowly, patiently, clear, and soothing. When Julian noticed how scared the patients were, he tried to comfort. He took fear not for granted.

In fact, the way Julian spoke with his patients, and took the time to listen to them, was completely different from how he acted in life outside the hospital of Freiburg. A few professors noticed this. They sought him out. They discussed deeper with him the illnesses, far beyond the theories they brought forward in their ex-cathedra lectures.

One particular professor once told Julian he was more than a doctor. He was a healer, a healer of soul and body. The professor said only the greatest of doctors had this talent.

Moreover, his professors saw he could work on any illness, however frightful, and on any man or woman. He acted as if nurses stood not really at his side, usually ignoring them, except to command them and send them for other medicines. Yet, the nurses obeyed him and never protested.

Julian Vincius had the talent and the priceless instinct of a true doctor. This, Julian discovered also of himself, though he always remained suspicious of too much instinct and too little reason and medical knowledge. So, Julian studied far beyond the courses given to him by the best professors in medicine in Germany and in Europe, brought together for teaching the next generation of doctors at the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg.

Julian had thrown himself head-on in work and study. When he had a patient, he tried to find out as much as possible about what had been written on that particular problem. His personal

taste for medical pictures grew, to cover entire walls of his apartment. His landlord and his landlord's wife, helped him. They sought practical arrangements of open cupboards to place his many books in. Later, together with a joiner, they covered the walls of the corridor with shelves for his books, and charged him the minimum. They appreciated how serious he was in his learning.

Because of so much work and long hours of studying, almost as an autodidact would have done, together with his involvement in the *Teutonia* student organisation, and with the affection of the elderly couple who were his landlords, he didn't feel lonely anymore. He scarcely thought about his past life in Thorn. He was becoming fast of another breed, of a breed on himself. Of course, the nagging pain of not having his former and still love, Dorothea Gomolenski, near him, kept haunting his mind. At unguarded, empty moments, her figure appeared before his eyes yet again. He returned, then, to working and studying almost like a machine. It was only with his patients, with the sick, that he returned to humanity. At least, that was how many people around him thought of Julian Vincius. He came to be called 'the priest'.

And then, on a bright morning in the summer of 1908, much changed, as rapidly as a sword could swing through dry air.

Julian was walking, hurrying really, through the very busy *Kaiser Joseph Strasse*, not far from the *Martinstor*, a little bowed, hands crossed on his back, when his senses suddenly made him look up and grant more attention to another figure that walked up to him, in front of him, coming from the opposite direction, but on his side of the street.

At first, he couldn't believe his eyes. She was a chimera, an illusion, an image projected by his mind onto the scene of diverse people in front of old, yet fine façades of stone and wood, the familiar street scene of Freiburg. She wore a raincoat, which flowed open, and a red bonnet cupped her head and her ample hair. She was smiling triumphantly at the surprise she inspired in him, and at his astonishment. It was her, yes, and she was a red flower in the otherwise grey street. It was Dora Gomol, Dorothea Gomolenski, nearing him. She was alone. The last steps she ran, to take away all doubts. She crashed into him, then covered him with kisses all over his face and later passionately thrust her lips on his. Dora had sought him out and travelled all over Germany to see him!

'You see,' she cried afterwards, 'I'll find you anywhere! You cannot escape from me, you scoundrel! What came into you, running away from me like that? I've come for you, and to study also at your university. That 'll serve you. I'm not going away so soon!'

Julian continued to hold her. He hadn't seen her for two years. She had taken on some weight, her breasts looked more voluminous, her face smiled as before. She had definitely become more of a woman! He did not quite know whether he should be quite pleased or angry. Dora was here, with him! Was that fact not proof enough she wouldn't let him alone, split with him ever? Why else would she have followed him? He doubted not an instant she had arrived in his pursuit. She could have chosen from a dozen other universities to study, all of them much closer to Thorn and Prussia than this one in Freiburg. He had been lonely for so long, been scorned by his colleagues and co-students so many times for not daring to get involved with a girl. He was too happy to refuse Dora now! He could not and would not refuse her! Yet, he was also very much afraid of what their being together again could mean for his studies and his life. How many times had his professors at the university not warned their students that girls meant trouble? They had warned that girls meant the end of dedication to study and to work. How could he spend as much time with Dora in the future, as much as he desired and should? He wanted to become a doctor, a good one, one who knew what to do in all situations. That demanded time! Would Dora grant him the time?

Julian could not do anything else, though, but accept the gift from heaven, this girl and her love, and to hold her, now, crush her to his breast, and not let her go, and smile as stupidly as an adolescent who had received his first kiss. Who else would show him this kind of affection, follow him from Prussia to Baden? Dora was his saving angel. She would not destroy the life he had sought, not stop his calling. His loneliness had ended. The only issue he perceived now, was how to conciliate both his happiness and his work.

Thus, like a flash of lightning on a clear day, Dora Gomol had returned in Julian Vincius' life. While they strolled on in the large street, arm in arm, Dora explained.

She had never wanted to let Julian flee to a life without her, she told.

'Sorry brother,' she laughed, 'you are not getting rid of me so easily! What did you have in mind, escaping from me without a word? Not one letter in two years!'

When her Gymnasium years had been over, Dora had warned her parents she too wanted to become a doctor or a nurse, and she wanted to study at the famous university of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. Her parents had forgotten about how close she once had been to Julian. In fact, had they ever known? Nothing was easier, Dora told. Her parents might have been enjoyed she would leave Thorn. Someone of the family already studied there, she had told nonchalantly. She would not be alone.

'You shall receive a letter from my mother,' Dora mentioned, 'asking you to take some care of me. Don't worry. I know quite well how serious you are. You don't really want me here, don't you? I know that too. Well, I couldn't do without you any longer. I would go crazy and utterly wild. Here I am, whether you like it or not. I only hope you have not found another love bird here.'

Dora looked at him interrogatingly, so he answered merely, 'of course not!'

Actually, Dora had not arrived in Freiburg alone. Her father had brought her from Thorn to here. He had not wanted to allow her travelling alone. They had travelled by railway for more days than Julian had, for they had stopped and spent a few days in practically all the largest cities under way, travelling by Berlin. She had visited the capital for the first time, Frankfurt, Köln and Strasbourg. Her father had found her an apartment in Freiburg fairly rapidly, a girl's apartment, he had told. She lived now practically in front of the university buildings, in this same *Josephstrasse*! Julian didn't have to be afraid; Dora would not bother him in his own dwelling.

'In fact, I don't really live in an apartment, dear,' Dora told Julian in the same breath. 'I live in an entire corner house, for me alone. It is not a large house, but it is comfortable. My father simply bought it! He provided for cleaning and maintenance. Imagine, I have windows on all sides! I have been in Freiburg, for two weeks already. My father bought me furniture, installed me, and I insisted on a very large bed! Then my father left. He longed to be in Paris. He actually wiped away a few tears at the railway station. My heart was but overjoyed to get rid of him!'

Dora looked at Julian obliquely. Was he overjoyed too? She thought he was. She moved her long eyelashes invitingly to him, inviting him once more to her body.

She noticed some reticence, a tightening of his muscles.

Dora added quickly, 'I came here to study too, you know, not to frolic about. I truly want to become a doctor, or at least a head nurse, if doctor is too difficult. I want to be independent from my father and family. I want to be free! I must have my own income. I might get lost in the lessons the first years. I hope you'll help me. I'm sure you are the best student in town. Don't be a bore!'

Julian smiled. He would indeed have to conciliate Dora with all of his other activities. He also noticed she was a fully grown-up young woman. She was not anymore the girl he had known in Thorn! How different would she be? What kind of a challenge would she form?

‘I’ll help you, all right,’ he decided, ‘and I am happy and overjoyed you’re here. But yes, I work hard, and I have to have a profession. I indeed take my studies seriously. Of what would I live when my parents cut me off their money, which is bound and natural to happen ever.’

They walked on, still arm in arm, quite close to each other. Julian was proud to walk with her, for she was an extremely beautiful woman. She showed a rare attractiveness to men. What constituted such power? It remained a mystery for Julian, but he noticed well how the men continued to look at her when they passed.

They talked the entire afternoon. Julian forgot what he had been doing in the *Josephstrasse* anyway. He had no lectures today.

They did not walk all the time. Near the *Martinstor* was a *Konditorei*, a coffee- and pastry house. One of the best. They entered there and sat, drank a large cup of coffee and had Freiburg pastries. Then, they stood. Dora wanted to see his apartment. Julian went down the *Salzstrasse*. He smuggled her in by the side-door. They just sat then, talked in his room. When evening fell, Julian proposed to have supper in a nice restaurant in *Gerberau*, a romantic small street along which a part of the river ran. Many students assembled in *Gerberau* in the evening. The students now saw him stroll with his very beautiful, stunningly attractive, elegant girlfriend. Afterwards, he brought her back home. She drew him into her apartment, her house. He found it indeed very cosy. He only left the next morning. That night, he would remember all his life.

After Dora’s arrival, Julian lived happily with his love in Freiburg. They studied both, and also Dora took her studies seriously. It happened they studied together in her small house, so that she could ask questions to Julian. He helped her prepare for her exams. He wondered where their relationship would evolve to. Dora was still quite worried about their blood ties, Julian much less.

Julian worked very hard now, granting Dora much time. He worked at night, though he hated having to work very late. They became a common, well-known couple in the students’ life of Freiburg. They did not hide they were together. Many students envied Julian for having such a beautiful young woman as companion. Dorothea Gomolenski was a familiar feature in the life of Freiburg, admired by all. She was not a brilliant student, but passed her year satisfactorily for most professors.

About one year after Dora’s arrival, at the end of the university year, after the exams, right before the holidays, one of Julian’s professors called him to his office. The man worked as a gynaecologist at the university’s hospital. Gynaecology was not a direction for which Julian had shown any interest. The professor sat in a small office at the hospital. He was an elderly man, nevertheless still vigorous and very active, a fine teacher, for whom Julian had great respect, though he had not followed many courses of him.

When they sat in front of each other in the uniformly white room, the professor reclined in his seat.

He began, ‘Vincius, yes, you are a fine student, a very intelligent young man. You will be a dedicated, talented doctor. Your diagnosis is faultless. Other professors told me the same. You may become a great researcher. In other words, you are one of our most gifted students, an example for your generation. You should know that. What I am going to tell you, must remain between us. So far in my career, I never broke the confidence of a doctor to his patient. Still, I feel you should know. I wouldn’t want to see a talent such as yours be spoilt

and thrown away. Believe me, this is the first time I break the doctor's rules of discreetness, of secret even. Still, I feel it is my duty as your mentor and teacher, to warn you.'

The professor looked up at Julian, who was totally astonished by such a long introduction, and who was still wondering what the professor wanted to talk about. His eyes remained innocent. What was going on? He felt a strong apprehension about what might follow.

The professor continued, more looking at his crossed hands on top of the table than at Julian. 'You go out with a young woman who equally studies at this university and at our faculty. She is called Dorothea Gomolenski. I believe she originates from the city of Thorn, as do you. I don't know whether you have known her from those times, before you both came to Freiburg University.'

The doctor paused. Julian's astonishment grew.

Julian answered, 'I did, professor. We are relatives, really. My great-grandfather was her grandfather. We are from different branches of the Vincius family, but we meet each other at family reunions. So, yes, I met her in Thorn.'

'Fine, fine. Maybe that is only why we saw you together. Of course, your private life should be of no concern of ours. Still, I have to ask you. Are you in any way more deeply involved with this young woman, beyond far family ties? Are you affectionately involved?'

Once more, the professor paused. He looked up at Julian, wanting to see how the young man reacted.

Julian reddened and confessed, 'I am. I suppose one might say we are in love. This does not have to affect our studies, though. We both got through our exams.'

'I know. You with excellence, she nearly, with her heels over the brook, as we, professors like to say.'

The professor became more and more nervous, embarrassed.

'This is very awkward for me, then. Did the young woman only frequented you, or did she also have intercourse with other men? Excuse my question.'

Julian wasn't sure he wanted to answer. Should he answer honestly? Where was the professor leading him to? He decided to answer truthfully.

'I think she may well have frequented other men, yes.'

'Well then,' the professor continued, 'the young woman came to see me for an auscultation. I'll give you the facts. While examining her, I noticed she had an abortion in the past, as well as signs of a venereal disease, now healed, I assure you. The man or woman who treated her with the abortion, if there was such a person, was most probably not a doctor, and if she or he was a doctor, he or she certainly was no doctor of long studies or experience.

I regret to have to say this Dorothea Gomolenski was butchered inside. I rather guess the girl, for she must have been quite young at the time, had sought the help of one of those country-healers who make a living helping girls in distress. You know the kind. Anyway, as a result, I doubt Miss Gomolenski can still have children. Do you understand what I'm telling you?'

Julian nodded. He remained speechless, and reddened more. He had been wondering how Dora could not yet have gotten pregnant in Freiburg, though he had asked her about her periods each time he made love to her. The mystery was solved, and extremely sad. Was he the father of the unborn baby? He didn't think so, certainly not if the baby would have been due before Dora arrived at Freiburg. They had avoided strictly all intercourse before that time. He had not slept with Dora before she had arrived at the university. He reddened more. He suddenly understood Dora had known men even before him. He would have to live with that realisation. Did she too have relations with other men after she came to Freiburg? He didn't dare thinking about the possibility.

He uttered, 'that could not have been my child, professor, definitely not.'

The pain ran through these words. The professor noticed.

The professor nodded again, ‘I thought so, indeed. I believe you. I had to warn you. As I already told, I also found evidence, the scars of a former venereal disease she suffered from. Miss Gomolenski admitted so much. She told me a doctor treated her for the disease, but I truly doubt that. Once more, a local healer, man or woman, with some knowledge of medicines or with medicinal herbs and potions, could have reached the same result. The treatment would have lasted longer than the ones we apply currently, and have been more painful. But it is possible she could have been cured that way. I don’t think she is still infectious. I prescribed her some further medication. She will return to see me.’

The professor turned and turned his pencil, fiddled with his papers, and then continued still.

‘I wanted to warn you. I thought you should know. You are one of our most promising students, Vincius. Young men like you come in rare. Do not let such relationships spoil your career. The career itself doesn’t count, really, but what you might find in a laboratory or the people you could save, do. Too many people out there need good doctors. We are only at the beginning of a new era, in which we begin to understand how nature works and how we can help suffering. You could be one of our major hopes on the new science of medicine. The patients need your talent. I mean this. Please, do not let such relationships as you may have with Miss Gomolenski spoil your work. You’ll know what to do. I assure you, there are other, fine girls out there, girls from excellent families, who would be happy to start a decent life with you.’

Julian nodded again. He couldn’t talk any longer. The professor watched him, saw the information and the warning sink in. He said no more. Julian stood up from his chair. He had to take hold of the chair to steady.

Julian muttered a short, ‘thank you, professor,’ and left the room.

He went into the corridor, where other doctors and nurses hurried on. Around the corner, he had to lean against a wall. He wept, face against the stones. He shook. The innocence of his relation with Dora had been shattered.

Julian couldn’t speak about what he knew about Dora. He couldn’t betray the professor’s confidence. He also wouldn’t break off his relation. In those times, he loved Dora dearly. He thought she had changed her ways. What had happened in the past, had to remain in the past. He took more care, however, to be seen less together with Dora in Freiburg. He didn’t any longer openly flaunt his involvement with her in the city. His happiness had been trampled upon, killed, dirtied, his illusions had been destroyed. He had the impression he had suddenly become a very old man. He henceforth avoided being seen frequently with Dora outdoors. He looked for signs of Dora going about with other men and students, and seemed to notice such signs, now. He discovered no such signs for some time, but then multiple ones. Yes, Dora had relations not just with him. He was but one of a series. His apprehensions and suspicions grew, poisoned his life, and make him feel bitter and utterly disillusioned in life.

During the last years Julian’s staying in Freiburg, Julian and Dora sometimes lived almost like husband and wife. Their relationship was often wild, passionate, now speckled with quarrels and reconciliations. With time, the quarrels grew sharper and more bitter, leading to times they practically hated each other, avoided seeing each other, and hung in depressive moods both. They always reconciled, but wounds remained open. The suspicious nature of Julian moved to the surface. Dora may have remarked his darker doubts.

Dora seemed not too faithful to Julian. He was a very observant man and learned to discover the signs. He saw the subtle changes in her mood, the way her eyes suddenly, from one day to the other, shone brighter, and when she talked more arrogantly to him, dismissing him often.

He was jealous, of course. He reproached her for having lovers, which she unfailingly denied. But Julian met her in bars, sometimes surrounded by a group of most rowdy students, which may not have been as serious as he surmised. He saw her with other young men having either their arms around her shoulders or around her waist. She had her own circle of admirers from other faculties than his. They seemed as many challenges by her to him. Or had she felt his view of her had altered?

Julian reproached her for a dissolute life then, which led to more quarrels of the kind of mutual reproaches he hated. She resented his pressure on her. He limited her liberty, she told. She kept shouting at him she was a free, liberated woman, who intended to live as he wanted, not as he wanted. When he broke up with her during a few days, she came knocking and begging at his door. They made up, and she was nice to him for a period. He should take her as she was, she told one night, or leave her. He should stop seeing her and seeking her out, she said. How could he do that? He was utterly convinced she was his one love! She too always came back to him, throwing her at him in the middle of one or another Freiburg street. He knew nothing of her life in the days or weeks when they didn't see each other.

At one time, Julian was called in to be the *Paukarzt* or doctor assisting at an unofficial, non-recognised *Mensur*. That was a *Mensur* not organised via the student organisations, a duel for personal reasons. Julian regularly refused to assist at such duels. They could lead to anything, even to a killing. He refused those duels, also because he suspected they would not be fought ultimately according to the normal *Mensur* rules.

For this particular duel, to take place in the dark, on the *Schlossberg*, outside the walls of Freiburg, friends of his own faculty and year had asked him to be present. They had not found any other doctor. They told him he simply had to come, for only he could tend to slash wounds as the best. When Julian finally agreed, and when he arrived at the site, he saw strange, mocking faces around him. He asked what was going on, and insisted, threatening to leave, until he heard the truth.

The men sarcastically told him the duel would take place between two admirers of Dorothea Gomolenski. The students knew well his relationship to Dora. The men threw the information insolently at his face, also because he had at first categorically refused to assist. This would have brought them into problems, for all other student doctors of the later years had equally refused to participate.

Julian had a sudden inkling to throw his doctor's case at their heads, but he considered he had a responsibility, having accepted to be here. He went to stand aloof, through ready to intervene when necessary. The duel was a meddled affair of a fight between two clumsy men, more afraid of each other than of receiving a wound. Finally, one of them received a slash wound in his upper leg. The man fell to the ground, shouting of supposed pain like a pig in a stable. Julian spread alcohol on the wound, which made the boy shout even higher, and then declared the fight over, for too dangerous to continue. This was not true at all, but Julian had seen enough. Julian went home, scandalised, sad, depressed, disgusted, more and more determined to break up with Dora.

Julian reproached Dora for her behaviour, told her at what comedy he had assisted. He reproached her for her ugly, indecent behaviour then, for her lusts, her envy at having men fight for her, her desire for men, her seeking power over men and over him particularly. She shouted back at him he was a coward. He had closed his eyes on her freedom and did not support her as a free woman. The row was ugly. He neglected her entirely, she cried, for him nothing else existed but his studies. What need had he to prove himself capable in his studies? First always came his studies, she came in behind! He could shut her out of his life, she said. That would be easy.

Indeed, Julian left her with a raging heart. For a while, he didn't seek her out. He had to pass a difficult series of examinations. He had to stay for long hours in hospital, he had to concentrate on his work. When they did meet in the streets of Freiburg, she shouted after him he had abandoned her as a used rag. If you cannot dedicate some time to me, if you are so jealous as to be possessive, then go, she shouted.

Her last words were, 'I'll take my pleasures elsewhere.'

Julian ran. He was disgusted. This was not love.

Julian grew very bitter about Dora Gomol. He loved her, so naturally, he was thinking of making the rest of his life with her. Marriage came to his mind strongly, even though he would not have children with her. But could he build a life based on lies? That was impossible! Julian was not a man who particularly kept to traditions, but he could not go as far as marrying Dora and then find other men in his bed with her. Marrying her in the state she was in, with the freedom she claimed, was impossible. He realised he should leave her. She did not correspond to his idea of love, even though his love could overcome all obstacles. Maybe he was but an old-time egoist. He could not imagine love between him and her, Dorothea still seeking out other men to have sex and comfort with. He refused to construct his own hell. No, no marriage could be built on his and her sharing other relationships. The very idea disgusted him.

Julian did not want to neglect Dora. Nevertheless, he refused being merely a playing ball of all her wishes. She could not do with him as she pleased.

For Julian, first always came his studies. Those were the anchor in his life, and he stuck to them. Julian's professors meanwhile, talked to him in his last year about his subsequent career. The professors wanted to keep him in the university hospital of Freiburg. He had not only been a fine student with excellent results at examinations. He had shown a real talent in medicine, and was as well very fit for fundamental research. He could perform surgical operations in the hospital, if he preferred. He might receive the title of professor after a few years, and give lectures. His professors proposed him to continue studies on his own in microbiology, as assistant to another doctor.

Microbiology was a new, very promising domain in medicine in Freiburg. The great researcher Robert Koch had discovered the bacteria responsible for tuberculosis, and also for cholera. Tuberculosis in those days affected one in seven persons in Germany. It led to many deaths. It was at those times the main cause of deaths in the country. Julian Vincius felt indeed interested in continuing Koch's research work on bacterias. Once more, however, he thought he had to flee urgently from his malignant involvement with Dora Gomol. He had once more to flee from her. His occasion would come at the end of this academic year, at the beginning of the summer of 1911. Julian refused to stay in Freiburg for that reason alone.

In this last year in Freiburg even, Julian proposed to Dora to marry him. She refused him scornfully. She laughed in his face. She might ever marry him, she shouted, but certainly not now, not here. She was a free woman, and wanted to remain so. She would never submit to a man. She hated any man who thought he could submit her to him. Julian wanted to imprison her in the role of a wife with children, placed in a golden cage of Prussian laws and religious beliefs and regulations. She would never accept that! She wanted to learn to know many people, maybe fall really in love, with somebody who felt like her. She needed another man in her life, one who she had not known for so long as he. And they were linked in blood, she cried. They would not have but crippled, idiotic children if ever. She cried out other odious words.

The relationship with Dora, which reached thus its paroxysm, affected Julian's studies in his last year. He abandoned his urge to discover new methods in medicine and causes for diseases. Julian isolated himself from friends and colleagues. His professors noticed the change in him, his worries. Few professors knew his true relations to Dora. Some thought he was family of her. Julian's behaviour threw a shadow on the fine impressions they had of him during the previous years. Julian could not stay in Freiburg, especially not when Dora Gomol wanted to settle in the town. She had already her house here! She was studying obstetrics, wanted to become a gynaecologue. Julian knew she was sufficiently intelligent to reach that goal, but he doubted she would ever be a fine doctor. Would she be accepted as such by the Freiburg professors?

Finally, in that year, his last in Freiburg, Julian appealed to his great-uncle Haim Vincius in Berlin. He asked Haim to help him secure a position, any position, in the *Charité* Hospital of Berlin. This was the hospital of the university of Berlin. The *Charité* was one of the largest, if not the largest hospital of Germany and of Europe. He could blend in. Once more, he hoped that way to escape from Dora Gomol, though Dora remained the very painful love of his younger years.

Julian Vincius sought work at the *Charité* Hospital of Berlin. The *Charité* was a rather extraordinary hospital. The founder of the *Charité* was the Soldier-King Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia. He wanted the hospital also to be useful for his young soldiers. He decided his future military doctors to have a sound scientific and practical education. Therefore, he provided the *Charité* from the very beginning with sufficient funds, among which a large domain in Schlesien.

In the years 1708 and 1709, the plague raged in Eastern Europe. As the devastating sickness neared the frontier of Prussia, King Friedrich I ordered in all his Province of Brandenburg to build houses that could serve for the isolation of people suffering from the plague. Thus, In Berlin, a large house was reserved, that lay in front of the Spandau Gate of the city, the *Spandauer Tor*. The pest turned around Berlin, avoided the city, so the house was later partly used as a Poor House, a general hospital, and partly as a *lazarett*, a military hospital for the garrison of soldiers. In 1726, the directors of the establishment proposed to transform the house to a hospital for the inhabitants of Berlin, and still continue the use as a military hospital. In Berlin, at that time, existed several other public hospitals, as well as the small hospital of the Jewish community that had been opened in the *Oranienburger Strasse*, near the synagogue. This hospital was moved in 1862 to the *Auguststrasse*, and very much enlarged.

The new public hospital was opened and used as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of 1727. King Friedrich Wilhelm I declared on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January the house should be called the *Charité*, for charity house. When in 1727 the king gave the name of *Charité* to the civil hospital in front of the *Spandauer Tor*, it had already 400 beds. The king also declared the hospital to be a school for people who studied medicine. This institute evolved from a place where a few lectures were given per month, to a proper education institute.

Soon, the hospital was too small. A second building was set up. The *Charité* became a large, square building, with a main building and three wings in square. The expansion advanced more rapidly, with a new house that contained a large dining hall, a kitchen and the necessary warehouse. Then followed a brewery, and next to it stables for a few horses, oxen, and cows, and pigs too. Around lay fields, where legumes and fruit were grown. Farther on lay the

pastures for the animals. The *Charité* came to cover the area from the later large city road, over the *Luisen Strasse* and the *Hannover Strasse*, to the *Chaussée*strasse. Nearby, the area was limited by a canal of the River Spree. It was difficult to reach the hospital from the city, as the River Spree and the *Panke* and *Schönhauser* Brooks had not yet any bridges! Until about 1800, one could only reach the *Charité* from Berlin by boat!

In 1736, the *Charité* had already more than 480 beds, and it continued to grow. In 1771, the directors asked King Friedrich II for more buildings. The king agreed, but the state could not provide sufficient funds. In 1782, again, the then director of the hospital, *Cammer-Rath* Habermass, complained about the sad situation of the degraded buildings. The *Charité* stood in swamp territory! Again, the money failed to provide for necessary works and for more buildings. Finally, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August of 1785, the first stone of a new hospital was laid for the new buildings of the ‘*Alte Charité*’, as King Friedrich the Great ordered.

The works were finished in 1802, when the new buildings began to be used. Little remained of the old hospital! More wings had been added in 1802, 1811, in 1827 and 1835, to serve the poor of mind, the syphilitics, and sick prisoners. In the years 1839 to 1840, the brewery seemed not to be needed anymore. Instead came a laundry house, with its own steam factory.

In the year 1797, was founded the medical and chirurgical *Friedrich Wilhelm Institut*, also called *La Pépinière*, the nursery. A cabinet decree of August 1797 declared a Staff Surgeon should lead each department of the *Charité*. Students of the *Pépinière* should receive in their 9<sup>th</sup> semester a practical education in the *Charité*. The *Charité* had by then become the first, largest hospital of the Prussian Monarchy.

In the year 1810, the university of Frankfurt-am-Oder was moved to Berlin. The *Charité* became a university hospital. It counted already 16 directors in 1904. By that time, each clinic had its own auditorium and laboratory.

The expansion continued! More houses were built. In the year 1856, the hospital expanded with a building for Rudolf Virchow’s experiments. Virchow was a pioneer in microbiology. He obtained a Pathological Institute with laboratories and stable to keep the animals Virchow worked upon. More buildings followed in 1867, 1879, 1883 and 1904. No less than 15 buildings were added to the *Charité* from 1898 to 1905. 1897 was a special year, as very many buildings were added under the direction of the *Geheimrat* Diestel.

In 1910, just before Julian Vincius arrived in Berlin, the *Charité* had feasted its 200-year jubilee. The *Charité* then consisted of 80 large hospital complexes for the sick, and 24 laboratories! It was huge, the largest hospital of its kind in the Empire of Germany, and most probably of Europe.

Julian Vincius entered the laboratory of the *Medizinische Klinik II*, one of the two general medical hospitals. The laboratory was a chemical laboratory, with specialised rooms for calorimetrics and gas analysis, a physical room, a bacteriological and serological room, a room for electrocardiograms, a respiration lab, a room for operations on animals, and other. All rooms had connections for electricity, gas, cold and warm water, and more. It also comprised two tuberculosis departments, so lightly built in 1906 to 1907, they were affectionately called the *Baracken*, the barracks. They were built well isolated, but on concrete plates, as the underground consisted of old moors, marshes. These barracks,

however, had their own laboratory, their own experimentation rooms, bathrooms, closets, toilets, and even living quarters for the nursing personnel.

Julian Vincius became an assistant doctor in these tuberculosis rooms, organised in separate wings. Julian was one of about 25 professors and doctors working in the laboratory department of the *Charité*. Of course, he did not yet, so soon, obtain the title of professor. He had to prove himself. Head of the laboratories was a *Geheimrat* Professor Doctor Orth. Julian saw him seldom.

Julian would work at the *Charité*, and he was very glad with the job. The *Charité* was an institution of great prestige. Nevertheless, he also wanted to build out a general, private praxis on his own. He looked eagerly at the *Landgrafenstrasse*, where his great-uncle Haim Vincius and his wealthy wife lived. Many, rather wealthy Jews lived in the quarter of the street. He could persuade his mother to buy him a large apartment, in fact an entire floor in a large house in that street. He promised after that generous gift never to ask something again from his parents. He got his apartment, though unfinished, and lived at first without anything more than a table and two chairs in it. But the *Landgrafenstrasse* was where he absolutely wanted to be, because it was situated very close to the *Tiergarten* Quarter of Berlin.

The *Tiergarten* held the Berlin Zoological Garden, the Zoo! But, more interestingly for Julian, here also had been gathered most of the foreign embassies to the Empire of Germany. The embassies lay in a very fine, green neighbourhood. The *Tiergarten* began a little behind the *Landgrafenstrasse*! It was a large, wooded park, really. Julian Vincius eyed greedily the wealthy ambassadors to the court of Germany. Ambassadors talked French. He had followed intensely many courses of that language in Freiburg, had taught himself most of the medical words in French, and he had travelled in France. He thought he spoke French fairly well. He surmised the ambassadors, the delegates and their personnel might want to consult a fine doctor not too far from their neighbourhood. He was ready to offer his services in cases of urgency. He would actively promote his services in this environment. He would present his assets: a doctor of the famous, excellent university of Freiburg, an assistant and lector at the university of Berlin, a manager of a department of the *Charité*, however small. He didn't add, but was sure it would become known soon enough he was a converted Jew. Did not everybody know Jews were the best doctors available?

At first, Julian went himself in all cases to the embassies. He learned to know people and addresses. He did not receive at his apartment. He had sufficient space, however, to organise discreet visits to his small office room on the same floor. With time, he bought more space in the house, on the ground floor, and installed a larger office with waiting room there. In one year, he earned enough money to fill his rooms with fine furniture. He could separate his office from his apartment. Julian Vincius thus settled in Berlin, quite satisfied with himself. Money started to flow in. To get to the *Charité* buildings, he hired coaches at first. Then, in 1912, he bought his first car. From the beginning, he loved riding cars. He bought an Audi Type C, with an engine of 4 cylinders. One night, when there was no traffic anymore in the *Tiergarten*, he rode on the long straight stretch close to 90 kilometres per hour!

The *Landgrafenstrasse* ended on its south side in the *Kurfürstenstrasse*, not into the wider *Kurfürstendamm*, into which the *Kurfürstenstrasse* turned west. Out of the *Landgrafenstrasse*, he drove into the *Friedrich Wilhelm Strasse*, then continued into the *Hofjäger Allee*. He drove to the *Grosser Stern* in the middle of the *Tiergarten* wood. There, especially at night, he could speed! Then, he turned right into the road that led to the *Brandenburger Tor* and the

*Reichstag* building. He drove past, under the *Brandenburger Tor*, though sideways, as only the emperor and his court were allowed to ride, usually on horseback, through the arches of the gate. He drove into *Unter den Linden*, just a very short while, then left again into the *Neue Wilhelmstrasse*, which ended into the *Luisenstrasse*. He passed a bridge, which had by then built over the River Spree, and rode immediately into the *Charité*.

The entire drive took him about half an hour, though where he could have driven faster, in the *Tiergarten* woods. He usually took his time, admiring the green-covered trees. To his left, he had the *Charité* buildings, to his right the buildings of other faculties of the university to which the *Charité* campus belonged. The entire area, limited to the north by the *Hannoversche Strasse*, to the south by the *Reinhardtstrasse*, to the west by the *Alexander Ufer*, where later also the *Humboldt Hafen* came to be built, and to the east by the *Luisenstrasse*, was now densely covered by buildings of the *Charité*! Julian Vincius was very proud to be able to work in this famous hospital. No other medical institute had such world-wide fame as the *Charité*!

Julian heard nothing anymore from Dora Gomolenski. In Thorn, he only rarely now visited his parents. He had no time for other, larger family reunions, he declared. Dora didn't write him, and neither did he. He tried to shut her out of his mind entirely. He barely looked at other young women, though, and not even at the nurses in the *Charité*. The sadness over his affair, over his adventure with Dora, took time to be absorbed and healed. Would he ever marry? He was 26 years old now! Was he happy and satisfied? At least, he had no other worries in Berlin but about his work. He spent as many hours at the *Charité* as he could, often staying until very late in the hospitals and laboratories. He often arrived in the early night only at his apartment. He arrived earlier on fixed days to serve his private clients. He only slept in the *Landgrafenstrasse*! Maybe he lived a sad, lonely life. It would have to suffice for the next five years or so. He promised himself to return to the world afterwards, not yet now. He reached a certain peace of mind, a Pyrrhus victory over himself, except when, in his dreams – or were they nightmares? – he thought he felt a naked arm around him, the arm of Dorothea Gomolenski. However hard he tried, forget her he could not. Why had fate separated them so cruelly?

## The Persecution of the Jews in Russia. 1900-1914

The persecution of the Jews in Russia remained important at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. This meant a constant sorrow for the Vincius Family, as they retained a vivid memory of their roots, which they assumed lay in Lithuania, and foremost in the city of Vilna. The Vincius of Thorn still maintained some commercial links with Jewish men and women living in Lithuania, which was now and that since decades, part of the western provinces of the Empire of Russia. The Pale of Settlement, the territories where most of the Jewish population of middle and eastern Europe was allowed to live, the territories from where the Vincius had originated from, lay in Russia since the early 1770s.

Tzar Alexander III had reigned for 14 years when he died. His successor, Nicholas II, came to the throne in November of 1894. In his throne speech, he immediately declared he would firmly guard the principle of autocracy over his people and his lands, and that uncompromisingly. He favoured confrontation over bowing. His people instantly knew what to expect of him.

In 1895, Constantin Petrovich Pobyedonostzev was still the Procurator of the Holy Synod, very eager to continue to make of the Christian Orthodox Faith the state religion of Russia. Pobyedonostzev, born in 1827, had formerly been a brilliant scholar of civil law, a representative of Russian conservatism, and a man of great influence at the Imperial Court of Russia under his pupil, Tzar Alexander III, and even under Alexander's son Nicholas II. In 1874, he had become a member of the State Council of the empire, and in 1880 the Procurator of the Holy Synod, which placed him at the head of the Orthodox Russian Church. He fought against the more liberal-minded ministers of the Tzarist Government, hated the industrial revolution, and its creation of Socialism. Nicholas II rejected the idea of systematic persecutions of other religions, though he did not always avoid them. After the first Russian Revolution of 1905, Pobyedonostzev, by then already 80, retired from public affairs. He died two years later.

At the end of 1895, Ivan Logginovich Goremykine was Minister of the Interior and Serguei Witte the Minister of Finance. Pobyedonostzev acted as the Great Inquisitor of Russia. Ivan Goremykine and Serguei Witte supported rightist, reactionary influences at court. On the future of the Jewry in Russia, Pobyedonostzev continued to repeat the issue would solve itself, as 'one-third of the Jews will die out, one-third will leave the country, and one-third will be dissolved in the general, Russian population'. This remained his government programme.

In January of 1895, the Russian Liberals openly warned Tzar Nicholas II. At a meeting of the assemblies of local representatives, the *zemstvos*, the tzar had fustigated the people who wanted the *zemstvos* to take part in the internal politics decided upon by the autocratic, tzarist regime. The Liberals wrote in an open letter they did not seek to put into question the autocratic government, but they warned the tzar against the nobility and the bureaucrats, who supported too strictly absolutist government. They remarked the tzar should take into account the urgent needs of the people.

At the beginning of 1899, an imperial *ukase* prohibited even the Jewish merchants of the first class, the wealthiest class, to settle in Moscow. Jewish merchants already well settled in

Moscow, were deprived of their vote in the commercial associations of the capital. Further prohibitions were released on the Jews of Russia. For instance, the Minister Witte persuaded the tzar that the introduction of a state brandy monopoly would automatically have the effect of forcing many Jews to leave the countryside. He was right! As very many Jews in the Jewish Settlement Areas, the Pale, lived either from distilling vodka or from selling it in taverns all over the land, the measure forced many Jewish families into instant ruin. Emigration seemed the only hope on survival. Large masses of Jews therefore continued to leave Russia for the United States of America, or for South America.

Wealthier Jews too suffered in their search for luxury and calm. These Jewish families frequently spent the summer months outside the suffocating heat of the overcrowded cities. This was now refused to them by a decree. Also, the watering places, or spas, very popular with the richer Jews, places such as Yalta, were as of now closed to them. The Jews could not reside in the largest cities of the empire, but they were allowed to pass through them. In Kiev, the police arranged for *oblavas* or raids, to hunt the visiting Jews, yet staying a little too long, out of the city. The Russian Empire made sure the regions outside the Pale Settlement Areas remained hermetically closed to the Jewish citizens of Russia, though not of foreigners of all other nationalities! Another law of 1896 interdicted even Jewish soldiers to stay outside the Pale during their brief leave of absence, granted during their term of military service.

The result of all these rules, which targeted specifically the Jews, was the collapse of Russian Jewry, exactly as Pobyedonostzev had predicted so firmly. All private taverns serving vodka, were replaced by official brandy stores, by the imperial bar rooms. Tens of thousands of Jews got deprived of their means of existence! When they had saved money, they too left Russia to start a new life in another country. A new, large category of Jews was created from the families who had not saved money: the Jewish proletariat, living in pauperism. From 1894 to 1898, the Jewish families in need of some form of assistance increased by nearly 30%. Moreover, as the Jews were also forbidden to live on land outside the cities, the crop failures in the years 1899 and 1900 led to famine in the impecunious Jewish families that had moved from the countryside to the cities.

The Russian Government did not allow the Jews to better their position by education. Before 1898, the Minister of Education for Russia had been Dyelanov, a rather good-natured man. As from 1898, the Minister of Education was the former Professor Bogolepov of Moscow. He refused any Jewish family asking for his pity, for allowing their son to study at a university beyond the low percentages allowed to Jews. From 1901 to 1902, the minister of Education was the General Vannorski. He too maintained the attitude of strictly applying the allowed percentages. He even lowered the percentage of Jewish students in the capitals from 3% to 2%, for universities outside the Pale from 5% to 3%, and from 10% to 7% in the Pale proper.

Here and there, *pogroms* continued to harass the Jews. In 1897, angry Russian mobs plundered and molested Jews in the spring in Shpola, a little later in the town of Katakuzenka in the province of Kherson, and also in Nikolayev, a south-Russian port. In Poland, anti-Semitism raged. A pogrom took place in 1902 in Chenstokhov, a Christian pilgrimage site. Many Jewish houses were plundered and demolished.

In this atmosphere, the Jews, looking with growing nostalgia to Palestine, to Canaan, organised the concept of Zionism. Since 1882 had existed a movement called the *Bibbat Zion*, or Lovers of Zion, a movement formulated by the well-known Jewish scholars Lilienblum and Pinsker. They had created about 15 early Jewish agricultural colonies in Palestine. Several thousands of Jews lived there already. But a solution was needed for the 6 million Jews living in the Jewish Settlement Areas! The aspirations of the Jews to live somewhere at peace concentrated in the mind of a Jewish journalist, in a man called Theodor Herzl!

Herzl was a Viennese journalist, who had seen the results of anti-Semitism in Vienna, caused for instance by the anti-Semitic Mayor Lueger of the Austrian capital. Herzl also had been a correspondent in France, in Paris, for the newspaper *Die Neue Presse*. He had witnessed the Dreyfuss Affair in its early stages.

Herzl had written a pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, published in 1896. He had been convinced the only relief for the misery of the Jews lay in a separate territory for them to live in. His book defined and proposed an economical, financial and political organisation to realise a new Jewish State, under international protectorate. His book had attracted much attention in Europe.

In August of 1897, was held the First Zionist Basel Congress, in that Swiss town. Four articles were adopted. Three articles were in favour of mass colonisation of Palestine, one for the local strengthening of the Jewish national feeling and self-respect.

Some Jews, despite everything, thus proposed to continue living in the Jewish Settlement Areas. Most were in favour of leaving the Russian regions, or those occupied by the Russians, in middle- and eastern Europe. Further Basel Congresses followed: a second one in Basel in 1898, a third one in 1899 equally in Basel, a fourth one in London in 1900, and a fifth one again in Basel in 1901. These meetings promoted the Hebrew language, the founding of a Jewish national school, the creation of a Jewish Colonial Trust and the Jewish National Fund, the financial means and institutions to allow the move. Dr. Theodor Herzl started diplomatic negotiations with the Sultan of Turkey, to obtain a Turkish permission and charter for the colonisation of Palestine. Herzl failed in these talks, but the willingness of the Jews to move to Palestine grew. Herzl was now convinced that outside of Palestine, the Jewish people had no possibility of continuing to exist. He thus created the Jewish national idea.

In about 1900, in Lithuania, had been founded the Jewish Labour Movement. The movement spread out into all the manufacturing centres of Lithuania and of Poland. This would become the Jewish Socialist Movement, of the Marxian Socialist ideology. In the second half of the 1890s, these groups were drawn into the mainstream of other Russian, often revolutionary groups. In 1897, all Jewish Labour Groups united in the *League of the Jewish Workers of Lithuania, Poland and Russia*, simply called the *League*. Its first meeting took place in Vilna! A year later, in 1898, was then formed the *Russian Jewish Social Democratic Party*, the *Jewish Bund*, the political party of all the existing Russian, Jewish labour societies. This *Bund*, would later still join the ranks of the Russian Social Democracy. It held conventions, its first in Kovno of Lithuania in 1899. At its 4<sup>th</sup> Convention, in 1901, it adopted resolutions, demanding Jewish national-cultural autonomy in education, and political rights, also for the language spoken by the Jewish people in Russia.

In 1902, the Russian Minister of the Interior, then called Dimitri Sipyaghin, was assassinated. The new Minister became Plehve, the former chief of the political police of Russia.

Vyacheslav Konstantinovich von Plehve was born in 1846 in the province of Kaluga. He had studied law, and joined the Ministry of Justice in 1867. He then exercised various lower functions in the Russian State's administration. In August 1903, he met with Theodor Herzl in Saint Petersburg, discussing the establishment of Zionist societies in Russia. Herzl proposed a Russian government request to the Turks to obtain a charter for Jewish colonisation of Palestine.

Plehve carried out the russification of the provinces within the Russian Empire. He earned himself great hatred in Poland, in Lithuania and especially in Finland. He opposed commercial development in Russia, because in his view, it involved the creation both of a dangerous proletariat and of a prosperous middle class equally inimical to autocracy. Plehve earned the czar's confidence, because he was in strong support of the autocratic principle in Russia.

Plehve became a target for Jewish revolutionaries after his meeting with Theodore Herzl over Herzl's demand to the Russian Court to exert pressure on the Sultan of Turkey for his, Herzl's, colonisation plans. Herzl had travelled to St Petersburg for this. He wanted Turkey to allow the Jews to settle in Palestine on an unprecedented scale. Herzl may have received assurances of von Plehve, as their interests ran parallel on this subject. Although Plehve had forwarded Herzl's proposals to the czar, the Jewish revolutionaries wanted Plehve dead. After he did nothing to prevent a bloody wave of anti-Jewish *pogroms* in 1903, a well-known double agent of the Russian police decided not to inform on the Socialist Revolutionary Party plans to kill Plehve. Plehve survived one attack in 1903 and two in 1904 before yet a further attempt succeeded. On 28 July 1904, a bomb was thrown into Plehve's horse-drawn carriage by a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party on Izmailovsky Prospekt in Saint Petersburg, killing him.

Von Plehve thought he could wage war against the Jews. Wasn't Karl Marx also of Jewish descent? The attitude of Plehve may have emboldened the men who launched a new, second series of cruel and bloody pogroms after 1903.

The first *pogrom* of the newer series began around Easter of 1903 in the city of Kishinev of Bessarabia, in the south of Russia. The *pogrom* had been called by an anti-Jewish newspaper, *Bessarabetz*, by a journalist called Krushevan. A Christian girl had been murdered in the city of about 50,000 people, and the murder had been ascribed to a Jew. In the *pogrom*, houses were plundered, Jews were killed, women were raped, and the synagogue was destroyed. The plundering and the killings lasted for 3 days. In the end, more than 45 Jews had been killed, over 85 Jews were wounded or maimed, and 500 Jews were slightly wounded. Over 1,500 houses and stores had been plundered and destroyed. In June of 1903, a Jewish youth, a student at the Polytechnic of Kiev, assailed Krushevan in St Petersburg on the Nevski Prospekt, and wounded him with a knife. The penalty for his act was a forced penal military service of 5 years.

Still in 1903, took place the 6<sup>th</sup> Basel Congress on Zionism. A new project of colonisation in Africa, in Uganda, was proposed, without much enthusiasm. But the Congress split into two groups. One group decided for Zionism in Palestine; another group was willing to found a new state anywhere in the world, and would resort to terrorism to reach its aim.

The *pogroms* continued with a riot in the town of Homel in the province of Moghilev. It happened early in the autumn, after a quarrel between peasants. Again, 12 Jews were killed or severely wounded, but also 8 Christians got killed or dangerously wounded. Von Plehve found the organisation of Jewish self-defence organisations inadmissible! In the fall also, was held the trial of the Kishinev *pogrom*. The senatorial commission minimised all damages. Only a few rioters were sentenced to hard labour or penal service.

At the start of 1904, a committee of governors and of Russian high officials came together to discuss the Jewish question. Their aim was to systematise the anti-Jewish code of law. This work was interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War, which erupted at the beginning of 1904. In this war, more than 30,000 Jewish soldiers and physicians fought against the Japanese. Nevertheless, rumours spread in the Russian press the Jews were secretly helping the Japanese!

Von Plehve was assassinated in the summer of 1904. A month later, an imperial decree was published, offering small favours to the Jews on the rights of residence. Jews of higher education were allowed to acquire real property, and live in the country, in the villages. Jewish soldiers of the Russo-Japanese War obtained the right of universal domicile, anywhere in Russia. The new Minister of the Interior became Prince Piotr Dimitrievich Svyatopolk-Mirsky (1857-1914), a former governor of Yekaterinoslav, and a Russian General who had taken part in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. His appointment was seen as a victory of Liberals over the Conservatives. He was an honourable, intelligent man of the highest moral principles. Svyatopolk-Mirsky's plan for constitutional reforms included transferring more power to the State Council of Imperial Russia.

At the end of the summer of 1904, more *pogroms* followed: Smyela in Kevipov, Rovno in Volhynia, Alexandria in Kherson, and in other towns. A *pogrom* raged in Moghilev, in Vitebsk and around in other places, in more Northern Russian regions. As for the trial of the Homel *pogrom*, the affair got finally described as an anti-Russian riot, perpetrated by the Jews! The defence council left the room in protest. The trial ended in the beginning of 1905, on light penalties pronounced as well against the Jews as on the other rioters.

In November of 1904, an assembly of the districts and provinces of Russia, the *zemstvos*, demanded more liberties, civil equality, national legislative representation and some control of the executive powers. Tzar Nicholas II and his entourage refused any change to their autocratic power. They confirmed this stance in an imperial *ukase* of the 29<sup>th</sup> of December of 1904. The tzar and his court refused all compromise.

At the end of 1904, an imperial *ukase* promised a number of reforms for the Jews, such as a relaxation of the severity of the police and the censorship, and a revision of the laws regarding the Jews. But then, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January of 1905, happened Bloody Sunday, the beginning of the first open revolution in Russia.

Strikers in St Petersburg wanted to bring a petition to the tzar in the Winter Palace. The guards opened fire, resulting in a large number of victims among the strikers. The demonstration ended in a tragedy. Svyatopolk-Mirsky claimed he had never authorised the shooting of the demonstrators, but still fulfilled his final duty to the tzar, becoming the scapegoat for the massacre. According to Svyatopolk-Mirsky's opponents, he had not only indeed authorised the shooting, but also actively encouraged the demonstration in order to

push his own political agenda. The same day, the tzar dismissed Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky, in fact for excessive leaning towards Liberalist ideas. Serguei Witte was installed as President of the Committee of Ministers of Russia, as Minister-President.

Moderate estimates of the 1905 St Petersburg massacre averaged about 1,000 dead, but other sources claimed from between over one hundred to more than 4,000 killed. The tzar was not in the Winter Palace at the moment, yet he was blamed for the killings. The attitude of the tzar was considered scandalous by the people. The Bloody Sunday Massacre proved later to have been a prelude to the revolution of 1905 in Russia. More strikes were called, houses of the rich were burnt down, and terror attacks proliferated.

Almost immediately, several mass petitions demanding rights for the Jews were addressed to Count Witte. The petitions denounced the cruel regime of endless restrictions placed on the Jews. In the meantime, strikes and the founding of more revolutionary associations multiplied. The Grand Duke Sergius was assassinated in this period. He had been the governor-general for Moscow.

At the beginning of 1905, the Government under Count Witte published three enactments. In the first, the revolutionary unrest was condemned. In the second, a new popular representation was formulated, a *Duma*, though still only with a consultative function. The third provided for the permission to private persons to bring before the government their views and suggestions to enhance the well-being of the State.

The Jews sent in their suggestions. In the spring, in Vilna they created the *League for the Attainment of equal Rights for the Jewish People in Russia*, asking for the complete emancipation of the Russian Jews, with freedom of language, schooling and even self-government! The League was led by a group of 22 members, with office in St Petersburg.

Count Serguei Ioulevich Witte, born in 1849, was Minister of Finance under Alexander III and Nicholas II. He was Minister-President for about six months from end 1905 to May 1906. He was the author of the October Manifesto of 1905, a prelude to the first Russian Constitution. Witte was of Dutch and German Baltic descent, though his family settled in Russia already in the times of Tzar Peter the Great.

Alexander II came to know Witte during the accident of the imperial train at Borki. Witte had been working at the Russian railways for years. He became of Minister of Communications in February of 1892, and six months later he replaced the then Minister of Finances Ivan Alexeievich Vichnegradski. In 1905, Tzar Nicholas II sent Witte to the United States, to President Roosevelt, to mediate after the Russo-Japanese War. Witte succeeded in limiting the damage to Russia. For this success, Nicholas II made him count of the Russian Empire. During the revolution of 1905, Tzar Nicolas II asked Witte to draw up a memorandum to solve the problems having led to the revolution. Witte proposed to offer a Constitution to the Russian people, which the tzar subsequently asked him to put together. This led to the famous Imperial Manifest of the 30<sup>th</sup> of October of 1905, by which Russia became a semi-constitutional monarchy, allowing liberty of conscience, of speech, of meeting and of association, announcing the institution of an elected parliament, the *Duma*. The emperor retained his former prerogatives on defence, on Foreign Affairs, as well as the appointment and revocation of the Ministers. Witte would become the first Russian Prime Minister under the new Constitution.

The revolution of 1905 ended in Moscow, where Count Witte sent troops, which shot and ruined entire quarters of the centre. Order was brought finally on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1905. But in April of 1906, the radicals won the first Russian election of history. Nicholas II had not expected this, and replaced Witte by the even more conservative Ivan Goremykine. Witte died from a heart attack in March of 1915 at St Petersburg.

The Russian Tzarist Government launched the reaction. The so-called *Black Hundred* group or movement was created, to demonstrate the people did not want to abolish autocracy, to discredit the revolutionary movements as being the work of the Russian Jews, and to intimidate the Liberals and all revolutionaries.

The *Black Hundred* organisation harassed the Jews, and new *pogroms* took place in 1905 in Bialystok, where Cossacks attacked Jews in the streets, at Dusyaty in the province of Kovno, at Simferopol in Taurida, in Zhitomir of Volhynia, in Troyanov of Volhynia, and other sites. In Zhitomir and Troyanov, respectively 15 and 10 Jews lost their life. Other *pogroms* happened in these first months of 1905. The *pogrom* proclamations were openly printed and distributed.

The *Black Hundred* stood for Russian nationalism, and for the monarchy. They agitated against Jewry in Russia. It was a social-political movement, accepting members from all classes. They resorted to assassination to reach their aims. They fought against Ukrainian separatism. Their paramilitary groups were called the *Yellow Shirts*. The name of the *Black Hundred* may have come from the medieval concept of *Black* or common people, organised in militias.

Alexander Bulyghin replaced Prince Piotr Dmitrievich Svyatopolk-Mirsky on 20 January 1905 after the strikes and protests in January. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August of 1905, he published a form of Constitution that has become known as the Bulyghin Constitution. It introduced a system for representation in the Duma, based on class qualifications. This *Duma*, of course, was still limited to advisory functions only.

The result was that at the end of 1905, Russia erupted for the second time in huge strikes. A general strike, all over Russia, was even proposed.

In the late fall then, the Tzar published an imperial *ukase*, promising to bestow civil liberties on the Russian people, such as the inviolability of person, the freedom of conscience, liberty of speech, of meeting and of organisation of associations. A legislative *Duma*, a *Duma* that could propose and vote on laws, was foreseen.

But at the end of October, the *Black Hundred*, the counter-revolutionaries linked with the Tzarist government, staged an orgy of blood, in which the principal victims would be the Jews. A reign of chaos ensued.

Once more, the chaotic situation was characterised by a series of *pogroms* on Jewish communities. The list is long, over 50 cities were the theatre of anti-Jewish riots. The most terrible happened in Odessa, where more than 300 Jews were killed and thousands wounded and ruined, for their houses plundered.

At the same time, armed uprisings set up barricades in Moscow. The leftist parties demanded a democratic, social republic for Russia, instead of authoritarian rule by the tzars. The Jewish committees also, demanded more openly new laws for universal and equal suffrage, without discrimination of sex, and an all-Russian, Jewish National Assembly.

In 1906, in elections for the *Duma*, 12 Jewish representatives won a seat in the Russian Parliament. The first *Duma* was convened that same year, and already dissolved two months later by the tzar for reasons of excessive opposition! The tzar closed the *Duma* at the beginning of the summer of 1906, because it had adopted a resolution, after heated debates, denouncing the violent policy of the government, the oppression, and even the extermination of opposers to the Government.

With the closing of the *Duma*, Piotr Arkadevich Stolypin was appointed as the next Minister-President of Russia. Stolypin forbade hundreds of newspapers. He arrested journalists and organised trials, which ended in deportations to Siberia, and in executions of a hitherto unheard-of cruelty. The revolution of 1905 ended in blood and more misery.

In these times of chaos, terrorism increased. The Government installed a political court-martial. From the autumn of 1906 to the start of 1907, over 1,000 people were sentenced to death, also many Jews among them. Then, the *Black Hundred* transformed into *the League of the Russian People*. New *Duma* elections took place in the spring of 1907. The extreme rightist and conservative *Black Hundred*, and extreme leftist associations won. The democratic centre was weakened. The Jews only managed to send three delegates to this *Duma*. The Government relegated the Jewish question to a Committee on the Freedom of Conscience.

Piotr Arkadevich Stolypin, born in Dresden in 1862, was the Minister-President of Russia from 1906 to the fall of 1911, when he was assassinated by a Russian revolutionary. He had been the governor-general of the provinces of Grodno (1902-1903) and of Saratov (1903-1905). In May of 1906, he was appointed to Minister of the Interior by the then Minister-President Ivan Goremykine. A little later, he replaced Goremykine.

Stolypin dissolved the first *Duma* in 1906, eliminated certain causes of the anger of the representatives, for instance by abolishing the *Mir*, the traditional, archaic, local distribution of lands to the farmers. The farmers from now on could hold their lands for longer periods, and thus they could seek to better the composition of the soil of their fields, boosting productivity. Stolypin also sought to better the living conditions for the workers in the cities, but he equally enhanced the power of the governors of the provinces. In June of 1907, Stolypin dissolved the system of voting, in favour of the rich and the nobility. He obtained the dissolution of the second *Duma*. In the spring of 1911, Stolypin presented a new proposition of a law, which was nevertheless rejected in the *Duma*, causing his resignation.

In July of 1905, the 7<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress met once more in Basel. Theodor Herzl had died. By the end of 1906, the Russian Zionists independently met at Helsingfors. They founded the Synthetic Zionism movement, a combination of the idea of colonisation by Jews of Palestine, plus the political battle for national and cultural autonomy in the Jewish communities worldwide. In Russia, these announced also two factions in Jewish Socialism, one in favour for emigration to Palestine, the other agreeing on emigration to any other territory. Two new parties were thus founded, one the *Jewish Socialist Labour Party*, called the *Saymists* for *Saym* or Parliament, the other the *League for the Attainment of equal Rights for the Jewish People*, which disregarded party and class affiliations. This last group declined all revolutionary aspirations.

In 1907, the *League* fell into four more groups, one a Zionist group, the other the Jewish People's group opposed to the Zionist idea and headed by the well-known Lawyer M. Vinnaver, who fought for civil emancipation and freedom of the Jewish culture. A third

group was the *Volkspartei*, struggling for national-cultural autonomy, wanting the creation of a national community with an autonomous school and rights on the usage of Hebrew and Jiddish. Lastly, a *Jewish Democratic Group* was founded, which leaned strongly to the other leftist political parties. All these groups had a common platform, the *Jewish Social Democratic Party*, the commonly still called *Bund*.

At the beginning of the summer of 1907, a political change happened in Russia, power moving once more to the extreme monarchist groups. They organised in the *League of the Russian People*, advocating the restoration of the autonomy of the czar. Its leader was the Minister of the Interior, Dubrovnin. Minister of Justice was the anti-Jewish Shcheglovitov. The Stolypin Government had to give in to the secret government of the *Black League*. Under these counter-revolutionary groups, the Jewish self-defence contingents were court-martialled.

In Odessa, assaults on the Jews continued in the streets, yet six young Jews of self-defence associations were sentenced. By the fall of 1907, the Zionist organisations were declared illegal in Russia. The education rules for Jews were tightened once more. Stolypin decreed about 100 Jewish students at the Kiev Polytechnic to be suddenly excluded, because they exceeded the quota on Jewish admission.

By the end of 1907, the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Duma* gathered after new elections. This has been called the *Black Duma*, as it had a clear majority of rightist parties and representatives. As opposition only remained the *Cadet Party* of the Constitutional Democrats, the *Trudovki* or Labour Party, and a few independent Socialists. The Jews could only get 2 representatives elected.

The *Duma* soon proved to be an anti-Jewish assembly. In 1908, it rejected to grant the Jews the right to visit the health resorts and spas. The Jews got excluded from the Russian Army. They were also banned from the Military Academy of Medicine. All Jews were excluded from the Justices of the Peace. The speeches of the very few Jewish representatives were shouted down in the assembly.

In the fall of 1908, the Minister of Enlightenment was called Schwarz! He applied ever more strict rules on the percentages of admission of Jews in schools, academies and universities. In 1909, the restrictions on Jews in secondary schools were tightened to between 3% and 15%, according to the towns and *shtetls*. Another law, issued in the spring of 1911, restricted the number of Jews to be admitted to the examinations for the Certificate of Maturity to a certain percentage of the number of Christian externs. Only, there were no such Christian externs! The result was, that the Jews received no diplomas from any secondary school in Russia. It must be added such laws were also decreed against the Poles and the Fins in Russia. The anti-Jewish harassments continued with a 1910 decree, prohibiting all the societies of the Jews, established by them with the purpose of fostering a separate national culture. The Jewish Literary League went out of existence because of this law. One may assert that the period of from 1881 to 1911 was a time of growing oppression against Jewry in the Russian Empire.

In the autumn of 1911, the minister-President Stolypin was assassinated in the Kiev theatre, and that in the presence of Tzar Nicholas II. The assassin was one Bogrov, the son of a lawyer of Jewish descent. Bogrov was hanged for his wicked crime. The Minister of the Interior Shchegbovitov then became the partner of the Black Hundred League. The cruel persecution of the Jews in Russia continued until 1914. Equally in Poland, anti-Jewish movements continued to act, peaking in the period of from 1910 to 1912.

The anti-Semitic court of Russia thus persecuted the Jews, showing clearly Jews were no longer welcome nowhere in the empire. No mass executions took place, however. There also seemed to have been no concerted effort to actively drive the Jews out of the imperial territories. But immigration out of the country was a welcomed, though not officially organised aim. In any case, it was very hard to be a Jew in Russia entire, including in the Jewish Settlement Areas of the former Greater Lithuanian territories.

The Vincius Family of Thorn and Berlin followed these evolutions with sadness, for this Russia was the land of their forefathers. On the other hand, they were glad their one-time forefather Asa Vincevicius had taken the lead to move his family and continue his dynasty in German-speaking Prussia. They loved Thorn and Berlin now, their new two homes. Their feelings for Vilna and Lithuania had evolved to a soft nostalgia only. The Vincevicius episode belonged to the far past.

## International Developments. 1890-1914

### The Concert of Europe. 1880-1900

After the defeat of the French Emperor Napoleon, at the Conference of Vienna, the European powers that assembled against the French emperor's armies had agreed to regular meetings to encourage communication among themselves, with the aim to avoid violent conclusions to conflicts. Large or lasting conflicts of interest had thus been solved by diplomatic conferences. The *Concert of Europe*, as the system was referred to later, worked well in the two decades from 1880 to 1914. Very many conflicts arose in that period among the European countries, none truly of existential nature for the involved nations. The disputes were practically all solved by diplomatic means. The tensions between the countries of Europe grew constantly, however, until nobody among the few people who decided upon the fates of the nations was really left willing to avoid the one global war that would damn them all. The story of these European conflicts is long, intricate and complex. Many internal matters exacerbated the issues. Julian Vincius followed these extraordinary political developments from in his early youth.

The lifelong obsession of Otto von Bismarck had been to protect the absolutist monarchy of Prussia, and after 1871, the supremacy of the German Emperor. Bismarck was a true civil servant, the personal, loyal servant of king and emperor. His social security laws of the last period of his influence on the German governments must be seen in this light. Bismarck introduced a social insurance system for workers, social healthcare and a general pension system for older workers, mainly to diminish the weight and the claims of the leftist organisations on German society. He literally cut the grass of anger and bitterness from under the feet of Communist, Anarchist and other extreme left groups. These weighed on the *Reichstag* with justified complaints about the dire situation of the proletariat and of pauperism in the country.

Otto von Bismarck stopped the claim of such groups for armed revolts as the only means to ameliorate the situation of the workers. The countries that did not legislate as Bismarck did, had to face violent revolutions of the poorest populace, in which sometimes, as in Russia, the leaders of the nation lost their function and even their life.

At the same time as Bismarck alleviated social pressure, the Bismarckian laws forbade the Socialists to form parties directed against the monarchist regime of the emperor. The Socialists agitated against the censure, or in favour of immediate freedom of speech and movement, as defined in a social-oriented Constitution.

The new Emperor Wilhelm II suppressed the last anti-Socialist laws of 1878 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September of 1890.

The laws had failed to deliver. The Social-Democracy continued to progress, adhering to the Marxist ideology and to the Erfurt Program.

The Erfurt Program had been agreed upon by the Social-Democrats of Germany, officially as of October 1891, convening in the city of Erfurt. It had been devised and was written down by Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein in the line of Marxist ideology, recognising the battle of the classes in society, with the necessity of placing the means of production and of exchanging goods in common, a Communist demand. The Erfurt Program had primarily been

adopted by the moderate wing of the Social-Democrats! The extreme leftist groups rejected the rule by Parliament, by the *Reichstag*. They were clearly in favour of revolutionary actions in the streets to take over power in the country. Instead of a parliament, they favoured the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The danger of this form of government was that the dictatorship of the proletarians was a very impractical way of ruling over a country. How could one come to an agreement in meetings of so many people? So, an organisation had to be created to realise it, a committee of but a few men, and invariably, one person had to take the lead. This president rapidly sought the powers of dictatorship in one hand, for him alone. The Marxist ideal of governing the people always led to the dictatorship of one only. This had to be avoided.

In November of 1890, the new *Reichskanzler* Leo von Caprivi, in another break with the Bismarckian policies, closed the German borders to imports of cheap Russian grain. Russian grain meant in fact Polish and Ukrainian grain, one of the most common trade products passing through the city of Thorn, then the basis of the Vincius Family. The Vincius had usually been pro-Russian for three or four generations, and they were traders by tradition and by the blood in their veins. They bitterly regretted this new German policy.

Von Caprivi wanted to strengthen the alliance of Germany with Austria-Hungary, by opening Germany to Austrian agricultural products, and first of all to Hungarian grain.

Russia lost the income from German payments for its grain, and ran into financial issues. It could only turn to France for financial support. Russia was thus drawn into the French sphere of political influence, and turned away from Germany. Otto von Bismarck had already chosen for Austria too, after profound reflections in his last period of government, but the overt rejection of Russia could equally be regarded as a change in policy, which Bismarck might have been able to avoid.

Slowly but certainly, also the Kingdom of Italy was moving further away from Germany and Austria. Italy negotiated with Great Britain. In March of 1891, it signed an agreement with Great Britain, in which this imperial government recognised the right for Italy to extend its influence from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Could thus not Italy gain more from Great Britain than from Germany, even though putting into jeopardy her alliance with Germany and Austria?

In April of 1891, in Germany, right-wing political groups founded the *Pan-German League*. Germany was by then fully known for its booming industry and for its scholars and researchers in the sciences. It had become a country as industrialised as Great Britain, profiting enormously by the industrial revolution. Germany had few colonies, though, contrary to Great Britain and to France and even to the much smaller Netherlands. The *British Commonwealth of Nations* had been formed as a worldwide conglomerate of interests with London as its centre, and dubbed by that name by the British politician Lord Roseberry. Roseberry was a very wealthy nobleman of Scottish origins, who had inherited vast domains. He had been married to a lady of the Rothschild bankers' family. He had wider views than many of his contemporaries. The British Commonwealth formed a worldwide empire, built by an island power, more directed to the seas of the world than to continental Europe, the continent it was in geographical theory part of. India, Australia, and Canada were part of the British Commonwealth.

In Germany, the *Pan-German League* affirmed expansionist views in Africa for the leaders of the empire. The about 20,000 members consisted mainly of army officers and of higher civil servants. It harboured growing nationalist views, and ideas such as the superiority of the overall German culture. The victories of the German Army against Austria and France led to this pride, arrogance even, and to a large sense of invincibility in anything Germany would undertake. Germany was in essence a land-power, however, restricted to the inner sea of the Baltic. Her difference with Great Britain was that the Germans could not so much be regarded a sea-faring people or a worldwide power.

If Russia turned increasingly to France for financial help, it also encountered setbacks in that appeal. In May of 1891, the Rothschild Bank of Paris refused to the Tzarist Government a new loan on the Paris Exchange. The Rothschilds were of Jewish origins. They reproached Russia for the tragic fate of the Jews living in Russia, and especially in the Jewish Settlement Areas of former Greater Lithuania. Germany had ended the *Reinsurance Act* with Russia, and increasingly closed its frontiers to Russian grain. The French Government obtained thus a leverage to draw the Tzarist Government in its sphere of influence. The tzar also knew well a secret pact of Germany with Great Britain, Italy and Austria had been signed concerning the influences of these powers in the Mediterranean Sea.

On the 23rd of July 1891, as a clear sign of the tightening, friendly relations between Paris and St Petersburg, a French fleet navigated into the Baltic Sea and to the Russian harbour of Kronstadt. It was received by the Russians with much enthusiasm. In August of 1891, a secret alliance was signed between Russia and France. Emperor Alexander II ratified it, after much hesitation, as he too understood he was cutting links with Germany. France, of course, wanted much more of Russia!

In 1891, Count Alfred von Schlieffen succeeded on Waldersee as Chief of the German Army General Staff. He held this position until 1906. He developed a plan for Germany when attacked from both sides by Russia and by France. The von Schlieffen plan would be used in somewhat varied forms by the German Army in her later wars.

By mid-August of 1892, France and Russia signed a new military convention. This was much more explicit and dangerous than mutual loans as financial support. The new pact had been discussed between military men, between the Generals de Boisdreffe for France and Obrouchev for Russia. In case of mobilisation of the Triple Alliance of Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary, France and Russia would both mobilise too. In the event of an aggression on either party, France would intervene with 1,300,000 soldiers and Russia with 800,000 men in arms. Both parties agreed to not separately sign peace treaties.

This was a secret, defensive alliance. Russia had fought France in the Napoleonic Wars. Understandably, Tzar Alexander III hesitated for 16 months before signing the treaty, but then he did sign!

Henceforth, Germany could call itself surrounded by potential and linked enemies. The ties of friendship between Germany and Russia could be said to be almost definitively broken. Even before Tzar Alexander III finally ratified the military convention with France, in October of 1893, a Russian fleet was triumphantly received by the French people at the naval base of Toulon. The development irked the old Otto von Bismarck in his retirement.

Anti-Semitism still raged in Russia at that moment.

In France had erupted the so-called Panama Scandal. The Panama Company had been founded by Ferdinand de Lesseps, the main entrepreneur and visionary builder of the Suez Canal. The company had bribed newspapers and parliamentary representatives, to assure pro-Canal votes in the French parliament. The French journalists Edouard Drumont and Maurice Barrès denounced more than one hundred members of Parliament for corruption. Drumont published the affair in his anti-Jewish newspaper *La Libre parole*. He could not bring forward enough hard proof, though, so the affair puffed in the French Court of Justice. Nevertheless, Ferdinand de Lesseps and the engineer and entrepreneur Gustave Eiffel were condemned to 5 and 2 years of prison, sentences that were cancelled a little later by the French Government. Various Jewish financiers had been involved in the scandal. The affair added to the anti-Semitic atmosphere in France.

Meanwhile, the Labour Parties continued to organise in Western Europe. In 1892, at the Congress of Halberstadt, the Social-Democrats of Germany created the *National Union of Labour Organisations*. In January of 1893, James Keir Hardie founded the English *Labour Party*, and organised its first congress. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September of 1895, in France, at Limoges, was founded the syndicate of workers called the *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs*, the CGT, France's largest Socialist syndicate of workers.

Counter-reactions followed. The German landlords, controlling about 100 representatives in the German *Reichstag* and with 150,000 adherents to their party, founded the *Agricultural Alliance*. This was a reaction against the policies of Leo von Caprivi. In number of members, they became the second largest political party, after the Social-Democrats or SPD. They linked with the *Pan-German League*, united with the Conservatives in parliament, and blocked further reforms of the electoral system.

They blocked ambitious projects of the German Government, such as the building of the new Wilhelm II Canal from Kiel to the Baltic Sea, and supported the original *Pan-German League* objectives. The Kaiser Wilhelm II Canal ran between Kiel and the North Sea to the Baltic, a crucial connection for the largest German battleships. It was finally opened on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June of 1895, after 8 years of works.

At the beginning of May 1893, the *Reichskanzler* von Caprivi wanted to diminish the stay of called-up young men in the army from 3 to 2 years, yet with 80,000 more men in the army. He wanted to pay for these measures by augmenting the taxes on brandy, beer and on financial operations at the Exchange. The *Reichstag* refused Caprivi's Army Bill. Consequently, von Caprivi dissolved the *Reichstag*. Later, Chancellor von Caprivi did get his proposal approved by Parliament, with the military service indeed diminished from 3 to 2 years, but with a standing army of only 590,000 soldiers in time of peace.

Despite Germany and Russia having drawn apart from each other, Leo von Caprivi urged in March of 1894 the *Reichstag* to accept a new Commercial Treaty between Germany and Russia. This seemed too little too late.

In May, von Caprivi broke with the last, large policy of his predecessor Otto von Bismarck, the *Kulturkampf*, by granting more independence from the State to the Evangelic Church in Prussia. The Prussian *Landtag* approved of the proposals of the Caprivi Government. A little later, however, von Caprivi clashed with Emperor Wilhelm II.

The Prussian Minister-President, von Eulenburg, had presented a new law against the Social-Democrats, despite the opposition to that law of the *Reichskanzler* von Caprivi. Emperor

Wilhelm II had grown afraid of terrorism. He supported the new law. When von Eulenburg wanted to suppress the universal suffrage for the Prussian *Landrat*, despite once more vivid protests of von Caprivi, the emperor dismissed both men on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October of 1894. Prince Chlodwig von Hohenlohe became the new Chancellor. He was 76 years old, and a former governor of Alsace-Lorraine. Von Hohenlohe exercised his function by leaving most issues of government to Johannes Miquel, his Minister of Finances.

In the meantime, unrest racked the Ottoman Empire of Turkey. In January of 1893, Sultan Abdul Hamid had feared plots of exiled Armenians. He had launched the Kurds against the Armenians, arch-enemies of each other. In August of 1894, the Kurds and the Turks massacred 5,000 Armenians. The massacre had been cautioned by the Sultan. The Armenians were Christians, the Turks and the Kurds were Muslims. From September, 30 of 1895 to the end of the year, new clashes took place between the Turks and the Armenians, with further massacres of Armenians perpetrated. In December of 1895, in view of these outbreaks of violence, the West-European powers, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy with Austria and Russia, jointly sent a large fleet to the Dardanelles, forcing the Turks to accept a Peace Conference at Istanbul. The Sultan granted general amnesty to the Armenian survivors.

In that period, around the end of the century, German scientists were at the forefront of scientific research. In 1894, Robert Koch and Karl Eberth discovered the bacteria responsible for cholera. In 1895, Wilhelm Röntgen discovered the interesting qualities of the rays he simply gave the name of X-rays. At the end of 1895, Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, organised the Nobel Prize. In Great Britain, in June of 1896, Marconi entered his first patent for wireless telegraphy. This was a landmark patent, allowing for much faster communications between cities and countries.

In May of 1896, at the Congress of Istanbul, at the meeting of the European ambassadors, the assembly found a solution for the Greek revolts on Crete. The Sultan accepted the autonomy of the island.

In Germany, Emperor Wilhelm II, in response also to the *Pan-German League*, increasingly directed his attention to the colonies Germany missed. In the raging war of Great Britain against the Boers of Transvaal and of the Orange Free State, he reacted. The Boers were the former Dutch immigrants in South Africa. At the very beginning of January 1896, Wilhelm II sent a telegram to the President of Transvaal, to congratulate Paul Krüger for having repulsed the British attacks led by the adventurous Doctor Jameson.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of December of 1895, a Doctor Leander Starr Jameson had assembled a troop of adventurers to attack Transvaal and to take power in the land. He tried this with about 500 men in a reckless raid. The *Boers* had not much trouble in destroying this attempt of Dr. Jameson! Jameson had been forced to depose arms. Then, the German Emperor had sent his telegram to President Krüger. Paul Krüger had been the President of the small *Boer* Republic since 1883. The German telegram caused indignation in Great Britain. Was this provocation of the British press and of the leading British classes, resulting in anti-German feelings in the British Empire, really necessary?

In the second half of 1896, and in 1897, the heath was turned on in the Balkan Lands. In August of 1896, foreseeing issues, Austrian and Russian diplomats had already negotiated and exchanged views on that subject in Vienna. In February of 1897, Tzar Nicholas II had

recognised Ferdinand of Saxony-Coburg as king of Bulgaria, maybe indicating thus his appeasing tendencies.

The displeased Bismarck had suddenly appeared in the open from his retreat of politics, and broken his silence, to express his anger. He was displeased about the foreign policy of Germany. He published the German-Russian *Re-Insurance Pact* in the Hamburg newspaper he had access to. This caused indignation in Russia, which had turned to Great Britain and France, and saw its efforts spoiled.

There were also issues for Germany, as Germany had recognised the Russian interests in Bulgaria, in contradiction to the Triple Alliance Pact. Was Germany once more turning to Russia? That was, in any case, what Bismarck had wanted.

In February of 1897, the Turks had caused massacres on the Isle of Crete. Crete had therefore declared its wish to join Greece. As a result, in April of 1897, Turkey had declared war on Greece, although a month earlier, the joined European powers had imposed a blockade on Crete against Turkey.

In the same month of April, the Turks had been repressed in Macedonia. The emperors of Austria and of Russia had met to sign an Austrian-Russian treaty of status quo in the Balkans, to stop the conflict.

In April, the Greek and the Turks, with respectively 50,000 soldiers and 120,000 had fought a battle in Thessaly. The Greek had to abandon the region, Greek by tradition, now plundered by the Turks.

Despite these conflicts, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1897, Greece and Turkey signed an armistice for Crete. In December of the same year, Greeks and Turks signed a Peace Treaty at Istanbul. Greece regained almost entirely Thessaly from the Turks. A potentially large conflict seemed to have been avoided.

Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany travelled to Turkey in October of 1898, assuring the Sultan and his court of the continuation of the *Baghdad Bahn*. With him travelled a number of industrialists, and also the Director of the *Deutsche Bank*. In accordance with the European powers, in November 1898, the Turks evacuated Crete.

In October of 1897, Hans von Bülow was appointed to Foreign Minister of Germany by Emperor Wilhelm II. In March of the next year of 1898, the Naval Secretary of Germany, von Tirpitz, presented his *First Naval Law* to the *Reichstag*. The bill was accepted, launching the increased competition on the seas between Germany and Great Britain. In April of 1898, von Tirpitz founded the *German Naval Union*, a new nationalist, expansionist political movement. The Union counted up to 500 departments, 15,000 members, and a newspaper sold to 50,000 exemplars.

The first Navy Law was voted in 1898, the second in 1900, especially for the construction of cruisers, the third in 1906 for battleships, the fourth in 1912 for submarines, for *Unterseebooten* or U-boats.

Incidents also happened between friendly countries! In 1898, a British-Egyptian Army, led by Sir Herbert Kitchener, drew slowly southwards along the Nile. Its aim was to reconquer the Sudan, to revenge the killing by zealous rebels of the late General Gordon.

A week after a major battle near Khartoum, Kitchener learned of another armed force moving further south, near Fachoda. A detachment of French soldiers, led by a Major Marchand, had entered Egypt and occupied the town of Fachoda in September of 1898. Marchand had to

defend the French interests in the region. Major Marchand had needed 2 years to reach the Nile! Two months later, Kitchener had found him in his way.

Great Britain demanded the immediate evacuation of Fachoda by the French troops. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Théophile Delcassé, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France only since the summer of 1898, had to draw back the French troops under the British diplomatic pressure. France could not afford at that time a war with Great Britain over Egypt. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1898, Marchand received the order to leave Fachoda. In March of 1899, France gave up on the Sudan. It withdrew its soldiers. Egypt was considered of strategic importance to Great Britain, because it controlled the Suez Canal, vital for the British sea-route to India. And Great Britain still distrusted France.

As well in Germany as in Russia, the conflicts between the Governments and the Socialist-Democratic tendencies continued to stir the minds. In December of 1899, the Prussian *Landrat*, for instance, voted a law prohibiting the Social-Democrats from teaching at the universities.

In the same month, the opposition to the autocratic rule of Tzar Nicholas II grew, with the creation in Minsk of the *Russian Social Democratic Labour Party*. The German Minister of the Interior, Posadowsky-Wehner proposed to augment penalties on strikers who harassed non-strikers. The proposition of Posadowsky-Wehner was refused at the end of May of 1899, forcing the minister to renounce on his policy of repression of the strikes.

On December the 7<sup>th</sup>, the *Reichstag* did adopt a law proposed by the *Reichskanzler* von Hohenlohe, but this was a law stopping the prohibition on the formation of new political associations. New parties and interest groups, suddenly emerged.

Divergences within the parties grew. Potential dissidents spoke out, for instance, in September of 1899, at the Social-Democratic Congress at Hannover. The revolutionary Socialist Rosa Luxembourg, criticised the reformist theories.

In May of 1899, the first Peace Conference for Europe was organised at Den Haag in the Netherlands, and that on a Russian proposal of Tzar Nicholas II. The proposal for disarmament in Europe was considered unrealistic by the other powers! Finally, voluntary diminution of arms at least, was proposed at the conclusion of the Congress. Each country knew well such restrictions would not be followed upon. Other, more generally acceptable agreements were formulated, and voted for, agreements on the humanisation of the wars, on the human rights of the combatants, and on the conditions of detainment for war prisoners.

In the meantime, France considered it might have gone too far in its previous Franco-Russian Treaty. France still agreed with automatic mobilisation in the case of a German mobilisation. But as Austria-Hungary presented a lesser interest for France, and as the tensions in the Balkan grew once more, France wouldn't enter a conflict if not directly menaced herself. France refused to automatically mobilise in the case of a threatening Austrian-Russian war. Russia did obtain French support in the Ottoman questions.

In the Transvaal, Paul Krüger bought large numbers of cannons and rifles in the Netherlands, France and Germany. He built fortresses on the Border of Transvaal. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October of 1899, Krüger sent an ultimatum to the British Government.

He demanded that no longer British troops would be sent to South Africa, and that all the British troops currently present in South Africa, would be recalled. It is always perilous to order an Englishman to do or not to do something. Great Britain started a war over the matter.

The Orange Free State joined Transvaal. The so-called *Boer War*, *Boer* simply meaning farmer in Dutch, lasted long. The British Army conquered the Transvaal of the *Boers* in October of 1900. In May, the Orange Free State had been annexed to South Africa. But this did not mean the end.

The *Boers* of Transvaal began a guerrilla-war afterwards, which ended only in May of 1902. The *Boers*, then practically defeated, accepted the conditions of General Kitchener. Transvaal and the Orange Free State recognised the British Monarch as their sovereign. Paul Krüger had fled to continental Europe.

The century ran to an end. France staged a new World Exhibition in Paris, which was expected to draw more than 50 million of visitors to the capital. The International Exhibition had built the steel-and-glass *Grand Palais* and the *Petit Palais*, built by the architects Deglane and Giraind, as symbols of the technical progress. The grand exhibition opened on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April of 1900. More than 40 nations were represented. The exhibition also showed many of the latest scientific discoveries.

Germany continued to enhance its military power. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January of 1900, Admiral von Tirpitz proposed a new Naval Law, accepted in the *Reichstag*, even though the Social Democrats voted against it. Von Tirpitz wanted no less than to double the high-sea fleet of Germany between 1900 and 1917. That meant to build 38 new cruisers, 20 larger and 65 smaller ones, and many torpedo-boats. With this law, the two-power standard of 2 British ships for 1 German would rather become 3 to 2.

Germany was now an example of power and prosperity. In July, Paris opened its underground Metro, the works having been engineered by Fulgence Bienvenüe.

In the same month, the huge, first balloon of Count von Zeppelin left its hangars on the Lake of Konstanz in Germany. The technological advance had added one more, new weapon to the German Army.

In the same month of July 1900, the German Commander Field-Marshal Alfred von Waldersee launched a joint European expedition against the Chinese *Boxers* uprising. The ‘*Boxers*’ was a European name. The Chinese name meant, approximately, *the Fists of Justice*. This revolt was directed against the European embassies and European economic interests. The Chinese reigning empress did not react and let the *Boxers* do what they wanted. Germany triumphed in the expedition, while the British were engaged in the Transvaal War against the *Boers*, and having difficult times in the various battles.

In national politics of the great powers, social issues continued to take a dominant position. In August of 1900, the Prussian War Ministry prohibited the soldiers to diffuse Social-Democratic papers. In London, in February, the Labour Party was created. In September, the Hamburg dockworkers went for the second time on strike for higher salaries. Once more, they achieved no great results. In Paris, at the Socialist Congress, an *International Office of Socialist Labour Parties* was opened. It would represent 69 member associations of 23 countries. In November of 1901, Russian intellectuals founded the Socialist Revolutionary Party, which aimed at terrorism as its means of expression and action.

In October of 1900, Hans von Bülow became the new *Reichskanzler* of the German Empire. In January of 1901, Queen Victoria of Great Britain died. Her successor was her son, King Edward VII.

The year 1900 ended, a new century began! In April of 1901, Italy clashed with Austria over Albania. Italy and France declared their mutual friendship, so that once more Italy moved further away from its alliance with Austria and Germany.

Great Britain had demanded a treaty of common defence with Germany. Great Britain merely desired a bilateral agreement with Germany, whereas Germany wanted to include Great Britain in its Triple Alliance. The negotiations failed, drawing a violent diatribe of Chamberlain against Germany.

As of the end of winter in February of 1901, the violence of the Macedonian crisis in the Balkan spread. Still, the Austrian Foreign Affairs Minister, Agenor Goluchowski, consulted his Russian colleague on the matter, avoiding the worst.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January of 1902, Great Britain and Japan signed an alliance for a period of 5 years. In April, Russia and China signed a convention by which the tzar agreed to evacuate from Manchuria.

In the summer of 1902, Lord Salisbury, who had been Prime Minister under Queen Victoria, ended his career. His successor was his nephew, Arthur James Balfour.

The same month, a new Anglo-Italian treaty secured the status-quo in the Mediterranean. In July of 1902, France and Italy signed a defensive alliance. It was held secret, but the Germans got wind of it. The Germans became very nervous over this agreement, as it broke the articles of the Triple Alliance, of which Italy had remained a member.

At the end of May of 1902, a Peace Treaty was signed between Great Britain and the *Boers* at Pretoria. The war had lasted more than 4 years! Tens of thousands of *Boers* had died in British concentration camps. After the Peace Treaty, the *Boers* preserved their autonomy in the British Commonwealth.

In December of 1902, at the very end of the year, tension increased between France and Spain over Morocco. Spanish war ships sailed to Tangiers to support Spanish interests in the region.

All these multiple talks and subsequent agreements meant for the European people they thought more and more any possible, impendent conflict could and would be solved by multilateral discussions, by meetings of the ambassadors and the leaders of the countries. That remained true in the entire first decade of the new century, but in the end, patience ran out. The leaders of the European countries ended the most crucial of all talks in a few months of time. The result would be a cascade of declarations of war nobody wanted to withdraw from!

In the Balkan States, tension also grew. Bulgaria denounced the commercial treaty it had since 1882 with Austria.

In June of 1903, a military putsch succeeded in Serbia. Serbian officers murdered King Alexander I Obrenovic and his Queen Draga. The officers reproached Alexander for his better relations with Austria. Dragutin Apis, the head of the Serbian Liberal party had fomented the putsch. Nevertheless, the monarchy held! The next king of Serbia was Peter I, a Prince Karadjordjevic. Neither Austria nor Russia intervened.

In July, the Russian Consul to Macedonia was killed. Russia reacted by sending troops into Macedonia. The Balkan country thereupon erupted in revolt against Turkey. Turkey, not eager for a new war, offered reparations for its misdeeds in Macedonia and hoped thus to close the matter. Its efforts had success! Macedonia remained in Turkish hands. In August, a

group of Macedonian revolutionaries tried again to get rid of the Ottoman tutelage. Despite the unrest, Austria and Russia repeated their agreement of 1897. Emperor Franz Joseph met Tzar Nicholas II at the hunting pavilion of Mürzsteg in Styria to this end.

In May of 1903, King Edward VII of Great Britain officially visited France. His visit ended in triumph! The rapprochement between France and Great Britain became a fact.

At the end of July of 1903, took place in Brussels of Belgium the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic parties. The Social-Democrats separated in two wings. The largest group, the leftist wing, would henceforth be called the *Bolsheviks*, for the Russian word of *Bolshoi*, the largest. The most ardent representative of this group was one Vladimir Ilitch Ulyanov, called Lenin. The minority group, hence and forthwith called the *Mensheviks*, for the word of smaller, led by one Martov, opposed to a party of the masses.

In the Far East, Russia entered into a conflict with Japan over Manchuria. It suspended its evacuation of Manchuria. The conflict evolved into a war between Russia and Japan. Japan attacked the Russian fleet of Port Arthur in February of 1904.

In April of 1904, a French-British Treaty was signed, which provided solutions to several joint issues, from the fishing rights outside New Foundland, to matters about Siam and Madagascar. This formed the basis of the *Entente Cordiale* between France and Great Britain. On April the 5<sup>th</sup> of 1904, France and Great Britain signed the official papers of the *Entente Cordiale*, a clear warning to the address of Germany and Austria. The alliance blocks were now in place.

In the same month, an anonymous, possibly German officer, calling himself 'Le Vengeur', the man taking revenge, sold the German strategic attack plans on France – the von Schlieffen Plan – to France. This plan dated from 1902. It was, with minor changes, applied by Germany in subsequent wars.

The influences in the North-African countries were settled at that time: France could exert its influence over Morocco, and Great Britain retained fully its interests in Egypt. The matter received great attention in Germany. Germany denounced the French aspirations on Morocco, an otherwise independent country.

Although France, Russia and Great Britain seemed to grow toward each other, an incident in the North Sea suddenly brought new tension between Great Britain and Russia. The Russians had sent their large Baltic fleet to China, to fight against Japan. In the North Sea, the Russian battleships noticed a flotilla of small ships approaching. Mistakenly assuming these ships to be a Japanese fleet, the Russians sank the ships, which simply turned out to have consisted of British fishing boats. Diplomacy solved the mishap. The Concert of Europe was still working.

## The Russo-Japanese War. 1904-1906

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan had modernised its industry, assimilating western technology. It did the same with its principles and devices of warfare. Its arch-enemy had remained Korea, which had formed a threat to Japan for centuries. As Japan had been able to transform itself into a modern, industrialised, efficient power, it looked down upon countries in the region that had not developed so fast, lands like China and Korea. The Japanese educational system had as its objective to train the students to be fine soldiers, indoctrinating the students into the *Bushido*, the spirit of warriors, the code of the *Samurai* class.

Japan had not developed into a democracy. An oligarchy ruled the land, with at its head the emperor. The oligarchy had allowed for an elected parliament, which had nevertheless received only limited powers and an equally limited franchise.

The Russo-Japanese War began over a conflict between Japan and Korea. *The Concert of Europe* was not applied.

In 1884, Japan had encouraged a putsch in Korea, orchestrated by a pro-Japanese faction. The Government of Korea had called in the help of China. The revolt was quickly terminated. Japan was at that time not ready to risk a war with China, so it backed down. As a result, Korea was drawn even more in the sphere of influence of China.

With China and the other countries in the region considered weak in weapons, leadership and industry, also Russia sought expansion in the Far East. By the 1890s, Russia extended practically to Afghanistan and to the Kamchatka peninsula farther east. Russia had laid the Trans-Siberian railway to the port of Vladivostok. Vladivostok had been won by the Russian Government around 1860. There, the Russians had built their strategic port for access to the Pacific Ocean.

Japan fought a Japanese-Chinese War in 1894 and 1895. The issue was about the control of Korea. A peasant rebellion in Korea, led by a religious movement, forced the Korean Government into asking China to send troops in her support.

Japan responded by sending in its own troops, to crush the rebels, and to install a puppet Government in Seoul. China objected. The issue developed into a war between Japan and China. Japan largely won the first battles, and almost destroyed the Chinese fleet in the Battle of the Yalu River. Japan and China finally signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki. China ceded the Liaodong peninsula to Japan, as well as the island of Taiwan. But after the peace treaty, the western European powers forced Japan to withdraw from the Liaodong peninsula. Japan felt it could not confront France, Russia and Germany together, so it gave in.

In October of 1895, Japanese agents murdered in her palace Queen Min of Korea, the leader of the anti-Japanese factions. This act turned Korean public opinion even more ferociously against Japan. In early 1896, King Gojong of Korea fled into the Russian embassy of Seoul, believing his life to be in danger from Japanese agents. Henceforth, Korea came under Russian influence. The up to then rather pro-Japanese government was overthrown, and several ministers were killed in the streets by revenge-seeking mobs.

In 1897, Russia occupied the Liaodong Peninsula. It built the harbour and fortress of Port Arthur, which became the basis of the Russian fleet of the East. The Russian presence at Port

Arthur may have been more directed to stem British power in the region, but Japan considered it a threat to her interests.

Germany was also present in the region. It occupied Jiaozhou Bay, constructed its fortress of Tsingtao, and equally placed a German garrison and a small German fleet there.

From 1897 to 1903, Russia built the Chinese Eastern railway in Manchuria. This was a joint venture with China, but the company's management was Russian, the railways had been laid to the Russian gauge, and Russian troops were allowed by China to protect the rail tracks from the bandits. The headquarters of the railway company was situated in the nearby built city of Harbin.

In December of 1897, a large Russian fleet arrived at Port Arthur. It formed a threatening menace for China. Russia still recognised the Liaodong Peninsula as belonging to China, though. China and Russia negotiated. In 1898, they signed a convention by which Russia could lease Port Arthur and other regions nearby from China. The Russians fortified Port Arthur, and built a railway from Harbin over Mukden to Port Arthur, thus linking Port Arthur to the Trans-Siberian Railway system. This railway would allow Russia to quickly move armies from the west to the east, to deep within China.

The Russians also began to take further control of Korea! They acquired mining concessions near the rivers Yalu and Tumen. This caused some upheaval in Japan, which still eyed Korea. Japan decided for war, before the Russians had completed the Trans-Siberian railway.

In 1900, a rebellion in China, called the Boxer Rebellion, threatened the international embassies in Beijing. An international force of 8 countries smashed the attacks of the Boxers. By that time, Russia had already 177,000 soldiers in Manchuria. These ejected the Boxer rebels from Manchuria. Later, the Russian troops, up to 100,000 men, remained positioned in Manchuria. Although Russian diplomats reassured the Chinese court of their withdrawal from the lands, they stayed!

Japan entered negotiations with Russia. It proposed to have Russia keep its control over Manchuria, in exchange for Japanese control in the north of Korea. In the meantime, Great Britain and Japan signed an alliance. If any state allied itself with Russia in a war against Japan, Great Britain would rush to the aid of Japan. This meant Russia could not receive assistance from France or Germany, without risking a war with Great Britain. Japan had its hands free to attack Russia!

Tzar Nicholas II had received reassuring letters from Emperor Wilhelm II, hoping Germany as yet could and would come to her help in a war with Japan. In fact, Germany was merely trying to pry Russia away from France and Great Britain.

At the end of July of 1903, the Japanese ambassador in St Petersburg started negotiations with Russia over the interests of both powers in Manchuria and in Korea. By the end of 1903, China decided to remain neutral in any conflict between Japan and Russia. By January of 1904, the Japanese Government understood the Russians were only buying time to strengthen their forces in Manchuria.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January of 1904, Japan proposed to place Manchuria outside her sphere of influence, if Russia would do the same with Korea. Korea interested Japan more than Manchuria. By the beginning of 1904, no reply had been received from Russia. Japan then severed its diplomatic relations with Russia. Tzar Nicholas II seemed not really to have

wanted a war with Japan, but he dragged on the indecision of his country. Nicholas rather hoped Japan would anyhow not dare enter a war with Russia.

But on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, Japan broke off all diplomatic relations with Russia. And Japan did issue a declaration of war to Russia on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February of 1904!

Three hours before the declaration of war had been received by the Russian Government, without early warning, the Japanese Navy attacked Port Arthur. The Russian emperor was left almost incredulous. Russia declared war on Japan only 8 days later. The Chinese court favoured the Japanese views, and offered military aid to Japan, but Japan declined the offer.

In the night of the 8<sup>th</sup> of February of 1904, the Japanese fleet attacked the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. Most of the Russian ships were old, not really fit for long voyages on the seas. The sea-battle nevertheless remained indecisive. The Japanese fleet damaged the Russian ships in an all-out torpedo attack, but the shore batteries protected the Russian fleet. The Russian battleships stayed well within the protection of the harbour's powerful cannons. The Japanese then blockaded Port Arthur. They sank concrete-filled boats into the deep-water channel to the port. But the boats sank too deep. Other such attempts at blockage also failed. In April, the Russians sailed out of Port Arthur.

They sailed into a Japanese minefield! One Russian pre-dreadnought battleship sank, the other had to be towed back to port for extensive repairs.

The Russians had learnt a lesson from the Japanese. They lured two Japanese battleships in a minefield of their own, sinking them.

Further attempts of the Russian fleet to break out of Port Arthur failed. By the end of June, the Japanese ships could fire shells into the harbour.

The siege of Port Arthur by Japanese land troops began in April of 1904. The Japanese troops launched several assaults on the hills around the harbour. This cost them thousands of casualties. They did conquer the hill defences in December of 1904. From there, the largest Japanese cannons could fire into the Russian fleet anchored in the harbour. Most of the largest battleships of Russia, 5 in all, and 2 cruisers, were sunk. The Russian fleet in the Pacific Ocean was much diminished in fire power, and could not anymore confront the Japanese fleet, without risking total annihilation.

The Russians tried to relieve the harbour by land. This also failed. After the Battle of Liaoyang in late August of 1904, the Russian forces withdrew to Mukden. The Russian commander of Port Arthur, Major General Anatoly Stessel, saw no advantage in defending Port Arthur any longer, after his fleet had been practically destroyed. He decided to surrender Port Arthur to the Japanese on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January of 1905. He took this decision alone, without consulting the military command and the czar. Much later, in 1908, a Russian court-martial would sentence him to death. Still later, he was pardoned.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1904, at the Battle of the Yalu River, Japanese troops stormed a Russian defensive position and conquered it. More Japanese troops landed at several places on the Manchurian coast. These drove the Russian troops back to Port Arthur. The Russians entrenched in defence. They forced heavy losses on the Japanese, such as at the Battle of Nanchan on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1904.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August of 1904, the Russian Admiral Wilhelm Vitgeft brought his last 6 battleships, 4 cruisers and 14 torpedo-boat destroyers into the Yellow Sea. He clashed with the

fleet of the Japanese Admiral Heihachiro Togo. Togo had 4 battleships, 10 cruisers and 10 torpedoboat destroyers. The battleships pounded on each other from a distance of 8 miles to closer than 4 miles. Admiral Vitgeft's bridge on his flagship, the French-built Battleship Tsesarevich, got hit by a direct impact. He was killed instantly.

Admiral Togo knew a new Russian fleet was arriving, so he didn't pursue the battered Russian ships as they fled back into the bay of Port Arthur.

The Russian Baltic fleet was led by Admiral Zinovy Rozhstvensky. He received orders to sail to far China. This was no small expedition! The Russian ships moved by the power of coal. As Russia had few bases between Europe and northern China, much coal had to be transported by collier ships all the way! The fleet sailed off on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October of 1904.

After the fall of Port Arthur, the Japanese land troops had advanced to reinforce their positions south of the Russian bastion of Mukden. During the severe Manchurian winter, no major land engagements took place along the about 100 kilometres front line south of Mukden. Nevertheless, between the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, the Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army under General Oskar Gripenberg attacked the Japanese on his right, near the town of Sandepu. He caught the Japanese by surprise. But without support from other Russian units, his attack was stopped. The battle remained inconclusive. Gripenberg was ordered to halt. Russia was sending more troops over the Trans-Siberian railroad. The Japanese then knew they had to destroy the Russian Army in Manchuria soon, before it was too late. They ordered the final assault on Mukden.

The Battle of Mukden started on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February of 1905. The Japanese assaulted the Russian defence lines along practically the entire front. About 500,000 soldiers were involved in the ensuing battle. After several days of fighting, the two ends of the Russian line were driven backwards. As they were about to be encircled, the entire Russian front retreated. The retreat proved a catastrophic chaos, so that the Russian defence practically collapsed. After 3 weeks of more fighting, the Russian General Kuropatkin withdrew to north of Mukden. The Russians lost 90,000 men in the battle! The Japanese equally, had suffered heavy losses. They were unable to pursue the Russians. The Battle of Mukden was a major defeat for the Russians, but the Japanese Army also had failed to destroy the Russian troops completely.

The Russian Baltic fleet meanwhile reached the Sea of Japan in May of 1905. It was now called the Second Pacific Squadron. The fleet had sailed 33,000 kilometres, to hear that Port Arthur had fallen. The fleet was still at Madagascar, then. Admiral Rozhstvensky wanted to reach the Russian port of Vladivostok. The shortest stretch to that port passed by the Tsushima Strait between Korea and Japan. Admiral Togo knew well how the Russian fleet advanced. Vladivostok was the only harbour the Russian fleet could move to.

The Japanese fleet comprised then only 4 battleships, but it had still all of its cruisers, destroyers and torpedoboats. The Russian fleet that was coming, held 8 battleships, and cruisers and destroyers to a total of 38 ships! The Russian fleet sailed into the Tsushima Strait at night to avoid discovery. The two hospital ships of the Russians had continued to burn their lights, in compliance with the international rules of war. A Japanese armed merchant cruiser noticed those lights! Its captain warned Admiral Togo.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> May of 1905, the Japanese ships engaged the Russian fleet. They navigated to stop the column of Russian ships by 'crossing the T', throwing their battleships

perpendicularly to the advance, in front of the Russian ships. This allowed them more broadside firepower, despite the Russians bringing in more ships than the Japanese had. By concentrating their fire power in the advantage of the 'crossed T', the Japanese ships destroyed the Russian ships one by one. The Russians lost more than 30 ships!

When the battle was over, the Russian fleet was practically completely destroyed. The Russians lost their 8 battleships and many smaller ships, with more than 5,000 sailors. The Japanese lost 3 torpedoboats and about 120 men! Only 3 Russian ships reached Vladivostok.

After the Battle of Tsushima, the Japanese forces occupied Sakhalin Island and forced the Russians to sue for peace. Tzar Nicholas II had no other option but to negotiate a peace treaty. He had to, in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January of 1905, and in the chaotic state of the empire, racked by internal strife.

Japan and Russia accepted the proposal of the United States President Theodore Roosevelt to mediate. The meetings were organised in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Russian delegation was led by Serguei Witte, the Japanese by Baron Komura. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September of 1905, they signed the Treaty of Portsmouth at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

The tzar of Russia refused to pay indemnities. Russia accepted Korea as belonging to the interest sphere of Japan, and left the country. Russia also agreed to evacuate Manchuria. As a result, Japan annexed Korea somewhat later, in 1910, in a Japanese-Korean treaty. Russia also agreed to hand over its 25-year leasehold on Port Arthur to Japan. This included the naval base and the peninsula. It ceded the southern half of Sakhalin Island to Japan. President Roosevelt received the Nobel prize for his efforts. The Japanese public, however, was enraged by the Treaty of Portsmouth. The United States were blamed in Japan for having cheated Japan out of claims for more. Anti-American riots broke out in Tokyo during 3 days.

One might have considered the Russo-Japanese War as but a small interlude or prelude to other, later, more devastating wars. After all, it lasted merely and year-and-a-half, with long periods in between of almost no action at all. And it happened on the other side of the earth. Nevertheless, the figures of casualties were staggeringly high. The number of Russian Army deaths ranged from 34,000 to 53,000, with additional casualties from disease having run as high as 10,000 losses, and 75,000 Russian soldiers were captured to an unenviable fate. The Japanese suffered 59,000 deaths and a further 27,000 dead from disease. From 6,000 to 12,000 men had been wounded or maimed. China suffered 20,000 civilian deaths.

The Russo-Japanese War was the first major victory in modern times of an Asian power over a European power. Russia's defeat shocked the West. Japan's prestige rose suddenly and remarkably. The Japanese Army had been on the offensive for most of the war! The land-battles between the Japanese and the Russian armies might be called precursors to the trench warfare in the later First World War.

Russia lost 2 of its 3 fleets entirely, its position as a sea-power vanished at once. The esteem for Russia in Germany and Austria diminished much, a loss of prestige that may have lowered the fear for Russia's effective military power in these neighbouring countries. In Russia, the humiliation at the hands of what was still considered a backward Asian state, diminished considerably the fame of the Russian imperial court and her army. The discontent inside the country fuelled the revolutions of 1905, and led it into the definitive February

Revolution of 1917. The Russian regime could stop revolution a last time, banning its leaders such as Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin to Siberia.

At the same time, in Poland, unrest equally simmered, as the Polish still remembered their erstwhile independence wars. Russia had to send a large army of about 300,000 men to secure Poland from large uprisings.

The other power in the Pacific Ocean, the United States, realised they would have a dangerous contestant in the region. The presence of the United States in China and Japan, strengthened its power as a great nation overall, not anymore as mere former colony of Great Britain.

Modern weaponry was seen in the Russo-Japanese War in all their horror. Rapid firing machine guns, accurate rifles, monstrous cannons that could fire ten miles or more at sea, had been used almost for the first time in a war. The use of such weapons allowed for new tactics on the battle fields. As well Russia as Japan should have been appalled at the number of casualties caused by the new technologies of war. The advanced weaponry had led to the massive counts of losses in a short period of time. As war could be waged over enormous distances, logistics became a prime subject of concern. The Russian battleships navigated on coal and steam. The Russians had to deploy a huge effort of supplying their battleships with coal, using collier ships transporting only coal, to provide the huge fleet with sufficient energy. The importance of having a chain of marine bases all over the world, such as only great Britain and her Commonwealth could count upon, became very apparent.

The Russian war effort was for a part funded by France, in a series of loans to the empire. Russia even secured a loan from Germany. Germany also financed a part of Japan's war effort! About 20 major land-battles and sea-battles had been fought, in summer and in winter conditions. The horror of thousands of sailors drowning in the seas, and that even at night, such as in the Tsushima Strait sea-battle, was a gruesome example of modern warfare, which remained unimaginable until it happened.

## Continued Conflicts. La Belle Époque. 1905-1912

### 1905

The year 1905 was the year of *Bloody Sunday* in St Petersburg, when in January, the Grand Duke Sergius had his Guards open fire on a pacific manifestation of labourers.

In March, Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany was with his ship in Tangiers. He refused to have Morocco be reduced to a French protectorate. If he could not have colonies, he could at least hold the French off from winning new territories.

Germany sought to force a barrier between London and Paris, by obstructing the efforts of France to bring French control over Morocco. But by the clauses of the *Entente Cordiale*, Britain was bound to stand by France! The German actions forced the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Delcassé, who was also strongly anti-German, to resign. Nobody in France wanted a war at that time.

In May, the nationalist and anti-Jewish French writer Maurice Barrès published his anti-German book '*In the service of Germany*', which turned out as a bestseller in France. Barrès became a shaper of opinions.

In July, France gave in, at least a little, to Germany. A conference to resolve the issues peacefully was organised in Morocco. The same month, the Tzar Nicholas II met Emperor Wilhelm II at Björkö in Finland. They signed a defensive treaty, which was never officially ratified. In August, Edward VII, Wilhelm II and Nicholas II met at Bad Ischl in Austria. A new rapprochement between Russia and Great Britain seemed in the making.

In Russia, in October of 1905, Tzar Nicholas II promised legislative powers to the *Duma*. He closed his eyes to the Jewish *pogroms* in his country. In St Petersburg, the first *Soviets* or councils of workers were created by the leftist organisations. The Russian Army, despite mutinies in Kronstadt and Sevastopol, reacted violently to the *Soviets*, annihilating those set up by Trotsky and the Mensheviks in the first capital of Russia. In Moscow, the Bolsheviks called for an armed insurrection. But equally there, the Guards suppressed the *Soviets* at the end of December 1905 and the beginning of January 1906. The Soviet Revolution seemed to have failed. Nicholas II could refuse the *Duma* to become a constituent, legislative parliament, despite his earlier promises.

In September of 1905, violent clashes erupted once more in the Balkan, in Macedonia, and equally between the Turks and the Bulgars. The Balkan remained a powder keg, ready to explode. In October, 50 Croat representatives and 50 Serbian representatives met in the town of Fiume to declare their political, cultural and economic autonomy. The resolutions were directed against the Ottoman Sultanate of Turkey. The Croatian and Serbian politicians were thereafter accused of high treason by Austria. Their trial opened in Zagreb on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March of 1909. The trial proceeded very badly, so it was annulled a little later!

1905 was an important year also in the development of science and technology. In November, a second Zeppelin balloon took off into the air. Its inventor convinced the German Army of its usefulness in military operations. In 1905, Alfred Einstein published his Relativity Theory, and Robert Koch received the Nobel Prize for Medicine.

## 1906

The controversy over Morocco lasted. In January of 1906, opened the Algeciras Conference on Morocco. The conference was a diplomatic success for France. Russia added its support to France, not in the least because after the war with Japan, it was waiting for new loans from France. The need for the conference dated from 1905. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1905, the German Emperor had been at Tangiers. In his visit, the emperor made clear Germany did not agree with the agreement between France and Great Britain on Morocco. The French Minister Delcassé had offered his resignation to the French Prime Minister Rouvier over this affair on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June of 1905. The British delegate, Sir Arthur Nicolson saved the *Entente Cordiale* through the Moroccan crisis. At Algeciras, despite the German intervention, the integrity of Morocco was recognised, but also the de facto supremacy of France over the country.

In February of 1906, Great Britain launched a new large, armoured battleship called the H.M.S. *Dreadnought*. It was the first of a series that became the norm for the largest battleships in the world. They were faster and more heavily armed than anything seen so far. They set a new standard in armament of battleships. Subsequently, all the large European powers built these dreadnought-class ships. By the German Admiral von Tirpitz' Naval law of 1908, Germany would build 4 new dreadnought-type battleships per year. The reaction of Great Britain was to build 8 new dreadnought-class battleships in one year. After 1912, the Germans built only 2 dreadnoughts a year, diverting armament budgets back to their army. The British had by then won the naval competition between the two countries.

From 1906 to 1913, President of the French Republic was Armand Fallières. In 1913, Raymond Poincaré followed up on him.

In 1906, in Russia, the elections for the *Duma* proved a success for the *Cadet Party*, and a resounding defeat for Count Serguei Witte. Two-thirds of the representatives came from the *Cadet Party*, the Constitutional Democrats, who were in favour of a parliamentary monarchy. Count Witte had to resign. Goremykin replaced him. Minister of the Interior became Stolypin, and Isvolsky arrived at Foreign Affairs. The *Duma* boldly asked for civil equality for all citizens, autonomy for the people, and agrarian reforms. In August already, happened an attempt at assassination of Stolypin by the Socialist Revolutionaries. When the czar once more suspended the *Duma*, its representatives met at Vyborg in Finland, in defiance of the czarist court. The representatives demanded the Russian people to strike on taxes, and to refuse the military service until the convocation of the *Second Duma*. The Social-democrats of Russia thus reacted to Stolypin's attempts at restoring the autocracy of the czar. In March of 1907, after the elections for the *Second Duma*, a large majority was chosen, hostile to the autocracy of Nicholas II.

Meanwhile, as of November of 1906, Russia organised its Pan-Slavic propaganda. This propaganda revived the hatred between Christians and Islamists. The demands for bettering the conditions of the common people in the Balkan and for independence from Muslim Turkey, increased.

In February of 1907, in Rumania, the peasants revolted against the large landowners. The Army suppressed the revolt, but the Liberals won in Parliament, and voted for measures in favour of the peasants. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, Tzar Nicholas II closed also the *Second Duma*. Not much changed in September of 1907, when after the elections for the *Third Duma*, the opposition to the autocracy yet won the elections.

In July of 1906, the Austrian Emperor, counselled by the Baron von Berk, had suspended the Croatian Parliament. Nevertheless, he granted universal vote to the peoples of the empire. By December of 1907, the Serbian and the Croatian nationalists obtained 57 of the 88 representatives in the Croatian *Sabor*, the Parliament, on interior issues. Meanwhile, Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian groups threatened to break the fragile balance in Macedonia, instituted by the Congress of Mürzsteg.

## 1907

In Europe overall, the search for alliances continued in 1907. Germany seemed more and more isolated, with only Austria as its ally. Emperor Wilhelm II received King Edward VII of Great Britain at Kassel. The British seemed also to want to emerge to some degree from their splendid isolation. Wilhelm would travel to London in November. The Germans sought connections to Great Britain, but their attempts remained in vain. On the contrary, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August of 1907, the negotiations between the Russians and the British led to the *Triple Entente* of France, Great Britain and Russia! The Russians could secure for their country the northern parts of Persia, Iran.

Emperor Wilhelm II travelled to Venice at the end of March of 1908, to enhance the relations between Germany and Italy. The Italian Kingdom remained a shaky, unreliable ally at the best. How could Wilhelm II truly realise the tightening of the relations with Italy, after the Italian-French rapprochement of 1904? Wilhelm largely failed in these, his efforts, too.

The Imperial Court of Russia also ran into issues, over Finland! In December of 1905, the Finnish Senate abandoned Russian as the administrative language in Finland. This was a definite blow to the russification in Finland, as desired by Russia in its border provinces. In March of 1906, Finland gave the right to vote to all men and women older than 24 years. In March of 1907, Finnish women thus entered the Finnish Parliament for the first time. Russia did not appreciate this example. Finland sought a political evolution independently from Russia, although it belonged to the Russian Empire! In April of 1908, Nicholas II dissolved the Finnish Parliament, calling it to order and obedience. The russification of its territories remained a key policy of Russian rule.

Russia sought also more and more to russify Poland. In September of 1908, Nicholas II threatened the Polish teachers who did not execute the Russian Imperial Court orders on russification with sanctions.

## 1908

In international politics, the Balkan Lands continued to stir the attention, mainly of Austria, Russia and Turkey. At the end of July of 1908, a revolt of the Young Turks, started in Macedonia.

The Young Turks were progressists, who wanted to Europeanise Turkey and to re-instate the Liberal Constitution of 1876, which had been suspended by the Sultan Abdul Hamid. They formed a nationalist, lay, modern tendency in Turkish politics. The revolt started from out of Salonika, led by a Major Niazi. After a while, the troops of Turkey fraternised with the rebels, and thus took power in Turkey. Sultan Abdul Hamid was forced to bring the Constitution back in full legal force. The sultan restored the former liberties on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August of 1908. A National Assembly was convoked to meet at Istanbul on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January of 1909.

In Great Britain, in April of 1908, a change of Government happened, after the resignation and the death only a little later of Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman. The new Prime Minister was Herbert Grey Asquith, Sir Edward Grey at Foreign Affairs, David Lloyd George at Finance, Richard Burdon Haldane as Minister of War. The Minister for India was John Morley. Winston Churchill was Minister of Trade and after 1911 Minister for the British Navy.

In July of 1908, a violent uprising began in Bohemia, in Czechia, in Prague. Violent incidents broke out between the German and the Bohemian representatives during a Pan-Slavic Congress at Prague. The Government of Austria-Hungary declared the State of Siege on Prague, and quenched a possible violent revolt.

More disturbances happened in the Balkan, when in October of 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bulgaria denounced the Berlin Treaty on the subject, and declared its full independence. The same month, Crete broke completely with Turkey, denouncing all links with the Sultanate and joining Greece.

At almost the same time, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November of 1908, the Italian nationalists blamed Austria for its annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, right on the other side of the Adriatic Sea. In Rome took place violent anti-Austrian manifestations.

In December, Serbia mobilised its troops against Austria. The Austrian generals wanted to start a preventive war against Serbia, but the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Aerenthal refused such actions. France also refused to intervene in the conflict. Russia once more felt passed-by and abused of. Great Britain protested against the annexation, and Italy demanded compensations.

The opposition that mattered most would have been that of Turkey, but Turkey merely declared the boycott of all goods imported into its country coming from Austria-Hungary. Austria finally would offer compensations for the Turkish loss of Bosnia-Herzegovina in January of 1909.

In November of 1908, Emperor Wilhelm II granted a very controversial interview with journalists of the London newspaper the Daily Telegraph. In it, Wilhelm II confirmed his friendship with Great Britain, acknowledging the deteriorating relations between London and Berlin were the fault entirely of Germany. He confirmed he had refused a proposal of Russia and France to intervene in the *Boer War* in Transvaal. He affirmed he had proposed to Queen Victoria a plan by which the British forces would have more easily won from the *Boers*. Wilhelm II proposed to have the German fleet join the British Navy in the Extreme Orient. Thereby, the emperor seemed to have entirely forgotten that at that time, Japan was allied to Great Britain in those waters!

In September of 1908, a new issue opened in Morocco. The French Army arrested three deserters from the German Legion, but the French authorities refused to extradite the men. France and Germany accepted the arbitrage of the International Court at Den Haag, La Haye, to solve the matter. A war between France and Germany was once more avoided in this way. In February of 1909, France and Germany went a step further in seeking compromises. They signed an economic agreement, by which they would exploit together, in a joint venture, the

Moroccan underground. The German company of Krupp even associated with the French company Schneider for 20% of the capital. The attempt did not lead to much success, though.

## 1909

In March of 1909, the race for supremacy on the seas raged between Great Britain and Germany. The Government of Great Britain decided to build 8 dreadnought-class battleships more. The German ambassador in London, Paul von Wolff-Metternich, warned Berlin of a possible risk of a definite break of Germany with Great Britain, if the naval armament race would be continued. He spoke of the determination of the British people to hold on to their wish of having the largest fleet in the world.

In April of 1909, in Turkey, Sultan Mehmed V replaced the Sultan Abdul Hamid. The Young Turks Army had marched on Istanbul, and deposed the sultan. Mehmed seemed more docile, hence more acceptable to the Young Turks. The Young Turks were now also and immediately confronted with the demands of the minority people in Turkey, such as by the Bulgarians and the Albanians. They reacted as intransigent nationalists. They resolved the issues, just as had been done before, by persecutions and massacres among the peoples.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the German *Reichstag* placed the *Reichskanzler* Hans von Bülow in the minority. The representatives reproached him for his foreign policy, which had led to the isolation of Germany in Europe, and for his policies in Germany itself, which had brought interior conflicts. The Daily Telegraph affair with the interview of the emperor had proved the end of his position, as it became clear the emperor had sent his speech first to von Bülow, who had read it, yet let it pass. Von Bülow had to resign. As of July of 1909, his successor was Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg.

In France also, Georges Clémenceau resigned as President of the Council of Ministers. Aristide Briand replaced him.

The leaders of Europe continued to hold multilateral discussions. In October of 1909, Tzar Nicholas II and King Victor-Emmanuel II of Italy agreed on keeping the status quo in the Balkan Lands. Both felt they had been victims of the Austrians in the *Triple Alliance*. A little later, Austria-Hungary offered more compensations to Italy, promising not to make other, further acquisitions in the Balkan, without compensation to Italy. For the moment, Italy remained in the *Triple Alliance*.

In November of 1909, near the city of Köln on the northern Rhine, quite near Belgium and the Netherlands, Germany staged a series of army manoeuvres, in which Zeppelins were used. This caused some distress in France, fearful of the advances of the Germans in new warfare. In March of 1910, the French saw the first aeroplane take off from the Lac de Berre, and land again on water. The hydroplane was born! No need to construct expensive airports for such aeroplanes!

## 1910

In January of 1910, the Social-Democratic Part of Prussia demanded universal suffrage for the *Landtag*. Bethmann-Hollweg was inclined to grant it, but the *Landtag* itself refused it.

In March of 1910, anti-Turkish revolts broke out in Albania, yet another Balkan Land. In Istanbul, the 25 representatives of Albania declared they favoured the autonomist development of their country.

In May of 1910, Crete officially asked to join Greece, rejecting all links with Turkey. In October, King George I of Greece appointed Eleftherios Venizelos to President of the Council of Ministers. Venizelos, whose grand idea was the union of all Balkan Lands together against the Ottoman Empire, won also the next elections for the Greek Parliament. Venizelos sought reforms, and the reconstruction of his country to European norms. He introduced agrarian reforms, reforms of the social legislation, recognition of the labour unions in Greece, and other Liberal changes. He sought for collaboration with France and Great Britain.

The month of July 1910 saw the death of King Edward VII. His successor was his son George V, who had a reign of almost 26 years.

Germany continued to make large, charming eyes at Russia. In July 1910, at the anniversary of the Battle at Tannenberg, *Kanzler* Bethmann-Hollweg declared in the *Reichstag* Germany should more turn its attention to the East. That, indeed, was the last occasion to make a new, powerful ally. In August, Emperor Wilhelm II made of Posen, of Poznań, his imperial residence, among several others. Posen received him triumphantly, but the Polish-Russian newspapers spoke of provocation.

In November of 1910, Wilhelm II and Nicholas II once more met, this time in Oranienburg, to try to agree on a convention guaranteeing peace in Central Europe.

In Germany, as in Russia, the social unrest, one of the products of the rapid industrialisation, continued to harass the governments. In September, large strikes were called and followed-up in large German ports, in Hamburg, Bremen and Stettin. The owners of the enterprises tried unsuccessfully to break the strikes by hiring British mechanics and marines.

In Russia, the revolts took a more political character. In St Petersburg and Odessa, students revolted. They protested against the use of corporal punishments applied by the police on political prisoners.

## 1911

In May of 1911, Emperor Wilhelm II was in London, visiting King George V. The monarchs discussed the tensions over Morocco, trying to appease them. Indeed, in May 1911, in this Morocco, the conflicts of views and interests had risen once more, now between France and Spain. An expeditionary force of France invested Fez, while Spain sent troops to Larrachi and El-Ksar.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of that year of 1911, the German Government sent a large dreadnought-class battleship, the *Panther*, to before Agadir. The Germans had remained bitter about

having so few colonies, denounced the Tunisification, the dominance of France over Morocco. Germany wanted with its intervention to obtain acceptable negotiation results from France. The Germans demanded a territorial compensation for the French presence in Morocco. Lloyd George urged the French to hold on firmly. In case of a hard conflict, Great Britain would side with France, he assured. The German battleship merely threatened, and then sailed back to Germany.

The industrial revolution had brought great riches to the West-European countries. At a reception, organised by the Bank of England, the Chancellor of the Exchequers of Great Britain declared one event only could stop the development of so much prosperity: an event, susceptible to compromise the international peace. He added the peace continued. But accepted at any price, it would be very humiliating. He hinted at the solution of an imminent war between the powers of Europe.

The parliaments of Europe and the political parties seemed to have heard this message. At the beginning of September of 1911, the German Social-Democratic Party pronounced itself in favour of a general strike in case of such a conflict. Socialists wanted no war! The mood of at least one other great leader of French Socialism, Jean Jaurès, evolved in the same line. The Socialists knew very well who would suffer and die in such a conflagration of violence. Not the politicians, not the generals, not the very wealthy! The common people would die, and they alone, and in great numbers.

Germany prepared for such a conflict. In August of 1911, the Prussian Government fortified the island of Heligoland as a forward base to the North Sea.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of September of 1911, Italy suddenly declared war on Turkey. Without much reason, three days earlier, it had addressed an ultimatum to Istanbul. Italy declared it had to protect the interests of its citizens. Rome had decided to occupy Cyrenaica and the port of Tripoli. Italy used this precise moment, when the authority of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire had been undermined, and before the Young Turks had been able to reorganise the Ottoman Army to modern principles and technology. The annexation of the territories mentioned, was seen in Italy as its last chance to expand in Africa. It was an act of pure aggression, of course. Italy occupied Tobruk and Tripoli. Italy re-baptised Cyrenaica to the name of Libya.

But on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, under pressure from the other France and Great Britain, the European powers annexed Libya to France! Italy could but obtain the coastal areas, and would henceforth be attacked there by Saharan tribes.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November of 1911, at the other end of the Mediterranean, the French and German negotiators signed a peace agreement over Morocco. France would be free to act in Morocco, but it ceded a large territory of 275,000 km<sup>2</sup> to Germany, the Ruanda-Urundi region lying to the east of the Belgian Congo. The French Parliament ratified the agreement in December of 1911, putting an end to the Moroccan crisis. The peace between France and Germany had been safeguarded.

In October of 1911, the Queen of Great Britain appointed the former Minister of the British colonies, Winston Churchill, to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the head of the British Navy.

In November, Minister Asquith proposed the universal suffrage for Parliament, though only for men. The Suffragettes, the women who wanted being represented in Parliament as well, and by their own female candidates, manifested against the proposal.

## 1912

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January of 1912, a new Government was formed in France. Raymond Poincaré became the new Prime Minister. He was a moderate senator for the Meuse Region. Millerand would be Minister of War, Aristide Briand obtained Justice. Poincaré kept Foreign Affairs in his functions.

In Great Britain, at the end of January, the House of Lords refused Home Rule for Ireland. Ireland did receive its own parliament, and its own government, but Foreign Affairs would remain British. The Home Rule proposal was twice accepted by the House of Commons, and twice rejected by the House of Lords. The lords had only a suspensive right, though, for a period of two years. The project had to be pushed back, which was effectuated in July, 15<sup>th</sup> of 1912.

So far, conflicts between the powers of Europe had been solved by talks and negotiations. The people of Europe had become used to this scenario for conflicts. The *Concert of Europe* worked. The British Lord Haldane, the British Minister of War, travelled to Berlin in February of 1912, to discuss the armaments race in the seas. The British Minister of War obtained from Emperor Wilhelm II the return to the norm of 2 British dreadnoughts to 1 for Germany, instead of the proportion of 3 to 2. Discussions on the neutrality of Great Britain in case of a new French-German War continued in London. These talks failed. The British Government did not accept to remain neutral at all cost in the event Germany would be involved in a major conflict in Europe.

## Julian Vincius and Dora Gomol. Paris. 1910

Julian Vincius returned to Berlin in 1911. He first sent his books on medicine, most of them bought in Freiburg, in three large trunks by train to Berlin. He warned the Vincius who lived in the same street as he, the *Landgrafenstrasse*, of this arrival. He too finally left by train, never to return to the town and university where he had been very happy. Freiburg had taught him how to be a true doctor. He had learned French there. He had made few friends, but his love, Dora Gomol, had been with him. That love ultimately had proved a painful disappointment. A new life waited for him in Berlin. He was dozing in the train that brought him from Frankfurt to Berlin. Automatically, his thoughts of between reality and dream brought Dora back to his mind. Yes, he had been happy with her, until he found out about her life beyond him. The images in his mind immediately came of his happiest days.

In the summer of 1910, Julian Vincius had felt very tired, burned-out in his interest of the science of medicine. He decided he urgently needed a vacation. He had been studying and working at the Freiburg University and Hospital for over five years now, only interrupted by brief visits to Thorn, which he considered not exactly periods of calm and quiet either. He felt really tired, not so much physically, as his mind had become dull.

Dora Gomol came up with the suggestion of doing something crazy, such as taking the railways and travel to Paris. Julian threw all patience in the air, and agreed. He liked the idea. He had always wanted to see Paris. He was surprised to hear Dora wanted to accompany him. They had been growing apart by then. He knew he would have to pay for her company, but he agreed. The two packed lightly, barely one not too large suitcase each. They reached Strasbourg, then Metz, and had no trouble getting information and tickets for train connections all the way to Paris. The voyage was tedious, but Julian and Dora made the most of it. Julian had been able to save on what his mother sent him, quite sufficient now to book a double room, two interconnected rooms, in one of the best hotels of town.

Instead of going immediately on a frantic tour of the largest, grandest museums, monuments and palaces of the city, they strolled, talked, and let their minds free of what might separate them, more than unite them. Julian should not have rented two rooms. One bedroom was never used. It looked like Dora loved sleeping in his arms all night. They regularly returned to their hotel very, very late.

Julian had never seen so many automobiles together as in France's capital. Cars began to dominate the traffic. As a consequence, traffic became a lot less chaotic! The cars kept all to their right side. Julian's second surprise were the large cinemas of Paris, where moving pictures were projected on huge, white screens. The cinemas of the *Studio Gaumont*, of the *Cinemas Pathé* lined the boulevards. They showed short scenes of love and strife, images of France's colonies, with exotic scenes shot in the jungles, moving images of elephant and giraffes and all sorts of apes, birds, and other animals. They saw camels walk in the desert, and formidable landscapes of villages and of rice fields in Cambodia, Annam, in the Indochina French provinces. They also went to a special projection of the now already old, first moving pictures ever having been made by the Lumière Brothers, of female workers leaving their factory. They admired images of Madagascar! They saw the first film and story

of Fantomas, the master of crime! The largest cinema they walked into was the *Gaumont Palace* at the Clichy Square.

The people of Paris wore fine clothes. The men worked about 72 hours a week, but that was changing. Women worked 12 to 13 hours a day. The duration of a day's work was being limited to 8 hours a day. A French law of 1906, granted all workers one day off per week. The men and women travelled together to places on the sea, like to Deauville and Etretat, which also Julian and Dora visited a few times, enjoying the water and the sun. During the weekends, there was much fun and joy in Paris. They danced and held picnics, as many other people did, along the Seine Stream and on the Canal St Martin. They also visited the huge Halles de Paris, the general markets brought all together, where the smaller shops and the hotel chefs found their food products, their best fish and meat. Julian and Dora shouted together at a famous boxing match in the French capital. They saw cycling races start and arrive. It seemed cycling might become the major sport in Paris.

In the evening, they went to concerts. They saw Félix Mayol and other popular singers bring their newest songs of love and of life in Paris. They had no issue with covering the large distances in the huge city, for the taxi services, the Paris Taxis, were well organised, now with Renault automobiles, and not extremely expensive. Or they could take the fast tramways underground, installed since 1908, new stations being opened each day now.

Paris was where life was exciting ever, and excellent. The food in the finer restaurants was delicious, the best wines were served for who could afford them. Julian actually bought his first photo-camera there, to make still pictures of what he saw. Of course, his first model was Dora Gomol. He photographed her everywhere they went.

In Paris, they soon found out the wealthy people lived in the western suburbs, far from the manufactories and the bad air. The poorer quarters lay at the north and east sides, and also in the Bastille quarter. The *Marais* quarter equally was rather poor, the quarter of *Les Halles*, a popular quarter where people lived who won but low salaries. One of the industrial quarters was the *Faubourg-Saint-Antoine*. Julian and Dora did not live in fun and good mood all the time. Still, they rapidly left those parts of the city, and did not return there.

Parisians did not all live in fun and good moods. Incessant rains had fallen in this past winter. The centre streets of Paris had been inundated with the waters of the Seine. As Julian and Dora travelled and walked in the high summer of 1910, little could still be noticed of the catastrophe. The high peaks of the water levels had come around the end of January. In certain streets and squares of the centre, the water had stood 2 metres 50 high! People still spoke of the disaster to Julian and Dora, about what Paris had to endure for months.

Another issue was emerging in France in that year of 1910. Prices of goods mounted fast, yet salaries stayed at the same level. Poverty grew in the city. Julian and Dora saw the signs of, poverty then everywhere. Julian and Dora saw more than once people being dragged out of the houses they couldn't afford anymore, being expelled, children crying in the street while furniture and other meagre belongings were being thrown out of the windows.

Life, in fact, was expensive in Paris, and often cruel. Julian and Dora saw manifestations of the poorer workers. They witnessed a strike of the railway workers. Earlier on, Aristide

Briand, the French President, had the railway stations be occupied by the French Army. This worried Julian and Dora for a time, as they would have to return soon. Groups of workers waving boards of the CGT, the *Centrale Générale du Travail*, the largest syndicate of workers, passed the streets.

Still, Julian and Dora had the money to take their pleasure at night in the Parisian music-halls and concerts and bars. They went to late presentations in the *Moulin-Rouge* and in the *Folies-Bergères*, to see the spectacular revues. They applauded the female stars of the shows, Cléo de Mérode and *La Belle Otero*, and the *Comédienne La Polaire*. They had sworn not to let them be touched by the sadder images of the situation of the poor in Paris.

In the poorer quarters lived the thieves and thugs of Paris. These were mostly young delinquents. Once, Julian and Dora hired a taxi to bring them on a tour of a stretch of the huge fortifications of Paris. There, they found the slum quarters of Paris! This could be the shame of the city! They did not get out of the car. Dora was afraid in this environment. They quickly rode back to the very centre of Paris.

Julian and Dora stayed about a month in Paris. Julian had been extremely happy and very much in love with Dora. He thought the same of her. Then, they returned to Freiburg, and took up once more their dull and depressing relation. The wonderful smile of Dora Gomol soon disappeared. Her mood switched and changed constantly. Julian had to observe again how Dora drew away from him. He noticed her walking, laughing in the streets of Freiburg at the arms of other men, noticing him but ignoring him, mocking him. She was holding tight her no doubt new lover, taunting Julian, yet not showing him the slightest smile. He threw himself back to work and study.

### More Conflicts. The Balkan Wars. 1912-1913

In the meantime, the tensions grew once more in the Balkan.

The Balkan Lands were Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia, Rumania, Greece even, and the European regions forming directly parts of Turkey, also called Turkish Thrace. The region took its name from the Balkan Mountains that stretch throughout the whole of Bulgaria from the Serbian–Bulgarian border to the Black Sea coast.

The Balkan Peninsula is bordered by the Adriatic Sea in the northwest, the Ionian Sea in the southwest, the Aegean Sea in the south, the Turkish Straits in the east, and the Black Sea in the northeast. The northern border of the peninsula has been variously defined. The term of Balkan Peninsula was a synonym for Rumelia, or European Turkey, in the 19th century. The lands were the former provinces of the Ottoman Empire in Southeast Europe.

In March of that year of 1912, Serbia and Bulgaria signed an alliance, directed against Turkey. Turkey was then still engaged in its war with Italy. In March, Italy intensified its actions against Turkey, threatening the Dardanelles. Turkish troops were far from disorganised, however. They disembarked for expeditions in the Aegean Sea, and occupied Rhodes and the Dardanelles. Two French ships with Turkish troops on board, sailing from Tunisia by Tripoli, were boarded by the Italian Navy. France only protested feebly. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of May of 1912, Greece and Bulgaria signed a defensive alliance, doubled by a military convention of mutual support. The alliance was directed against Turkish interventions in the Balkan Lands. As Bulgaria also had an agreement with Serbia, the Balkan Lands were thus consolidating their defences, and consolidating their borders. The alliance was called the '*Balkan League*'. Russia also helped to set up this *Balkan League*!

France and Poincaré became nervous about these developments, as France had many financial interests in the Ottoman State. France's Prime Minister, Poincaré, was at St Petersburg at that time. He received assurances Russia was committed to keeping the peace in the Balkans. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, France and Russia even signed a military protocol. In the event of a war of Germany with France, Russia would send 100,000 soldiers against Germany within 15 days after the opening of the hostilities. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, also a naval agreement was signed. The Russian fleet would support the French fleet in such a conflict. France promised to defend the Russian interests in the Balkan.

Germany could now definitely forget about further alliances or pacts with Russia! In the case of a war with France, or with Russia, it would have to fight on two fronts, in the West and in the East. The Franco-Russian military pact could as well be regarded as a peace-ensuring pact, a deterrence against the threat of a hard, global conflict in the event of impending war, as well as exactly that, a global war on two fronts. Germany would have to prepare for such an eventuality.

Events in the Balkan Lands followed each other up with increased velocity. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, the Government led by the Young Turks resigned. Ahmad Mouktar Pasha formed a new Government. At the end of August, Turkey reached an agreement over the revolts in Albania. It promised to protect Albania against attacks by the other Balkan lands, such as Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro.

In September, Bulgaria demanded of Turkey to grant autonomy to Macedonia. Bulgaria threatened to mobilise in case its demand was not accepted.

These developments worried Germany. Berlin clearly saw the implications of a new explosion in the Balkans. It would have to support Austria-Hungary in a war with Turkey! Russia might intervene. In case of a war with Russia, France would intervene. Berlin warned the great European powers they should not intervene together in the event of a conflict in the Balkans. Would that really be the case?

The Balkan conflict continued nevertheless!

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, King Nicholas I of Montenegro declared war on Turkey. Serbia and Bulgaria had already mobilised, pretexting Turkish troop movements at their borders. In the Balkan Lands, aggressiveness took over from interest in keeping the peace. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria together, introduced an ultimatum to Turkey to demand constitutional reforms in Turkey, as well as the immediate demobilisation of the Turkish Army.

Turkey could not fight two wars at the same time, one with Italy and one in the Balkan! On October the 15<sup>th</sup>, therefore, it signed the Treaty of Lausanne with Italy. This ended the Turkish-Italian War. Italy received what it had always wanted, Libya and Tripoli. In exchange, Italy would evacuate the islands in the Aegean Sea, occupied by her troops.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October of 1912, Turkey refused the Balkan ultimatum of the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, declaring war on Serbia and Bulgaria. The First Balkan War was on!

Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro fought the Ottoman Sultanate, and launched their troops against the Turkish armies. The Turkish Army suffered early defeats: on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October to the Serbs at Koumanow, and at Kirk-Kilisse against the Bulgarians. In November, Monastir fell to the Serbs. The Bulgarians led a siege to Adrianopolis. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, the Serbs penetrated into the Albanian city of Alesso.

But the tide slowly turned! The Turkish troops stopped the Bulgarians before Tchatalja, a mere 150 kilometres from Istanbul. The Serbs and the Bulgarians were breaking the status quo in the Balkan. Would Austria-Hungary let them continue to conquer the entire Balkan? The risk was great. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1912, the King of Bulgaria pronounced himself in favour of support to the Orthodox Christians of Macedonia. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, Turkey officially asked for an international conference in London to seek a way out of the conflict for all the countries engaged in the war in the Balkan.

In Russia, the rightist parties progressed in the elections for the 4<sup>th</sup> *Duma* in November of 1912.

Lenin and Stalin had to reorganise the Bolshevik Party. They amplified the agitation in Russia.

France and Great Britain exchanged views on their naval strategy. Churchill and Delcassé coordinated their efforts. Great Britain would concentrate its fleet in the North Sea, France in the Mediterranean. Paris and Madrid decided together on their interests in Morocco.

In the Balkan Lands, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1912, Albania declared its independence. Some hope on peace in the Balkan emerged. But then, Bulgaria attacked its former allies. It was defeated in its turn! Austrian pressure limited the successes of the Serbs by forcing them to evacuate the Adriatic coast. Austria helped creating Albania to counterbalance Serbia.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, in London, Turkey and the *Balkan League of Nations* signed an agreement to stop the war between Turkey and the Balkan Lands. Nevertheless, in January of 1913, the London Conference failed to come to a final solution in the wars.

Austria had become involved too, for Serbia wanted to add to its territory the harbour of San Giovanni di Medusa, which would have allowed it an access to the Adriatic Sea. Austria refused this categorically. It wanted to create a buffer country between itself and Serbia and Albania. In March of 1913, Serbian troops nevertheless occupied San Giovanni, refusing no as an answer. The Serbian troops marched on Scutari, which was Turkish until then, even though London had declared this town had to remain Albanian. As of the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, Russia exerted pressure on Serbia.

Russia called to a stop the dangerous degeneration of the situation in the Balkan. The Serbian troops ceased to advance in front of Scutari, and left Albania altogether. Austria's Foreign Minister, Leopold Berthold, threatened to use force unless Serbia's ally, Montenegro, passed Scutari to Albania. He later even demanded Serbia to evacuate the entire Albanian territory.

Changes happened among the leaders of the countries involved in these developments in the month of January of 1913.

Raymond Poincaré was elected President of France.

Enver Pasha organised a putsch in Turkey. He was an officer in the Ottoman Army. The new government of Turkey was then constituted of extreme nationalists and bellicose ministers, making the situation in the Balkan ever more complicated. Turkey demanded back the control over Adrianopolis, Janina and Scutari. Enver Pasha denounced the armistice of London, so that in February of 1913, a new war started.

In March, King George I of Greece was assassinated at Salonika. His son Constantine succeeded on him.

That same month, of March 1913, Adrianopolis, a strategic town for the Turks, surrendered to the Serbian and Bulgarian onslaught. Turkey signed a new armistice in mid-April. In London, the peace negotiations had continued. An new agreement was reached.

Turkey would have to surrender all her European regions. It could only hold Istanbul and the Bosphorus. All other lands would be independent. In May of 1913, the Conference of London also opted for the autonomy of Albania, though under Ottoman protectorate. Austria and Italy renounced on entering Albania with their troops. The Peace Treaty between Turkey and the Balkan States was signed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May.

The fate of Crete, although the island had announced already a long time ago its joining with Greece, its representatives already having received seats in the Greek Parliament, was handed over to an international commission. This commission would also have to decide over the fate of other islands in the Aegean, and over Albania.

The Balkan Lands thus officially gained their independence, by the agreements among the powers of Europe. Henceforth, each country independently, could develop its expansionist ambitions, and the countries, driven by nationalist factions, could fight among each other!

New Balkan unrest started already on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June of 1913, with the signature between the Serbs and the Greeks of a treaty of defence against Bulgaria. Bulgaria wanted Salonika and Karola. But Greece also wanted these old Thracian territories, to cut the Bulgarians from the Aegean. Serbia allied with Greece to take other lands away from Bulgaria. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, despite Russian attempts to guarantee the peace, Bulgaria attacked Serbia. Bulgaria thus launched the 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkan War, turning against its erstwhile allies!

The Bulgarian offensive was stopped, when Greek troops passed the Danube. Rumania joined Greece and Serbia on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July. Rumania wanted to recuperate Silistria from Bulgaria. The Turks attacked Bulgaria in their turn on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July. The Turkish troops, with Enver Pasha leading, were quickly at Adrianopolis.

Bulgaria had made a very bad decision to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkan War. It got the surrounding countries closing in on it like voracious prey-birds! On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, the Rumanian Army equally passed the Danube.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1913, Sofia asked for an armistice. A day later, the delegates of the European powers gathered in London, recognised the total independence of Albania. The great powers declared it a neutral country in the Balkan War.

Bulgaria lay defeated. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August of 1913, a Peace Treaty was signed in Bucarest. The largest parts of Macedonia were given to Greece and Serbia, despite what had been earlier decided. Rumania received coastal territories of the Black Sea. The Turks recuperated Adrianopolis. Former Thrace went to Greece. Montenegro got extensive territories in the south, which had formerly been of Albania. They also received regions in the east, towards Novi-Bazar. The great winner in this Second Balkan War was Serbia! Its population suddenly augmented from 2.9 to 4.5 million people, its surface from 48,300 to 87,000 km<sup>2</sup>! It could now position itself as a rival to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in the Balkan.

Turkey was in dire need of reorganisation of its Army. To that end, it signed a military agreement with Germany! A large group of German officers, led by General Liman von Sanders, was sent to Turkey. Von Sanders even got the direct command of the First Turkish Army Corps of Istanbul. Of course, France and Great Britain protested. Turkey promptly appointed the English Admiral Limpus to the commander-in-chief of the Turkish fleet in the Bosphorus.

The Balkan Lands began to reorganise. In December of 1913, in Florence, an international commission drew up the exact frontiers between Greece and Albania. Greece accepted the verdict, but kept leading pernicious actions of terror in the region it had not obtained.

In view of these conflicts, the European powers began to strengthen their armies.

In Germany, in July of 1913, the impression of an impending war was heightened. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, the *Reichstag* approved of a new law on continued armament. In peace time, Germany

would from now on have 850,000 men under arms, ready to intervene at any moment, instead of the 700,00 it had previously. With the reservists added to these, Germany could very rapidly have ready an army of 1,500,000 soldiers. In August, a scandal broke out in Germany around the Krupp armament factory. Krupp directors were suspected of having bribed several higher officers into choosing for Krupp weapons for the Army.

Italy and Austria signed a convention to have their fleets jointly operate in the Mediterranean. In France, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August of 1913, the Senate ratified the law on the 3-year conscription. From then on, it could align 780,000 soldiers in its peace-time Army. In June, the French Parliament had already voted for a loan of the state of 800 million francs to increase its armament.

For Russia, the mobilisation was for 1,800,000 men in total! In March of the year, 1914, Russia too enhanced its armed forces to bring it in peace time from 460,000 to the number mentioned.

But Russia lacked the means of transport to throw so many men together rapidly in a conflict. In November of 1913, the Russian Imperial Council forbade the municipal councillors in Poland to use the Polish language in their deliberations. In view of any large conflict, this was not a wise decision. Should not Russia have counted on soldiers from all of its lands to confront possible enemies? It could and probably should have granted some leeway to Poland.

Great Britain only, counted on a small, still voluntary service in its Army. Winston Churchill obtained more funds for the British Navy in February of 1914.

When so many of the most modern weapons were building up in Europe, the temptation to use them augmented.

The tension in the Balkan did not really diminish, despite the end of direct, armed conflicts. The Albanian King Wilhelm von Wied, decided to call the general mobilisation of Albania, to go to war against Greece. Greece had sought exactly such an eventuality. It had not recognised the independence of Albania, and continued its anti-governmental actions in the country. Albania noticed the danger, and refused to be brought under Greek dominance.

And then finally, happened the event that would end all petty conflicts and lead to a generalised war in Europe.

## The Conflagration. 1914

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June of 1914, the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand of Habsburg and his wife, were killed in a terrorist attack at Sarajevo, in the Slavic province of Bosnia. Bosnia had by then been for some time integral part of the Austrian empire. Franz-Ferdinand had been destined to become the successor to Emperor Franz-Joseph I, the Habsburg Emperor of Austria-Hungary.

Franz-Ferdinand was actually an unattractive, authoritarian man, choleric and xenophobic, but he had generally spoken out more for peace than Austria's Chief of the Military General Staff, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf. The terrorist who shot the archduke was called Gavrilo Princip, a Bosniac of Austrian nationality, merely 19 years old. It became quickly known Serbian nationalist-minded officers, some maybe members of a secret organisation called the 'Black Hand', had helped preparing the assassination attempt. In fact, Serbia's army and intelligence service, also involved in nationalist organisations, had been acting out of control of king and government.

Austria was outraged. It was time for the Habsburgs to take on Serbia, and teach it a lesson it would not soon forget, maybe to conquer and annex the Slav country!

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, Emperor Franz Joseph asked Berlin to associate with Austria-Hungary in the judgement of Serbia. Emperor Wilhelm II had already refused two years ago to move against Serbia. This time, he could not and would not withdraw from the Austrian plea. He asked his General von Falkenhayn, the Minister of War, to prepare for the armed conflict with Serbia. At that moment, Wilhelm II may still have believed neither Russia nor France would be tempted to enter the conflict in arms.

Wilhelm II and his court considered France was not yet well prepared to go to war. The French, for instance, were deciding on the acquisition of more and heavier cannons, and that issue had not yet come to a conclusion.

Germany conscripted less of its population than France. It spent less of its national product on defence than France and Russia, but in the last years, this complacency had been filled-in. Germany had a population of about 60 million people, France only 39 million. Germany could call to arms relatively easier many more men than France.

Emperor Wilhelm II showed he was not really worried about a general war of the alliances. He went on with his project of cruising with his ship on a holiday trip in the Baltic! Was a war with Serbia not a minor conflict?

The German emperor also believed Russia was now a weak country in all aspects. It was in trouble in its interior with growing unrest from the Socialist movements, and weakened still by its recent, disastrous defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Moreover, short on funds, Russia would not intervene in modern arms.

Still, since 1910, Russia had reorganised its army, enabling it to move much faster its conscripts to war capabilities. Lately, Russia's early 1914 so-called 'Great Programme', had as its aim to expand the army by 40% over 3 years. True, by the summer of 1914, this programme remained in its first stadium only. Russia's rearmament efforts would have to mature for another 3 to 4 years! In January of 1914 also, in return for a loan to finance its commercial railway construction, the Russians had agreed with the French on a project of strategic railway building in Poland to the Russian interior. This had the potential to

accelerate Russian military deployment by about 50%. The German Military General Staff considered it was better to start a war with Russia now, than later!

Wilhelm II still thought Russia would stand aside in the localised conflict between Austria and Serbia. Also, in Germany, the SPD, the Socialist Party of Germany, despite its anti-capitalist rhetoric, remained mostly law-abiding and unrevolutionary. Not so for Russia. Even as late as the beginning of 1914, large strikes had thrown up barricades in St Petersburg. The former Russian Minister of the Interior, Peter Durnovo, had sent a memorandum to the monarch, foreseeing and warning the tzar that a war now would end in defeat of Russia, as well as in catastrophic social upheaval. The memorandum was prescient, but Nicholas II seems not have given the letter much attention. And still, the Tzar and his court decided the time had come for a firm stand, whatever risks a war might bring. Risks there would be, and they materialised rapidly!

Still, peace was more on the mind of the men discussing the issues than war! Army expenses were seen by all these men rather as measures of deterrence and defence than offensive actions, and even than measures of preparations to start armed hostilities. Both large blocks, the *Triple Entente* and the *Triple Alliance* had been increasing their war capabilities in views of deterrence. But as their confidence in their armies had grown, so they seemed to be bolder really in considering war, fighting, as an alternative to endless scares, threats and palavering in the *Concert of Europe*.

Gavrilo Princip was a Bosnian. Many Bosnian Serbs had of course resented the Habsburg rule over the country. The Serbs were about 42% of the total Population of Bosnia! They formed the largest ethnical group in the country.

In Serbia itself, groups such as the *Narodna Odbrana*, or the People's defence, supported Serbian minorities outside Serbia. Another Serbian organisation was the Black Hand or Union of Death, a secret organisation, which wanted to unify all Serbs by violence. The assassins of Sarajevo belonged to a group called Young Bosnia, mostly students, who wanted to destroy the Habsburg authority and unite all the South Slavs and all the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in one, new federation.

But then, in a few weeks of July of 1914, the diplomatic initiatives accelerated, and the unbelievable became harsh reality. Here is the calendar of events in the second half of 1914:

July, 5: Austria had sent Count Hoyos as special envoy to Berlin, asking for support. Emperor Wilhelm II told Count Hoyos Austria could and should march into Serbia, with Germany's support, even if war with Russia would result. Emperor Wilhelm II had been on friendly terms with Archduke Franz-Ferdinand. For him, the assassination was a terrible outrage to any dynastic authority, on which his own regime was based. This message was later called the '*blank cheque*' given by Germany to Austria-Hungary. The next day, the German *Kanzler* Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg repeated this message. Emperor Wilhelm coldly went on a cruise in the Baltic!

July, 6: Germany sent an official telegram to Vienna, agreeing to come to the aid of Austria-Hungary. Austria obtained the German promise of support for a drastic retaliation to Serbia.

July, 7: Vienna decided in its Council of Ministers to intervene in Serbia. The Hungarian Prime Minister opposed the plan, but he didn't win the votes.

July, 12: Berlin learned of the impending Austrian ultimatum to Serbia.

July, 15: the French President Poincaré and his President of the Council of Ministers, Viviani, were in Russia. The meeting had been foreseen since May, and was in principle not linked to the events of Sarajevo. France and Russia affirmed their mutual support in case of a war.

July, 23: Austria-Hungary addressed its ultimatum to Serbia. The Austrian ultimatum accused the *Narodna Odbrana* of having helped the murderers of the Crown Prince of Austria. The real culprit, however, was the Black Hand organisation. The head of this organisation was Colonel Dragutin Dimitrievich, or Apis, the Serbian chief of military intelligence! Serbia was to denounce all separatist activities, ban all publications directed against Austria, ban all organisations hostile to Austria, and accept Austrian inspectors to conduct a judicial inquiry. Serbia may have remained rather exhausted after its previous Balkan Wars. It accepted the conditions of the ultimatum, except for the demand to have Austrian police experts collaborate at the inquiry into the murder of the successor to the Austrian throne. It consented only to Austrian inquiries if these were subject to the constitution of Serbia and international Law. The answer of Serbia was given within the 48-hours deadline. Austria rejected the Serbian answer.

July, 15: Russia declared its solidarity with Serbia, guaranteeing the Serbian sovereignty over its lands.

July, 25: Great Britain proposed in vain to mediate in the threatening conflict.

July, 26: the Russians began their pre-mobilisation measures. Before that date, and even after the Austrian mobilisation, Germany had remained rather inactive. On July, 26, Germany received a wake-up call.

July, 27: a new offer of mediation of Great Britain was made public. It asked Germany to intervene at the Austrian Court, to accept the Serbian answer to the ultimatum, rejecting it as merely the basis of a negotiation. This proposal would only reach Vienna the day after Austria-Hungary had already declared the war on Serbia.

July, 28: Austria declared war on Serbia. The ultimatum of Austria to Serbia had but been a pretext for a showdown with Serbia. Austria-Hungary began a partial mobilisation in the Balkan.

July, 29: Austrian battleships, sailing down the Danube, started gunning at the capital of Serbia. Belgrade was evacuated.

July, 29: Russia mobilised its troops. Poincaré and Viviani were back in Paris. It was too late for France to equally develop further mediation initiatives.

July, 29-30: Great Britain offered a third negotiation. The *Triple Entente* of France, Great Britain and Russia seemed to agree on allowing Austria to teach a lesson to Serbia. Russia, however, demanded to halt any negotiations after hostilities of Austria against Serbia.

July, 30: Tzar Nicholas II of Russia signed the order of mobilisation. Once the Russians began their pre-mobilisation measures, the fate of Europe was sealed! Germany had to react fast.

July, 30-31: the Russian general mobilisation caused also the general mobilisation in Austria-Hungary. St Petersburg and Vienna closed all mediation efforts. Berlin had also sent an ultimatum to Russia. Germany started intensive military preparations. It sent a peremptory ultimatum to Russia to urge it to cease mobilisation.

July, 31: Jean Jaurès was murdered in Paris. The Social-Democratic anti-war mood was thus weakened further.

July, 31: Great Britain asked Germany and France to confirm their respect of the neutrality of Belgium. No concrete answers were obtained. The British court still felt responsible to the Saxon-Coburg dynasty continued in Belgium after Queen Victoria had them installed in the small, but wealthy kingdom. Germany cared little for the but 6 divisions that Great Britain would send to the continent. Throwing the right wing of its armies through Belgium, was integral part of the von Schlieffen-von Moltke war plan.

July, 31: Germany asked of France to stay neutral in the conflict. Viviani answered France was not at war with Germany, and she would act in her own interests.

Aug, 1: Germany declared war on Russia and proceeded with the general mobilisation. France equally mobilised. Austria-Hungary too, proceeded with the general mobilisation. In Russia, Minister Sazonov warned Tzar Nicholas II that unless he supported Serbia fully, he would risk revolution in his land and lose his throne. In Great Britain, reaction remained lukewarm. Sir Grey had to tell the French ambassador in London that France had to decide by herself on how to respond to Germany's ultimatum, without assurance of British support. This British view didn't last long.

Aug, 2: German troops entered Luxembourg. Germany demanded of Belgium free passage on Belgian territory. Belgium rejected that ultimatum. In three dramatic British cabinet meetings, Great Britain decided to act against the violation of Belgian neutrality, and to stop the German fleet from attacking French ships or the French coast.

Aug, 3: pretexting bombardments of Nürnberg and Karlsruhe by French aeroplanes and the crossing of French troops over the borders into Germany, a trumped-up allegation, Germany declared war on Belgium and on France. Italy and Rumania declared their neutrality in the war. Emperor Wilhelm II seemed more anxious than before. Paris remained quite passive and non-provocative.

Aug, 4: Great Britain declared war on Germany.

Aug, 5: Austria declared war on Russia. Great Britain decided to send the BEF, the British Expeditionary Force, to France.

Aug, 6: Serbia declared war on Germany.

Aug, 11: France declared war on Austria-Hungary.

Aug, 13: Great Britain declared war on Austria-Hungary.

Aug, 16: the German Army took Liège in Belgium. Liège was the first town victim ever of a bombardment out of the air, made by Zeppelins. The von Schlieffen Plan for the war against France was in full effect.

Aug, 20: Belgium was defeated. The German Army invaded France.

Aug, 23: Japan declared war on Germany.

Aug, 25: Austria-Hungary declared war on Japan.

Aug, 26: the German Army defeated the invading Russian troops at Tannenberg in Eastern Prussia.

Sept, 6-13: the French stopped the German advance after the Battle of the Marne. General Alliéni launched his troops on the German flanks. Von Moltke suffered at the River Marne, and got replaced by von Falkenhayn. The German troops withdrew to the Aisne. The two adversaries tried to turn the one around the other, causing a displacement of the front to the north, the beginning of the 'race to the sea' of the German Army.

Sept: Russia. The *zemstvos*, the local Russian assemblies, formed a common committee, the *Zemgor*, destined to stop the errors of the government. The Russian Army experienced the first horrors of the war.

Nov, 3: France and Great Britain declared war on Turkey, which had signed a secret alliance with Germany on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August.

Nov, 4: the French Field-Marshal Joffre explained to General Foch how to build up the defence in Flanders, thus to be able to reorganise the French reserves. No decision was gained on this front quickly. There was no hope on a short conflict!

Dec, 6: the Germans took the town of Lodz on the Russian Army, at the price of a large loss of soldiers.

Dec, 29: violent battles developed on the eastern front. The battles had the names of 4 rivers: Bzura, Ravka, Pilica and Nida. The Russians withdrew to the Bzura. The Russian front held its own. A silence of arms set in. This lasted for a few weeks, as the battles led to very heavy losses of men on both sides.

Great Britain had settled its disputes with the USA since the turn of the century. In 1902, it had concluded an alliance with Japan. In agreements of 1904 and 1907, it had settled most of its differences with France and Russia. In 1911, the General Staffs of France and Britain had agreed on a British Expeditionary Force or BEF of 6 divisions to be sent to the French northern flank. The links and agreements between Belgium and Great-Britain, with dynasties both of Saxony-Coburg, were strong.

From these last dates on, the First World War would rage all over Europe, and also in the colonies of the great powers, as in the countries close to them. Neither the *Concert of Europe*, nor the *Second International*, could stop the war. All sides were willing to risk war, rather than back down. European countries would be destroying the finest of their people, their youth, their economy, their finances, and largely themselves, until new powers emerged to take over the lead in the world.

## The Kleinberger and the von Chrapitz. 1900-1914

Max Vincius had not only brought the Vincius Family to live and Thrive in the Prussian town of Thorn. With his second wife, Leandra von Chrapitz, he had created a side branch of the Vincius, the von Chrapitz-Vincius. These members of the von Chrapitz Family vowed to another religion than the main, central Jewish core of the Vincius. They were Prussian Evangelic of faith, more Lutheran than Calvinist, and even Roman Catholic in part. Like the main, Jewish core of the Vincius, these von Chrapitz were not very zealous in their religion. Though they believed, and feasted the main events in the life of their family according to the rites of their religion, they were not very practising men and women. They rather thought religion was mainly for the women to honour, for the women to educate the children in, and for the women to force the men to remember their duties to God.

Leandra von Chrapitz gave a daughter and a son to Max Vincius, her husband. The firstborn was a boy they called Julius. What better name for a boy, who should become a great man, a man of valour and a dignitary, who would inherit and have to augment a nobility title of count. Julius would receive large parts of the considerable fortune of the von Chrapitz and the Vincius, an empire of lands and golden coins and deeds and investments in companies. The boy had been named after Julius, the first of the Caesars. Maybe his mother had placed too much of her pride in her little emperor.

Julius kept his name of von Chrapitz-Vincius, as his mother had worked hard to keep the noble Prussian name first, and then the added Vincius behind, not in front. He should have been called Julius Vincius, which would also have been a triumphant, prestigious name. His mother wanted the von Chrapitz name to last. Max Vincius, his father, had agreed out of love for his wife, to keep the Chrapitz name of his wife for these, his children from his second marriage. Max had also wanted to mark the difference between the offspring of his two wives.

The Vincius would remain Jewish, with the cracks of exceptions, as Max's son Michael had also converted to Christianity.

The von Chrapitz would keep the noble, Teutonic title of von Chrapitz, the name of the descendants from the Teutonic Knights line. Who would suspect Max's sons to be of Jewish descent with such a name? With time even, in one generation, the Vincius name was dropped in that family. Julius's children would simply be known by the name of von Chrapitz.

Julius von Chrapitz was a tall, elegant man of great intelligence and of a dignified, imposing stature. His back was straight, his head high. Julius was of the most ancient nobility of Prussia, but he remained a trader. He could have become an officer in the army, but interest for such bellicose function lay not in his character. After the death of his parents, he managed his domains with much success. He became the patriarch of the Chrapitz branch of the children of Max Vincius. Julius had admired his father, learnt much of him. But like his mother, he remained more the Prussian nobleman, rather than the son of a Jewish wanderer who had originated somewhere in Palestine and then fled to Lithuania, to the Pale.

Julius attended the right schools in Thorn, lastly the German Gymnasium. He had fully been trained in management and trade, privately, by the best professors his mother could find. His father had provided him with a series of good books and subjects of economy, finance and law, as well as of advanced mathematics. He had taught his son how to find his way in them.

He read the books in three languages. When Julius's father died in 1900, he was still young and impetuous, 35 years old. He had already married and had children of his own. His mother continued to supervise him and add her own precious advice, which he mostly appreciated and tolerated with a slight smile.

Leandra died in 1907, when Julius was 42 years old. Then, he became the patriarch of the expanding von Chrapitz Family. His wife was actually brought to him also by his parents. They did this discreetly, without wanting to force him into a marriage. Julius liked the first girl his parents introduced to him, one Anna von Fiebris.

Julius married when he was just 18 years old and his wife, born in 1867, was merely 16 then, yet a splendid, vivid and smart young woman. They married in 1883. Max and Leandra built for them a grand manor, smaller than the von Chrapitz Castle, but more adapted to modern life with organised, central heating and gas lighting. The manor stood in a large patch of land, arranged to a large garden. After the death of Julius's father, however, the couple moved into the Chrapitz Palace.

Anna von Fiebris was an intelligent and warm-hearted person. She adored her children. Her health was delicate. In her later years, she developed pneumonia, which would also cause her untimely death.

The marriage of Julius was a happy one. He sincerely loved and respected his wife. Anna von Fiebris also respected Leandra von Chrapitz. Anna was a dignified woman, aware of her status. The two women appreciated each other, and nursed one another in sickness.

Julius and Anna had two children, two boys, who arrived not long after the marriage of their parents. Anna delivered them with ease, though they were both big babies. The children were called first Philipp, and then Otto. Julius dropped the Vincius addition from their names, leaving only the reference to the Teutonic noble name. The clerk who inscribed the name pretended not to notice the change, especially as banknotes were shoved discreetly over his table.

Philipp von Chrapitz had inherited the intelligence of the Vincius and the energy and charisma of the von Chrapitz. Still as a baby, he loved to eat and drink copiously. He grew up to a strong child, as Haim Vincius once had been. The boy showed an agreeable character. He laughed a lot, with a hearty laughter that ringed through the von Chrapitz manor and later, the palace. Walls could not stop the sound. Philipp liked Thorn. He finished his studies with not very marvellous results, but quite sufficient to pass.

As a young man, he looked already fully the settled, landed gentleman, who would at one time be considered a decent inheritor of his father's fortune and domains. He married rather late, after the death of his grandparents Max and Leandra, but he sought out his bride by himself, and married well. His wife was a girl of good old Polish noble stock, a lusty girl called Charlotte Lisnewski. Charlotte was 4 years older than Philipp. They married only in 1908, when Philipp was already 24 and Charlotte 28. Charlotte was set to become an old maid, nor too handsome nor ugly, but a woman admirably suited to Philipp von Chrapitz' character. They too lived a thoroughly happy life! Charlotte liked to laugh at her bear of a man, without him minding. She managed her household and her husband to perfection, and drilled some Prussian discipline – despite her being of Polish descent – into her family. Philipp used to say this or that difficult subject would be handled by his sergeant-major, pointing to his wife.

The second and youngest son of Julius von Chrapitz was of an entirely different breed. He was a boy who ate little when he was very young. He nevertheless grew up to being tall and lean. With time and with many walks with his parents in the woods and the fields of the von Chrapitz estates, he too developed into a strong, well-muscled boy. Julius had christened this boy Otto, after the German politician he most admired, Otto von Bismarck.

Otto von Chrapitz was an altogether very different child from Philipp. The contrast could not have been greater! Nobody exactly understood from which forefather or foremother Otto's character originated from. If Philipp resembled a bear, Otto resembled a weasel. He darted around the manor and palace to all places where no one expected him. He rarely stayed in one place for more than a few minutes. With tall, slim, long, dangling arms, Otto grew up to a very anxious youth. He was far from a coward, but Otto needed to know everything about to where he would go or be brought, before he decided to put one foot before the other. When he reached 20, he knew better than anybody else what happened and what lay in the domains of his father. He simply had to know everything about his environment, before he could feel at ease. Otto had not such a jovial character as his brother. Otto could hurt, deliberately, calculated, in words and in acts, and not care. He fought with the other boys in school. He cheated in class, yet finished his Gymnasium with very good results. It seemed the only thing he had inherited from his Vincius forefathers was a very sharp, calculating mind. But Otto's mind could be malicious and cruel, and not directed at doing good around him. After Otto had finished Gymnasium, Julius von Chrapitz, Otto's father, discussed seriously with him, almost having to lock him in a room with him, about what Otto would want to do with his life.

'I shall become a soldier,' Otto von Chrapitz had simply exclaimed. 'My grand-uncle, the General Haim Vincius, had promised me to get me into a fine regiment. I'll have to marry well, too, because I'll receive only the crumbs of the von Chrapitz fortune to live by. So be it. I am only a second son, the reserve son, if you want. Don't worry, father, I know already who I am going to marry! Don't start looking for one.'

And so was done! Nobody ever found out how Otto von Chrapitz had proceeded, but he won one very dignified Lady Elisabeth von Grabia to marry. Von Grabia was one among, if not the finest name of the district of Thorn. The name of von Grabia was older and more prestigious than the von Chrapitz, and the Grabias were certainly twice as rich, proprietors of domains all over Prussia. Their name had been one of the most respectable of the *szlachta*, the ancient nobility of Poland.

Elisabeth von Grabia came with a very, very large dowry, which could have made of Otto by one stroke a landed Junker. Most remarkably, this Elisabeth was as beautiful as an angel, and as cold and calculating of mind as her husband. Elisabeth also inherited a manor, into which the couple decided to live. The manor lay rather far from Thorn, nearer Marienwerder, close to the regional power of West-Prussia. Elisabeth's husband was not often on his newfound estates, which suited her just fine. She liked to have the large house by herself. She supported the career of her husband, and acted in the best circles she knew to further his promotions. She did not really have to do that, for Otto was a magnificent soldier and officer.

In fact, Otto himself was not really interested in a career limited to the staff offices and tents. He became a lieutenant almost immediately, and loved nothing more than to patrol in the wide plains, among the many lakes of Prussia, along the borders with Russia, to participate in manoeuvres, and to bully his men when at rest in a garrison city. His senior officers noticed

he knew quite some Russian officers too, having heard of rambunctious evening parties of Otto on the other side of the border, in Russian tents. It was said Otto was the only officer of the Prussian Army who could drink Russian officers under the table.

On the other side of the von Chrapitz-Vincius family, there were only girls of the name! That meant the names of von Chrapitz and Vincius would disappear naturally and completely in that branch. Maria von Chrapitz-Vincius married a Count Gomolenski, equally a Prussian nobleman of Polish descent. She married young. She was only 17 years old, which was quite young for a woman in those times and among the nobility. Her husband was merely a year older, but both knew they had to have each other, and disappeared under the covers even before any ceremony. The marriage did not have to be arranged, and was a success. Andrej was of Polish stock, the son of a family of Polish landowners. The Gomolenski had lost many pieces of land in the Prussian Germanisation programs. They had not much complained, for Prussia had allowed them to become richer even, in industrial ventures. The family also owned many lands elsewhere in Prussia, and even in Poland, outside the cities, outside the eyes of the greedy hands of the Prussian and Russian civil servants. Andrej and Maria could live a life of leisure. They were both what one would call now intellectuals. They read widely, travelled widely, conversed with scholars, got interested in the advances of the sciences, and were appreciated conversationalists everywhere. They lived quietly, and managed to expand their fortune as easily as they could read a book. They had two daughters.

The first daughter born of Andrej and Maria was the Dorothea Gomolenski, so well-known to Julian Vincius, for she was the girl he called Dora Gomol and loved intensely. She could hold the title of Countess, but rarely mentioned the title. Dora was a passionate girl and later a splendid woman, more of the Polish dash than of the Prussian dignified restraint. Maybe that was why Julian Vincius had been drawn to her. He always admired people who were different from himself in character and demeanour. Dora fascinated him. He always wondered why such an expansive, wonderful, beautiful girl could be attracted to him. Still, she had subdued him with her charm, even from when both were still very young. Dorothea Gomolenski was indeed beautiful, intelligent, very present in the world, eager, curious, sensual as only Slav girls could be, and one who liked the presence of men around her. She couldn't stop herself from flirting with any man, of whatever age. She was very popular with older men.

When Dorothea was still young, maybe only 13 years old, Maria von Chrapitz found her daughter half naked in the attic, with a stark-naked scoundrel of a Prussian boy from another noble family of Thorn at the feet of the girl, kissing her where Maria had never dared allow her husband to touch her.

Maria and Andrej could have been very scandalised, but they were not up in character to this fierce, strong-willed daughter of theirs. Boys flocked to Dorothea Gomolenski like bees to a hive. She was their queen. Only a little older, Dora had lovers, true lovers, wild lovers, several ones, more than she could count on her fingers. Then, she stopped all that, and found solace to a boy of her own family, though the Gomolenski did not really frequent much that branch of the Vincius Family.

The new boy was no other than Julian Vincius.

The Gomolenski rather thought of Julian as being a cold duck, lacking any special charm, a non-conspicuous boy, who seemed to have no particular talents of his own, and was not even

strikingly handsome. Still, Dorothea for a long time, only went out with this Julian, and instead of tumbling with him in the hay, she walked with him, seemingly at peace and rest. Of course, this affection did not last. Dorothea's parents noticed with some suspicion and apprehension that only this Julian could calm down their daughter, and hold her to her senses. It was because this youth, a very sensible and sensitive boy, that Dorothea had expressed the wish also to study at a university, to study medicine, and that at the same institution where the Vincius boy had moved to, at Freiburg-im-Breisgau!

Maria and Andrej Gomolenski were happy their daughter left Thorn and the temptations she knew too well in her home town. Maria and Andrej expected Dorothea to return soon to Thorn, with a full belly. They would not object to a nice marriage with the Vincius boy, though they worried some about the blood-proximity of the youths. Much later, they were quite astonished Dorothea had fallen out with this young Julian too.

In 1913, Dorothea Gomolenski suddenly married Albrecht von Papau, not Julian Vincius. Dorothea was 26 years old when she married. Albrecht was 17 years older than Dorothea. Dorothea was still very beautiful, a very sensual and mature person, blooming out in generous forms, a resplendent and still young woman. Why had she married such an older man? Maria and Andrej recognised no special affection between man and wife. Albrecht von Papau was well aware his bride, the extraordinary woman, could not have children. He knew not why, but Dorothea had not hidden the fact from him. Von Papau was a cynic in such matters. He did not particularly appreciate children. He wanted Dorothea Gomolenski because he lusted after her. He wanted to possess her, to show her off in his circles of the Prussian nobility. She did as he asked. She paraded.

A few years after their marriage, Albrecht left the district of Thorn for Berlin. He left with his wife, to take on a function as a high-level civil servant in the diplomatic department of the *Reich*. His wife then began to work as a nurse and doctor. They mostly lived in separate rooms in Berlin, knowing well love was lost between them.

The other daughter Gomolenski, Dorothea's younger sister, was called Micol. Micol was an old Jewish name, but the Gomolenski either didn't know so much, or didn't care, and simply liked the sound of the name. Micol too was beautiful, intelligent, and of a much warmer and yet reserved personality than Dorothea. She studied at Thorn, and married at 17 with a man called Rudolph von Witzke. Von Witzke too was of old Teutonic descent. He was a trader and a landowner, who worked a lot together with Albrecht von Papau. That was how, actually, Albrecht met Dorothea. Though a few years younger than Dorothea, Micol married quite earlier.

Micol's marriage was one out of love. Micol and Rudolph were both Prussian Evangelic of religion, though not very zealous church-goers. Von Witzke was not very rich, but he could live well enough. After a few years, he and his wife drew into the manor of the von Witzke near Thorn, still in West-Prussia. They had to restore the house, and transformed it into a comfortable, large modern house with fine stables added. They felt closest in opinions and in friendship to the other couple of Philipp von Chrapitz and Charlotte Lisnewski. The von Witzke were quiet, gentle and happy people.

Another family in Thorn was linked to the Vincius. Although they, much more than the von Chrapitz-Vincius were quite proud to wear the name of Vincius, the von Chrapitz practically did not frequent these Vincius men and women. This family too were of the Prussian

Evangelic religion, not Jewish. The members of it had been born from an illegal, adulterous relation, even if that relation was one of love and which lasted a lifetime. The von Chrapitz called them their Kleinberger relatives, though that name was worn by nobody in it, except the matriarch. She was Esther Kleinberger, the lifelong mistress of Kurt Vincius. Kurt was one of the sons of the deceased Max Vincius with Sara Benavicius. Esther Kleinberger had two children by Kurt, recognised by her lover, and called Richard and Marlene Vincius.

Marlene had married a Polish trader called Anders Lipinski. The Lipinski had no noble title, which already would have set off the proud von Chrapitz men. Anders Lipinski had also no large fortune. But he was a man astute in business, to the Prussian example, and had soon enough money to provide a fine, comfortable life for his wife and children. At first, they lived quietly in a house in the centre of Thorn. After a few years, when the children of Marlene and Anders were still small, they moved to Königsberg, to stay closer to where Anders Lipinski had invested in a textile factory. The factory grew, and allowed the family to live well. Although Anders was of Polish descent, he got along well in the Prussian establishment of Königsberg and did business with several of the town's original Prussian traders. The Lipinski had two boys, Joseph and Erich. They respectively with Regina Schmied and Bettina Danksa. Anders Lipinski was Roman Catholic. Marlene entered her husband's religion. This family lived and remained living in Königsberg.

Richard Vincius, Marlene's brother, married Rosa Danemann. Both vowed to the Prussian Evangelic faith. Richard was a boy of the Kleinberger generation. He first traded, and he was a very good trader, even better than his father Kurt. He inherited the Kleinberger shops, now a chain of several shops, installed in several towns of Prussia, with the largest one still in Thorn. He also received quite some funds from his parents, invested that money in ventures that brought up more money, invested again, so much so he could soon be regarded as a magnate too. He invested in railways and in factories. People regularly came to him, asking him to invest in their new enterprises. Richard Vincius made huge profits in his most daring ventures. He came into a lot of money in the peaceful years of from 1890 to 1910.

Richard and Rosa had 3 children. In sequence came Peter, Frieda and Ernst. Peter was a serious boy, who knew a girl called Michaela Kohle, a Thorn girl. He married her late, for he worked until he could provide her with a fine house. They loved each other and had a fine household.

Frida Vincius married a trader of Königsberg, who often had passed by Thorn. The trader worked with her father, noticed her at one of their meetings in Frida's house. He remarked at once her delicate beauty and her fine, equal character. They too moved to Königsberg, and agreed quite well with the new Königsberg branch of the family.

The youngest son of Richard was called Ernst. Ernst had at first no idea, really, what he wanted to do with his life. He was still quite young when the World War broke out in 1914. He was drafted into the army! His fate would be linked with that of Julian Vincius in rather unexpected ways.

In the story that is to come, only three people mattered around Julian Vincius. One, of course was Dorothea Gomolenski, his Dora Gomol. Julian never forgot about Dora. His heart remained aching after his first love. The other persons who played roles in his life were Otto von Chrapitz, whom Julian encountered in the war, and then also Ernst Vincius, who became Julian's dearest friend.

The war had been declared! And this war was to be waged all over Europe, in the West, in the East, in the South, and probably also in the seas to the north of Germany. Since the defeat of Emperor Napoleon I of France in 1815, such a great war involving all the powers of Europe had not happened. All the wars fought since, had not lasted a very long time. Yes, the Crimean War of 1854-1856 had drawn on, but had remained far from the centre. All the other ones, the Italian War of 1859, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and even the Russo-Japanese War of 1905-1906, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Boer War of 1899-1902, the Turkish-Italian War in Libya of 1911-1912, the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, had remained intense, though some followed by periods of prolonged strife between much smaller groups than was now to be expected. The large clashes between complete armies had not lasted longer than six months, rarely longer than a year. Would this war be such one, an intense conflict, stopped by the *Concert of Europe* after a few months?

The system, referred to as the *Concert of Europe*, had worked well until the summer of 1914, though the system was voluntary, a habit only, really, a convenient means of solving the conflicts by words rather than by arms. Conferences to talk peace had been called, and never refused by all parties. There was no institution behind these meetings.

The governments of Europe had also signed to install telegraph, wireless connections, and postal services. They had harmonised timetables for railways, though not for the gauges of the tracks. The powers had not seriously obstructed each other's economies, except maybe in rare and extraordinary circumstances. They had allowed trans-border export and import of goods.

Would the *Concert of Europe* now also not intervene at the beginning or soon in the development of the hostilities? An all-out European war would be extremely bloody, Julian Vincius knew. He was a doctor. He knew the destructive power of a high-velocity shell filled with powder that exploded. He knew the injuries that could be caused for hundreds of meters around. He did not dare thinking about the injuries such explosions could cause to human beings. Until the last moment, Julian had not thought it possible such a war between so many peoples could be waged in modern times. Yet, it would come.

## Part II. The World War. 1914-1918

### The War begins. 1914

Julian Vincius always first looked to what happened on the western front, on the front with France. The German Army invaded Belgium on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1914. The German General Staff sent three armies against Belgium, with the aim to outflank the French armies from the north-west. The Moltke-von Schlieffen Plan dictated such moves, and everything had been brought in readiness, months if not years in advance, to make a splendid success of the movements. The 1<sup>st</sup> Army under General Alexander Heinrich Rudolph von Kluck marched from the north-eastern border of the country. Tens of thousands of soldiers advanced inexorably past Liège to Tongeren, Leuven and Brussels, to turn before the River Dender southwards to the town of Mons, and then into France straight south, to Maubeuge, Aulnoye and Avesnes.

Von Kluck was a Münster, Westphalia man, born in 1846, and thus 68 years old. He had enlisted early in the Prussian Army, participated in the seven-week Austrian-Prussian War of 1866, as well as in the Franco-German War of 1870. He got wounded twice in the Battle of Colombey-Neuilly in that last war, and had been awarded the Iron Cross for bravery. The Prussian king promoted him to general. In 1906, he became Inspector General of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army district. In the revisions of the von Schlieffen Plan by the current Chief of the General Staff, the CGS, the younger Helmut von Moltke, he was to pass with his soldiers by the fortifications of Liège.

From Brussels and Mechelen on, von Kluck's Army had to function as the western shield for the strong attack by the 2<sup>nd</sup> German Army, which advanced parallel to him, led by General Karl von Bülow. His orders were to accompany von Bülow's main forces on a straight dash to France's capital, the wonderful city of Paris.

General von Kluck fought ruthlessly on those first days of the war. His troops murdered hundreds of Belgian citizens, destroyed villages and ran through Walloon and Flemish towns crushing all resistance. His army was afraid of single men hiding in woods and behind walls, harassing the battalions. These were called in French the *franc-tireurs*. It sufficed for a civilian showing suspicious movements, to be shot instantly by the invading troops. Von Kluck's men burnt down the famous, beautiful University Library of the centuries old Catholic University of Leuven. The Belgian citizens still remember his troops for this ignominious act of barbarity.

Von Kluck had to march to Paris and move to its western side, while von Bülow would do the same from the east. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, near Mons, the British troops halted General von Kluck's onslaught temporarily. The British Expeditionary Force, the BEF, had to draw back. Von Kluck's men aggressively marched on, suppressing all resistance.

Von Kluck also pushed back the French General Lanrezac's 5<sup>th</sup> Army in the episode later called by the Allied British and French forces of the Great Retreat. Von Kluck advanced quite more rapidly than von Bülow! General von Bülow was a little more cautious. He had brought his 2<sup>nd</sup> German Army just south of von Kluck, over the Meuse River by the cities of Namur

and Huy. Namur was heavily fortified, like Liège, though less formidably so. Von Bülow ran over the fortifications and then drove his troops southwards, by the town of Charleroi.

Von Kluck received orders from Headquarters to wait for von Bülow. Moreover, von Bülow received command over the entire western flank of the attacking German forces, including von Kluck's army. Von Kluck protested against the order, as he wanted aggressively and rapidly to march forward, southwards, against General Lanrezac's left wing, of which he thought he was capable of crushing it easily. Helmut von Moltke overruled him, and repeated the order for his troops to wait for von Bülow.

Nevertheless, von Kluck's 1<sup>st</sup> Army had already advanced to within about 20 kilometres north of Paris! Von Kluck had decided not to follow the von Schlieffen Plan anymore, and to turn his army south-east. This happened on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August. In so doing, he created a gap in the German attack, between himself and von Bülow's 2<sup>nd</sup> Army. His rapid move exposed his right flank to the French General Joseph Maunoury's 6<sup>th</sup> Army. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, Maunoury's men began to attack von Kluck's right, his western flank, thus starting a new battle hence called the Battle of the Marne River. Von Kluck easily closed the gap by forcing two army corps into the open space between the German 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Armies.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, the other French General Franchet d'Esperey, who had replaced Lanrezac, threw in a surprise attack against von Bülow's forces, again widening the gap between the two German armies, into which the British Expeditionary Forces threatened to enter and exploit the situation.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September therefore, the German General Staff considered the fast advance of the German armies too dangerous to continue. It ordered a retreat of all the attacking German armies. The BEF had by then already passed the Marne.

German attacks on Maunoury's 6<sup>th</sup> Army had failed. The Germans retreated northwards in good order, to behind the River Aisne. There, the Germans would remain in entrenched positions for the rest of the war.

The great German offensive reached to over the Marne, then had to draw back to the Aisne! The controversy on whether General von Kluck would have been able or not to overcome the issues, and as yet move on southwards after another kind of Marne Battle, remains open.

Julian Vincius heard of what has happened near the Marne River in the town of Gembloux in Belgium, just west of Namur. In his opinion, von Kluck could have turned the situation to his advantage, and continued his unrestrained march to Paris, with von Bülow next to him. But who will tell with certainty what might have happened?

In March of 1915, on an inspection tour of his troops, General von Kluck was struck by shrapnel, which caused him seven wounds and seriously injured his leg. He received the order *Pour le Mérite* from the emperor, the highest award of merit to the empire, and he was allowed to retire. In early 1915, his son, Eugen von Kluck, had been killed in action.

Karl Wilhelm Paul von Bülow, equally born in 1846, as old as von Kluck, was a born Prussian. He was born in Berlin even, in a distinguished Prussian military family with forefathers of Mecklenburg. He entered the prestigious Guards Infantry in 1864, participated in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, and was a veteran of the more than famous Battle of Königgrätz. He also served in the Franco-German War of 1870, and equally earned for himself an Iron Cross distinction for bravery in action.

The German generals who attacked France with their armies were war heroes all, men who had seen war from near, and who did not fear the fire of direct action. Von Bülow got promoted to major-general, served a time in the War Ministry, was promoted again in 1900 to lieutenant-general, and received the command of the Guards Division. In 1912, he was inspector-general of the 3<sup>rd</sup> German Army. Von Bülow and his men occupied Liège on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August of 1914. His troops captured the Namur fortresses around the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August. A little later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, his forces defeated the French General Lanrezac at Charleroi and also on the 30<sup>th</sup> of that same month at the French city of Saint-Quentin. His soldiers committed crimes of war on civilians during his advance through the Ardennes. The town of Andenne on the Meuse River suffered 260 civilian casualties. His troops too remained particularly nervous about the *franc-tireurs*, the individual sharp shooters hidden among the population.

Von Bülow and von Kluck, through Kluck more than von Bülow, were later blamed by the German public for failing to capture Paris. Nevertheless, the German emperor promoted von Bülow to Field Marshal in January of 1915. In March of 1915, von Bülow suffered a heart attack, and left in retirement early 1916. From then on he lived in Berlin, until his death in 1934, aged 88.

A third German Army marched through the Ardennes, advancing to the River Meuse, south along the main forces of General von Bülow. General Max von Hausen led this army. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army took the Meuse defences around the Belgian town of Dinant and around the French town of Givet, both on the Meuse. His soldiers, in a frenzy to take revenge on supposedly dangerous *francs-tireurs*, executed about 600 civilians, among whom women and children, in Dinant. They burned down the peaceful town. Then, von Hausen's army marched on southwards, along the Meuse, constantly fighting against the 5<sup>th</sup> French Army, and moving to Verdun.

Max Clemens Lothar Freiherr von Hausen, born the same year of 1846, like his two colleagues von Kluck and von Bülow, was a Saxon. He too participated in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, though on the other side, on the side of the then enemies of Prussia. He too participated in the Franco-German War of 1870, this time on the right, the German side. He was a *Generaloberst* of the dreaded Saxon Army, and in 1914 he was War Minister of the Saxon Kingdom. He too had fought at Königgrätz, with the Austrians, and with Saxon troops. After 1871, Von Hausen taught at the Prussian Military Academy of Berlin. He served a while on the Imperial General Staff. In Saxony, he had been promoted to *Generaloberst* or colonel-general in 1910. He led the 3<sup>rd</sup> German Army during the invasion of Belgium, which actually was the Royal Saxon Army. He took part in the Battle of Charleroi against the 5<sup>th</sup> French Army. Early in September of 1914, his troops were also responsible for the destruction of Reims.

Von Hausen participated fully with his troops in what has been called the Battle of the Frontiers. When during the first Battle of the Marne, von Bülow's army retreated, von Hausen's own flank got exposed, so he too had to retreat. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1914, when the front stabilised on the Aisne river, he had to be relieved from his command. General Karl von Einem replaced him. Max von Hausen was given no other commands in the war. He died in 1922 in Saxony's capital of Dresden.

## Julian Vincius in the War. 1914

Until a few days before the war actually broke out, Julian Vincius still worked at the *Charité* Hospital of Berlin. He was very happy at his job. During the times he stayed at the *Charité*, and though he kept a keen interest in the international developments in politics, his main attention and thoughts went to his research and to his management of a small part of the vast hospital. He had much to do, to think constantly about his patients and at the same time he reorganised the procedures in the barracks he managed. He continued in the laboratory the study of the bacterias responsible for tuberculosis. He tried to extend the research led by Robert Koch.

As a result, he felt rather happy. He thought only of the *Charité*. His job was very challenging, his curiosity in the world of the very small satisfied, yet never satiated. His life had by then evolved to a tranquil routine, neatly timed and planned, between his home and the *Charité* premises. Julian stayed in his laboratory till very late in the evening or the night, nobody waiting for him at home. Whether he worked in the lab or sat in a chair of his apartment, reading about the medical sciences, was practically the same to him. He read various newspapers, as Max Vincius had done, studied the Bible, now with the New Testament, and didn't believe one second he would somehow be drawn into the threatening future of a war. Julian was no surgeon, no general practitioner. He was so taken in by his microscopes and preparation of glasses, his study of organic chemistry, he could not imagine what use he could be of in a real war. He began to study how one could best treat wounds, and could not think of anything else but how to keep the micro-organisms out of the wounds. He had treated wounds made by sword slashes during his university years, as doctor to the duels, but those had not been more than superficial inflictions.

Late July of 1914, the leader of the *Charité* complex of hospitals and laboratories, a city on itself, the *Geheimer Regierungsrat* Ernst Pütter, the Secret Government Councillor, the *Verwaltungsdirektor* or Managing Director of the many institutions that formed the largest, most famous and formidable hospital and research facilities that were the university hospital of Berlin, called Julian to his office. Pütter was the closest man to God in the hospitals, so Julian wondered what the man could want of a newly arrived young doctor and researcher.

Pütter, moreover, was not a man to spend many words on anything! He had been born in Westphalia, so much Julian knew, in Greifswald, in January of 1864. He was now just 50 years old, young for a post of high responsibilities such as that of Managing Director of the vast set of over 50 buildings, which Julian had never even tried to start counting, let alone visiting.

Pütter was the son of a jurist, so he too had studied law and held several positions in the administration of the government, before being appointed in 1904 to the directorship of the *Charité*.

That had been a wise decision, Julian had to acknowledge, for doctors were seldom fine managers of large institutions. Among the doctors of the hospital, Julian was one of few to hold that opinion. Pütter was no doctor, but he had learned a lot about the acts of healing, and he had soon become an excellent organiser and manager. In several departments led by doctors, Julian judged lacks in management were manifest. Pütter had also immediately directed the attention of the hospitals to the illnesses of the common people. He deemed the welfare of the people important, and so found a place in the esteem of Julian.

Pütter privileged the institutions who cared for the sicknesses of the lungs, among which tuberculosis, of the results of abuses of alcohol, and about cancers of all sorts. Pütter had reorganised entirely the way patients were cared for, insisting on cleanliness and order. He had introduced female care by nurses to the *Charité*. As he had studied law, he had turned the *Charité* into a legally independent unit. The institution did not completely depend on the university authorities, could decide on how to work best, and how to manage its own finances. It was no longer a source of income for the university as a whole.

On a morning in the middle of the week, Julian Vincius walked with a heavy heart and some anxiety to the *Verwaltungsgebäude*, the management building. A female secretary let him in, watching at him closely over her huge glasses, showing somewhat strange, probing eyes, which made Julian fear for the worst.

He had not reached great, spectacular results with his lab tests so far. Was he even looking in the right direction? The world beyond the microscope remained more closed than open to him. He had discovered no other means of fighting against the bacterias but the substances that also killed the adjacent human cells. In fact, he had used the expensive equipment of the university, finding no advance at all in the battle against tuberculosis! Was he to be thanked and fired?

The *Geheimrat* Pütter sat behind his large oak table when Julian entered. Heaps of papers covered the wood, except for a small space, exactly as large as one white page to write on, which was necessary for Pütter to put his reports on.

Pütter sat like a Buddha, a large inert body on a chair behind the desk, immobile but for the pen that seemed to fly over the paper, the hand barely moving, moved by the spirit alone. The silence weighed in the room. The Director didn't look up to Julian. He moved his other hand slightly to point to the chair in front of him. Like the Buddha, he would not be distracted. Julian sat and waited. He was not a thin man either, but still young and bursting of energy, while this monument never moved. Julian waited. Finally, the man behind the paper seemed to remember somebody else was in the room. He looked up. A strong head, large but angular, balding, receding hair at the top of a broad forehead, a black and heavy moustache beneath an eagle's nose. The man could be a sculpture of Julian himself, thirty years later. Julian too was already balding, and he too had let his moustache grow since he had come to Berlin from Freiburg. Few hairs on the scalp. Hair grew well on a dung heap, not on the scalp of intellectuals, one of Julian's bald professors had jokingly claimed. Julian and Ernst Pütter shaved short and clean. Julian felt uncomfortable as the small piggy eyes of the formidable man scrutinised him. Pütter was probably surprised at the unimpressive youth he had before him, one of his junior doctors, one of those who had still to prove their worth.

'Ahem, *Herr* Julian Vincius, I take,' Pütter began with a strong voice. 'A fine name, I have to say. May you overcome your opposers and your issues always. I know about you, young Vincius. I followed you some, because you work in the domains I am particularly interested in. I had and still have high hopes for you! Do you realise how important your work is? I bet not! Your work is crucial for the well-being of our citizens, you know. Lung diseases, cancers, ailing due to the abuse of alcohol, are the sicknesses I directed my care and work to at the *Charité*. So, do not disappoint me. I had great hopes for you as a researcher. I took an interest in what you were doing and seemed to want to make your way in, too.'

'There you have it,' Julian feared. 'I have not fulfilled the expectations of the *Geheimrat*.'

‘You astonished me. Did you know that?’ Pütter continued. ‘I rather expected you would have dived into your laboratory and would only occasionally emerge out of it to look at the patients. Instead, you did both. The first you did was to look at the barracks and start rearranging them. You changed entirely the way the nurses were looking at the patients. You rescheduled the program of the care. Merely because of that, the number of deaths in the tuberculosis barracks have diminished, not by much, but significantly enough for me. I know the statistics. I bet you don’t. You moved on. Yet, the state our patients are in has strongly ameliorated. The nurses seem to like you, though you look like me and not like a dignified young man out of a romantic play. I understand you have not reached yet the ground breaking discovery of the definite cure for tuberculosis we are all so eagerly waiting for, but you are only at the beginning of your search. You will get there, I am sure, even if it takes you twenty years. My opinion is that you are indeed in for a very long, painstaking search. For with science alone one may get where one wants to be, but only a divine inspiration or sheer luck makes the medical sciences advance by leaps. A happy event may still arrive, one of the kinds for which you can shout Eureka! And run out naked in the street, as our old friend Archimedes did. It can last a lifetime, you know! Don’t be disappointed so soon. Our kind of medicine advances mostly by years of hard work. The years of easy discoveries are over. Intuition, instinct, talent, feeling, keen observance and much, much patience lead to the great discoveries these days. I keep repeating that constantly to the young men who enter the *Charité* and expect rapid miracles. We are but humans of flesh and blood.’

Pütter paused, crossed his fingers, and then he continued, ‘I didn’t call you here to explain what you know better than I. You do, others don’t. I called you in for another matter. A war is coming. It will come soon, now. I know. Generals talk to me. I have been asked to send doctors to the army. It seems the doctors of the army are far too less for a war. I have already given names. Doctors, I have plentiful, though also never enough, at the *Charité*. I have also been asked to send a few people with organisation skills in the domain. I must give them doctors that can set up a medicinal service behind the front.

Doctors are considered as specialists by the Army, as technicians, men who do what they have been taught to at the universities. The most witted, wiser generals of the General Staff also want men with the scientific knowledge of medicines, of the modern processes of treating illnesses, of the equipment needed to heal people quickly. But they also insisted on sending them men with the charisma of leadership and the skills of management. That’s why they appealed to me. And of such doctors, I have very few! Julian Vincius, despite my high hopes for you as a researcher, I have your name on the second list, a very short list, so short that I can hardly take away any name on it and still provide the generals with the quota they demand. Nevertheless, I do not want to send a man to war without his personal agreement. So, there is my question. Do you agree to go to the war in a position of setting up medical services from scratch in an Army or in a region? Your country needs you, of course. It needs everybody in the army. I have to warn you. This may be a long war. A war much longer and much fiercer, much crueller than any war we have waged until now in our history. Germany is not up against Austria or against France alone. Germany will have France, Great Britain and Russia against it, against us, probably in the end also Italy as an enemy, a few countries in the Balkan, and – who knows? – the United States of America, a growing economic and major industrial power with immense resources we do not have. Everybody at court seems enthusiastic we can win in a short, energetic campaign. I wonder. I have seen more offensive, assaulting men stagger backwards. I can only guarantee you horrors unseen

before! How crazy is mankind to have invented more instruments of death, rifles, cannons, explosives to kill, rather than means to save lives!’

Ernst Pütter paused, look out at the windows over the canal and on to Berlin. Julian kept his silence. Pütter continued.

‘Anyhow. However long the war will last, and as long as I stay director of the *Charité*, your place in our institution and at the university is safe. When you come back, your place and work will be waiting for you. If you agree to go now, I have the powers to promote you to the quality of professor at the *Charité*. After the war, you will thus be able to take your former functions. I can only sign this promotion, though, on the condition you accept to serve henceforth in the medical service of the Army. As to your rank in the Army, I obtained for you the rank of *Oberststabsarzt*. This will be the equivalent of an *Oberst*, a colonel, but of course only in the medical staff, and that in the staff of the medical service, whatever that means. Anyhow, nobody shall push a rifle in your hands and send you out to kill adversaries. It is the highest function I could secure. You shall be envied. The doctors in the army, the ones who chose to serve long time ago, will consider you an intruder. But a rank is a rank, and I am sure you shall deserve it. The army has its own doctors and officers. Ambitious men only serve in the Medical General Staff. I doubt you will see much of any staff. They will want you where the action is, not where quick promotions can be made. Nevertheless, a high rank is useful to get things done, to have people jump to obeisance, to have easier access to whatever you may need. The *Charité* still exists, do not forget this. If you need equipment and medicines, please appeal to us. We can send you what you need. Write to me personally, and I will send you what I can.’

Julian’s throat tightened. He was being granted a golden opportunity and a golden cage at the same time. He could not refuse the offer, the order. He had to go to war! He would probably not fire one shot. He had never held a gun in his hands, not even a sword, though he knew how to use them. After the war, if he survived, he would return to the *Charité* with the aura of a veteran, of a hero, maybe with an Iron Cross or with an Order *Pour le mérite*. He would be a professor of the *Charité*! What more could he desire? Or, he could be killed and not come back at all. But an *Oberststabsarzt*! Even Haim Vincius had not been promoted that quickly! It guaranteed him a place far from the actual front. To live was what he wanted. There was so much to do in his branch of the sciences. If he came through the ordeal, he would be a professor! One of the youngest at the *Charité*! He would not have to seek a forced marriage with an ugly but rich wife of the higher society of Berlin, no haggling for the title, no flattering of tired old men in power needed! He could remain his own, and do as he pleased, or almost. The offer was hard, dangerous, but un hoped for, and presented honestly by the director.

‘I shall accept, of course, as you propose, Your Excellence. One does not refuse to serve one’s country!’ Julian answered without hesitating.

The *Geheimrat* Pütter smiled. The answer had come fast. He had not expected less. He knew his doctors. This one knew very well where his interests lay. This Vincius was a very intelligent man, and a brilliant mind, a man who would serve in the most efficient and straightforward way. He would always succeed in doing what the generals wanted. He would not fail, this Vincius. The young man knew clearly what he had to do to grow in society, and

that was always necessary to get the resources for a medical service, even at the *Charité*. The young man was no coward. Could Pütter, with time, make a director out of this one? Pütter had a complete file on Julian Vincius in his desk. He had gathered information on the man from Freiburg. That was the only flaw. Why had this Vincius not studied in Berlin? It was a little untypical. This talented doctor had studied so far away, and by his own choice! Was that to be closer to where Koch himself had worked? It was not necessarily a negative point, though. Pütter would show an open mind. He would not send all young men graduated from the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin to war. Pütter also knew this Vincius came from a Jewish background, the first of his generation to convert. But this Julian had indeed converted, attended Evangelic ceremonies regularly, also in Berlin, and offered all guarantees of a decent life. Freiburg had noticed Vincius had frolicked for a few years with a far cousin of his, a rather loose-living female student, also born near Thorn. But the Vincius had not married the girl. The girl from Thorn, the hometown of this Julian, had thus formed no special issue. She too was a doctor, now. A woman a doctor! Whoever had heard of such a thing?

Julian Vincius interrupted Herr Pütter's thoughts.

'When should I leave, to whom do I have to refer in the Army?' Julian asked.

'Be prepared to go any day from now,' Pütter answered. 'You'll hear from me. I shall send you a note. The only thing I know, is that you will have to move west, to the front with France. You can go by train, or you can go in your own car. You can take your own driver, whether some soldier from here or one you may find near the front. The man must be a soldier, not a civilian. Give me a name if you have someone in mind, and that man will automatically be enlisted as a *Gefreiter*, a corporal.'

'Fine, Your Excellence. I shall wait for your final order, then. Until that time, I would like to continue working at the *Charité*. I'll have packed. I can leave whenever you give me my papers.'

'I shall do so,' gave Pütter coldly. 'You may have a few weeks even, not much more. Unless someone finds a way, maybe in the *Concert of Europe*, to stop this madness as yet.'

Ernst Pütter paused.

Pütter continued still, 'I have, actually, only one sole advice for you, as I am sure you will do your duty. You are smart. You have brains, and you can make things happen. So, I'll want you back, Herr Vincius, safe and well. The *Charité* is a venerable, prestigious place where, with some luck, you can do great things. We need you here. I wish you well. Make sure you come back.'

Julian almost saluted after those words. Pütter already put his arm and hand forward. The men shook hands. Julian turned, and left the office. When he passed the secretary on his way out, she smiled. She must have known. Was it pity or some sort of admiration he saw in her eyes? Had he been tricked?

Julian packed. He assembled everything he thought might come in handy on a military campaign. Things to live in, things to sleep in and keep warm, things to keep warm in the very cold, things to shelter from the rain while walking, things to hide in, things to walk in during heavy rain showers, things to wear in extreme heat, things to eat with and things to drink from, things that didn't break easily. A better watch than the fancy thing he had bought

for Berlin. A compass. A man with money would be king always. He had a mechanic drill, cut a secret compartment in the chassis of his car to hide coins in of gold and silver. Within a week, he was ready for a journey to the Poles and to the jungles of Africa. Each day, he had thought of other, useful things. Everything stood neatly packed in his garage, in a corner, hidden under a tarpaulin, ready to be thrown in the car in a few moments. Within half an hour, he could be on his way. His worry was a uniform. Would he get one from the Army, or should he have one made in a specialised shop in Berlin? Better to have two! Shirts and underwear. He decided for buying a uniform in Berlin to be sure. This took a few days more. And then, he had a pleasant surprise.

On an evening of the second week after his conversation with the Director Pütter, two men knocked on Julian's door in the *Landgrafenstrasse*. One man was his grand-uncle Haim Vincius, who lived but a few houses down the same street, Haim the editor, Haim the general. With him, behind the great man, stood a fairly young man, vaguely familiar to Julian. Uncle Haim presented the younger man as one Ernst Vincius, 17 years old, the youngest son of Richard Vincius. Richard was the son of Kurt Vincius, Haim's brother. Kurt Vincius was not married to Esther Kleinberger, Richard's mother, but Kurt had recognised Richard as his son. Thus, Haim was also the grand-uncle of this boy, Ernst. What that made of Ernst to Julian, nobody of the three had any idea, but they were all family indeed. They were offspring each, Ernst and Julian, of two different male lines in the family of the great Max Vincius of Thorn. The Vincius Family counted now so many members and lines, even Julian with his large memory could not hold all the names in his mind. Julian had a chart in a cupboard, drawn up by himself. On the chart, he had noted all the Vincius members he should have knowledge of. And yes, Ernst Vincius stood in little characters on that chart, in the left lower corner. The youth seemed cheerful and good-humoured.

Haim had wanted to talk to Julian. Julian invited the two in. He apologised for the mess every bachelor's house was left in during the week. He pushed the men in two large seats in front of him, around a table and a bottle of one of his best white wines. Uncle Haim, after the usual polite small-talk about the family, came to business rapidly.

‘Young Ernst here, has received word he must join the Army. They take them in young, these days. Within three weeks, he must join a gathering point in Königsberg. As he is still so young, his mother is in deep distress. His father has as yet not been able to find him a decent place to serve his conscription time in, a fine regiment near home. He sent the boy to me in a hurry, to help finding a safe place in the Army, as it seems a war is going to break out any moment now. I still have a few friends who fought with me at Königgrätz. I kept contact with other generals and colonels of the old Imperial Staff. I also know the *Geheimer Regierungsrat* Pütter. He asked me a few times how you went. He told me you would be sent to the war, to the western front. The war has started. You know that. You will receive your mission papers within three days from now. Sorry to be the one who has to announce this to you, but you expected this, as Pütter told me in confidence.

Young Ernst, here, will be a soldier too, soon. Pütter equally told me you could choose a driver and an orderly. I wondered whether you could take on young Ernst, as that orderly and driver. He is family. You will be able to trust him. The boy doesn't know how to drive a car, but I heard from my brother young Ernst is a quick learner and a smart boy. I put two and two together. It would console his mother to hear he is not alone in the war, and with you in safe hands. Could he stay with you? It would be a consolation to his father, Richard, and to his

grandfather Kurt. I too would feel better to know two young people of our family are together in this, and helping each other out. I can arrange for young Ernst to be transferred from whatever service he is currently affected to, to being your orderly. What do you say? Have you already made a choice, perhaps?’

So far, Julian had no idea of who he could take on as driver. He had thought simply of driving to his regiment, which one he didn’t even know yet, and ask for a bright young man there. He didn’t really care who served him, whether young or old. He only would seek an agreeable companion. This young Ernst would do. He might as well take family on, as somebody totally unknown.

‘Sure, we can do that,’ Julian answered immediately. ‘Ernst can ride with me. But the boy will then have to be transferred very quickly from one assignment to the other. I have no idea where to start doing such a thing!’

‘Don’t worry about such a mere detail,’ Haim smiled. ‘Leave that part to me. We’ll put him in a uniform, here in Berlin, and I can have him assigned to you in a couple of days. Such re-assignment will follow officially later. Be sent, it will, I can assure you both of that. Nobody shall contest the word of an *Oberststabsarzt* either. Yes, I know of that, too. Just start shouting a bit. The paperwork will come! I shall add a few words, and have a letter from a general or two joined. I know the generals who shall lead the army corps in the west. I met them all at Königgrätz! They won’t refuse an old comrade-in-arms.’

Julian showed his glass of wine, presented it to Ernst high, saying, ‘Ernst, my friend, from now on consider yourself a driver and a *Gefreiter*, a corporal. You have just been promoted, too, on your first day of active service. I hope you may get on with me.’

Ernst laughed a long, hearty laugh, ‘I’ll have to learn driving pretty rapidly, then! I always wanted to drive a car!’

Julian had better start giving a few lessons very rapidly!

The next day, Julian taught the boy the pedals of his Audi, and Ernst took the driving wheel. The first few seconds went wildly, but soon, Ernst was directing the car quite straight into the large avenue leading to the *Brandenburger Tor*. The boy was a quick learner, and a serious boy, though he also laughed a lot. Julian asked him to pack. He discussed with Ernst what the boy could best bring with him, suggesting the boy drew into his apartment for the next days. He had a spare room. This was done. Ernst and Julian bought what Julian deemed necessary. The boy had coins sown in an already heavy coat. Money was no problem for him.

A few days later, Julian said goodbye to the people he knew best in the *Charité*, including the *Geheimrat*, from whom he had finally received his official papers. Julian passed the command of the tuberculosis barracks to his assistant. He stayed the last days at his house, setting his affairs in order. Haim would manage his house and send someone to clean it every once and then. Haim had been so happy his mission with Ernst had proceeded so simply and satisfactorily. He could send good news to Richard Vincius’ family!

Julian’s last papers arrived at the end of the week. He set off immediately. He and Ernst were ready with their packs. Julian had to report to the staff of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army of General von Bülow, somewhere in Belgium, in the Ardennes, or farther in France. He and Ernst rode out of Berlin in Julian’s Audi. On roads that were not too clogged, Ernst drove. He did that very well.

Julian was pleased with the boy, who proved a fine companion. The Vincius boy also learned quickly, and drove well.

## The War. 1914

From Haim Vincius, Julian Vincius received a small, raw sketch of the von Moltke-von Schlieffen plan of the German advance. The German Army aimed to outflank the French forces by invading Belgium. The main thrust of the Germans would be supported by superior artillery. The Army brought with it quick-firing, light Krupp field guns, howitzers that could launch heavier shells from higher angles than the field cannons, excellent Mauser rifles for the infantry, and grenades.

The French thought the main German attack would remain south of the Meuse, but von Kluck's 1<sup>st</sup> Army passed Liège, drove immediately deeper into Belgium, and pushed backwards the Belgian divisions that tried to halt it. The German 1<sup>st</sup> Army moved south, straight into France. Germany used more than 20,000 trains to bring its soldiers to the front. The German forces entered Belgium on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August. Julian rode out of Berlin on the 20<sup>th</sup>, quite later.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, the forts of Liège resisted the German advance. The Germans had the plans of the fortifications of Liège with them, as the Belgians had the forts of Liège built by the Krupp Company of Essen! And the Krupp Company had not yet delivered the modern cannons ordered by the Belgian Army.

The defence of Liège consisted of 12 major fortifications, made of reinforced concrete. The larger forts had 8 or 9 turrets with cannons. They formed an impressive barrier of firepower. The turrets of the forts had not yet been reinforced, however, and not yet made retractable. The forts were supposed to be defended by an infantry line of 24,000 soldiers, commanded by the Belgian General Leman, to stop the German field guns from coming too close to the actual forts. But von Moltke's Chief of Operations was Erich Ludendorff, and Ludendorff, in his own aggressive style, stormed the fortifications and the Liège citadel straight on. The German troops used heavy howitzers, borrowed from the Austrian Army, to wreck the forts. Leman withdrew his infantry to the interior country, leaving Liège to its fate. The German artillery destroyed and silenced the forts.

The French 75 mm field cannon could be called superior to the German field cannons, but the French had no howitzers! They had heavier cannons, pirated from their own fortresses in the rear. They held these at the separate, Army group level, rather than at the level of the divisions, as the Germans used them.

The Belgian Army had about 100,000 men in the field, the BEF of the Allies had about as many, and Lanrezac's 5<sup>th</sup> French Army was at about 250,000 men. Against these forces, von Moltke launched the 1<sup>st</sup> Army of von Kluck with 320,000 men, von Bülow's over 250,000 men in the 2<sup>nd</sup> German Army, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of General von Hausen followed, with 180,000 men. The German thrust could not be stopped in this first phase.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, the German Army destroyed entirely the forts of Namur, in all 9 forts, defended by but one division of Belgian soldiers.

The Germans also attacked as southernly as Mulhouse in the Alsace, and that already on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August. The Battle of Morhange-Sarrebourg ensued where the French forces advanced. A German counter-attack threw the French troops back, taking more than 20,000 French soldiers as their prisoners. The Germans also captured 150 field guns.

French counter-attacks under General Joffre failed and became a disaster for the Allies. General Lanrezac's 5<sup>th</sup> Army counter-attacked early on at Charleroi, but equally failed with heavy losses. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Lanrezac had to retreat. He abandoned the Namur forts.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, General Lanrezac retreated further south. The BEF had stayed at Maubeuge in France. These forces then advanced to Mons in Belgium. The BEF fought a battle there with 2 divisions against the 6 attacking German divisions. The BEF enjoyed some success in delaying the Germans, but this small positive news was rapidly dwarfed by the débâcle of the French armies in the Battle of the Frontiers, of from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of August.

By this 24<sup>th</sup> of August, the general, and supreme commander of the French troops, General Joffre, had to report already 74,000 French soldiers were dead and the casualties – the total of the killed and wounded men - stood at around 260,000 men! Joffre reported his massive counter-attacks had failed. The battle had turned into a disaster for the French divisions. He wrote the Allies had to revert to defensive stands.

The German Army too, by that time, encountered issues. Von Kluck's army had covered 500 kilometres in less than a month. The German troops had only about 4,000 lorries, of which 60% broke down before the Germans reached the River Marne, pushing towards Paris. About 84,000 horses drew Von Kluck's field cannons. The horses needed 2 million pounds of fodder per day. His soldiers were dropping from exhaustion, the dying men and animals lay along the roads of his advance. His units fell to half strength.

Moreover, the Germans had to secure their positions.

The Belgian Army had been sent to Antwerp, shielded by a screen of fortifications. The Germans didn't much care about these forces, but a German Army Corps had to be sent to screen off Antwerp. A brigade had to garrison the captured capital of Brussels, and an Army Corps had to besiege Maubeuge. The Germans began to lack the overwhelming power they had showed at the start of the invasion of Belgium, to push back the French and the British forces. Their attacks in the north-western front weakened!

By the end of August, von Moltke, the Chief of the German General Staff at headquarters, moved his office to Koblenz. That was still far behind the attacking troops.

Von Moltke did not strengthen his right flank, where von Kluck advanced ever more painstakingly, until the 5<sup>th</sup> of September. He estimated the first global attack on the western front already won, for he sent two Army Corps to reinforce East Prussia. Before those troops had arrived, however, the Russian Army's attacks had already been thrown back.

Von Moltke was as cautious a leader as von Bülow. He wanted to protect first of all the territory of the German Empire, whether in the west or in the east. Still, he did not hesitate to attack when he deemed his enemy weak.

By the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, General Helmut von Moltke still ordered his 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Armies forward against the French enemy, directed towards the lower Seine region and to Paris. This main offensive had not as first aim to take Paris, contrary to what Clausewitz had taught, but to continue outflanking the French Army and push a German army between Paris and the sea. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, the BEF under Horace Smith-Dorrien counter-attacked with 55,000 British soldiers against the now 140,000 men of von Kluck. At the Battle of La Cateau, the

British failed. But the BEF could withdraw, leaving nevertheless almost 8,000 casualties in the field.

Likewise, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, von Bülow hit the French 5<sup>th</sup> Army and defeated it at the Battle of Guise. In this battle, the British General John French refused to take part. The French Commander Joffre appealed to Henry Wilson in London, the British Operations Officer, and the British Cabinet sent General Kitchener to Belgium. Kitchener could override John French. He was also more willing to give Joffre what he wanted.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September of 1914, the French Government fled to Bordeaux, because the German forces had formed a large bulge in the French defences, which stretched from the north of Paris to Verdun, and which threatened the capital from the east. Another bulge had formed between the Aisne and the Marne rivers. Von Kluck already spoke of a great victory, and lured at Paris.

But then, the French General Joffre perceived opportunities to attack the two flanks of the German advance. He would counter-attack from the direction of Paris in the north-west of the German forces, and from Verdun in the north-east, while holding a firm defensive stand in the centre. Both sides would be on the offensive! The violent clash happened on a large front of more than 150 kilometres long. It was called the Battle of the Marne in the west, whereas on the east of the front the Battle for Verdun started.

As of the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1914, General Joffre ordered the counter-attack against the German thrust to Paris. General Galliéni held Paris. In front of him, the 6<sup>th</sup> French Army under General Maunoury attacked west of Méaux. To the east of Méaux, between Méaux and Château-Thierry, stood the British Expeditionary Force. The French 5<sup>th</sup> Army of General Franchet d'Esperey attacked the Germans at Château-Thierry. Further to the east, the 9<sup>th</sup> Army of General Foch stopped the German assaults, and still more to the east, near Vitry-le-François, the French 4<sup>th</sup> Army of General de Langle de Cary did the same. The German troops here, still on the offensive, were led by the German Crown Prince.

Near Verdun, the troops led by the Prince of Württemberg tried to push back the assaulting 4<sup>th</sup> Army of General Langle de Cary. The Germans attacked the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of General Sarrail, hoping to surround these troops and to force them to surrender. The front east of Verdun had reached Nancy, which the 2<sup>nd</sup> French Army of General de Castelnau continued to defend and hold. From there the front line ran to the south of Lunéville, and to St Dié, south of the Meurthe River. These towns were held by the Germans.

General Sarrail refused to let the German troops enter Verdun! With his forts of Troyon and Gécicourt on the east side of the Meuse, and though heavily bombarded, he held the strongpoint that Verdun formed. The Germans could not pass the Meuse from the east, and neither could they from the west. The road of Bar-le-Duc, strategically important for Verdun, remained open to the French soldiers. Finally, to the east of Verdun, the French positions from Gécicourt over Troyon to St Mihiel stopped the German onslaught. To this east of Verdun, lay the plains of the Woëvre, which were German, and on the other side of the Woëvre still lay Metz on the Moselle River, the largest town of Lorraine, which was since 1871 entirely German.

Thus, around Verdun, the pincher movement of the French forces achieved no spectacular victories or breakthroughs. The battles there, though, refused the Germans to advance yet further on. The German offensive had stopped at Verdun.

In the west, the combats developed along the River Ourcq. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Army of von Bülow held a high ridge north of Méaux, and pushed back the attacks of the French General Maunoury. This French general received reinforcements brought in utmost urgency from Paris, transported by the Parisian taxicabs. In the centre, lay the marshes of St Gand. There, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army of von Bülow stopped the French 9<sup>th</sup> Army offensive of General Foch. By the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, the vast Battle of the Marne developed to the advantage of the German Army. Joffre and the British BEF had an advantage of about 30 divisions, yet they succeeded not in throwing back the Germans.

At that moment, both sides were low on shells for their field guns. Von Moltke could have persisted in the German attack and broken the French resistance then and there on the Marne, but the situation in his army had become critical. He did not know also the French armies had reached this point. Von Moltke was the more cautious! The staff of General von Bülow argued that if now the BEF also crossed the Marne, von Bülow's 2<sup>nd</sup> Army would have to withdraw under the pressure. And if this happened, the 1<sup>st</sup> German Army of von Kluck would have to do the same.

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, von Moltke decided to break off his offensive actions to reach Paris! The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Armies of Germany retreated and reached between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> of September a very high chalk ridge, some 150 metres high, above the River Aisne. It was called the *Chemin des Dames*. The German armies fortified this new line. The ridge would later still become very famous for the belligerents.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, General Joffre did order a general attack over the Aisne River, but his troops failed everywhere. Repeated assaults against the German entrenched defenders failed miserably, and left very many French casualties in the field.

The French forces could liberate Reims and Amiens, and push the German bulge backwards, away from Paris. The result was a stalemate on the Aisne. The French soldiers had been defeated almost everywhere, but the French pressure had saved Paris and stopped the German advance. The effect could also be considered a serious defeat for the German Army, but the *Obere Heeresleitung*, the OHL, the German headquarters, saw the Marne setback as a serious, but only temporary and not irreparable delay. One could muse over what had happened in Europe and to the war, in the event von Kluck had reached Paris and captured it.

One man who realised the lost opportunity certainly, was General Helmut von Moltke. The head of the German General Staff, the CGS, suffered a nervous breakdown after the Battle of the Marne, so terrible he could not go on commanding the western theatre of operations for the Germans. The emperor replaced him promptly by General von Falkenhayn, who was the German War Minister, and who would now combine both functions of War Minister and of Chief of the General Staff, of CGS. For Falkenhayn too, the Battle of the Marne had merely delayed the inevitable German victory, and not prevented it.

Around the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, Julian Vincius finally received clear orders to start organising the medical services of the German troops attacking Verdun. Moreover, on the western sides of Verdun, constant attacks by both sides happened in the Argonne region, fierce combats in

the forests, towards Vienne-le-Château and Le Four de Paris. The German Army Corps of von Mudra took Bagatelle and Saint-Hubert in atrocious combats from October 1914 on. Julian's services, of which parts had already been set up, would have to cover a large war theatre, west and east of Verdun.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1914, von Falkenhayn ordered the German offensives to resume east and west of the French town of Verdun.

West of Verdun, the German forces cut the railroad to Toul. They brought the railways of from Paris to Nancy within artillery range. Only one light railway track remained open for the French, to send reinforcements and provisions to Verdun.

In the east, the German troops advanced to form a southward pointing finger of land in German hands. This was called the St Mihiel Salient, after the village on the Meuse at the end of the German conquests. The Germans subsequently even remained there, on the east bank of the Meuse, for a long time.

The attacks stalled to a balance of power. The German forces did not want to lose more men than they had already sacrificed. Verdun remained French!

The heaviest fighting of that autumn of 1914 raged along the vast open territory laying between the Marne and the Channel. Both armies engaged in a race to the sea. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, the French 6<sup>th</sup> Army tried to outmanoeuvre the Germans along the River Oise. The attack did not succeed. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of that month, a large battle came to be waged in the environs of the town of Albert on the Somme Stream. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, the Germans attacked the larger city of Arras. Soon, the last open space on the western flank near the sea remained the one occupied by the Belgian Army. This was Flanders.

General von Falkenhayn then decided for a large offensive in Flanders. The German troops occupied Bruges and Gent, and reached the coast at Nieuwpoort.

Both armies also suffered transport issues at that time of end September. On the German side, the railways had been destroyed by gunfire. The British BEF began to lack shells. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, General Joffre had complained that at his present consumption rate of shells, his army would soon be unable to fight using artillery.

The new French War Minister, installed only as of the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, was Alexandre Millerand. Millerand organised emergency meetings with the French industrialists that were producing shells. He urged them to produce more and more quickly. The French industry upgraded the production of shells, but to well into 1915, the French troops would remain short of high explosive shells. The Germans meanwhile consolidated their defences along the line from the Oise to the sea.

In October of 1914, the stalemate was complete on the western front. Flanders of Belgium became the centre of the heaviest fights, but the front was active everywhere. Flanders apparently formed the last open flank. During that time, considerable Belgian forces remained trapped at Antwerp. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, the German Army launched its main assault on Antwerp. The German artillery pounded on the forts and demolished them. The Belgian King Albert fled with a large part of his army out of the port town, along the coast, under the nose of the Germans, to the river the IJzer in the south-west corner of Flanders. Another part of the Belgian Army fled to the neutral Netherlands, and was interned there, as

the Netherlands did not want to intervene in the war. Antwerp surrendered on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, von Falkenhayn started the offensive anew, in Flanders. The German soldiers attacked south of the town of Ieper. At Armentières and at La Bassée, the BEF counter-attacked. The British troops succeeded in pushing back the Germans. The Belgians then opened the sluice gates of the drainage system that kept the polders dry, the low plains of Flanders beyond the IJzer. They formed thus a flooded plain no army could pass!

The German forces attacked therefore no longer along the coast, but deeper inland, in the region of Ieper, to what became the first Battle of Ieper.

The Allied Powers could hold the Ieper salient, even though the German attacks came with more men and greater firepower. To stop the German forces, the defenders used trenches and breastworks. Due to the clay underground layers in this zone, trenches could not be dug very deep, and the trenches filled with water. Breastworks above ground, made of mud and twigs and sand-sacks granted protection.

The Allied troops, Belgians, British and French held their positions.

The Germans attacked in dispersed order from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of October of 1914. They did not succeed in advancing! Between the 31<sup>st</sup> of October to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, the German enemy then concentrated their assaults on Ieper itself. They pushed the British soldiers off the Messines Ridge, and nearly broke the BEF, but not just yet.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, a last, large German assault faltered. Afterwards, the Germans launched still sporadic attacks, which resulted in nothing, but caused heavy losses of men to the German Army and a complete lack of shells. Von Falkenhayn stopped the useless attacks. In these battles, Belgium lost about one third or more of its army, about 20,00 casualties, wounded or killed men. France lost 50,000 men more, and the BEF 58,000 men. The German losses amounted to 130,000 men. Ieper had been a slaughterhouse, as more would come.

After these battles, the original, old BEF, was almost completely destroyed. As the German Army had used many student volunteers, who were mostly unskilled and untrained in war, the battles were called the *Kindermord* in Germany, the murder of the children. The end of these atrocious battles at the very western end of the trenches, in the wet, windy and bad weather of Flanders, meant a major turning point in the war. The Allied defence line ran now from the sea to the Lorraine region. From that moment on, the end of 1914, entrenchments and defences were dug or built from the coast to past Verdun. The year 1914 ended after 5 months of very intense, murderous German attacks and Allied counter-attacks. The front stabilised. The armies were entrenched, and fortified their trenches.

## Julian Vincius at Longwy. 1914

Julian Vincius was considered by the other medical staff members of the von Bülow army as someone other than they, as the odd man out. He had arrived from the prestigious *Charité* Berlin hospital, was nearly the youngest doctor around, and he seemed to enjoy special privileges.

Thus, at Gembloux near Namur in Belgium, Julian had been given quarters in the large house of the main notary of the town. He had drunk the notary's best wine, red and white, had been received with deference, and he had conversed with the family in the finest French. Where did that peacock get his French from? Was he to be trusted? Julian could stay in Gembloux quite a while, setting up a large, though temporary *lazarett* or German field hospital in the town abbey. That abbey had been transformed into an agricultural university. Julian Vincius had little to do, really, so he started operating on and caring for the wounded. The German Army doctors that worked in the abbey, though not many, shoved him aside for the most intricate work. Still, Julian got more than once splashed all over with blood that was ejected to all sides out of badly damaged, yet still living bodies. Julian looked at what the other doctors did. He was astonished to see he would have no difficulty with doing the same as they, even though he had not particularly studied to become a surgeon. He was convinced he could do better, cleaner and more precise. Sometimes, he would have liked to have a Siemens X-ray machine at his disposal. He said nothing. Who knew what his remarks and comments would lead to? He wanted to be his own boss somewhere.

Ernst Vincius had asked for the permission to place their Audi in the garden of the notary, on a piece of only earth. All the time, he learned to know more of Julian's car, of the motor, the chassis, the tires, the seats. He liked motors and knew a little of how they worked. Now, he dared studying the motor, turning a screw here and there, getting pieces out and putting them back on. Julian let the boy work. His knowledge could come in handy any time. Ernst cleaned the car thoroughly. He had an easy job, and seemed quite happy to be with his relative. Julian was a taciturn man, but he could be an agreeable and cheerful company. As for Ernst, good food, decent sleeping quarters, a doctor in care of disasters, remaining far behind where all the shooting and bombardments took place, what more could a man wish in a war? After having stayed about a week and a half at Gembloux, Julian and Ernst left the dreary small town. They rode south, following the troops.

In half September, Julian Vincius received his real assignment. By then, the front had more or less stabilised. The French Army held Verdun, though the town and its fortresses were almost completely surrounded. Verdun lay in a valley. North of it came the German Army. The heights of the valley to the left and to the right, west and east, were being besieged by the German Army. Many wounded men suffered the ugliest of wounds. Verdun could fall any day to the German troops. Astonishingly, the French 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of General Sarrail held a tenacious defence.

Julian and Ernst Vincius were by then at Longwy. They received an apartment in the house of the *Maieur* of the town, the highest official of the town, the mayor. The man was called Théophile Baraine.

Baraine had tried to defend his rights of property, but German soldiers forced him by handguns to his head, to accept without further protests. He could have been happy to not

have his entire house be requisitioned! The German command only demanded an apartment of him. Baraine did not want to inflict a German officer on some of his neighbours, so he grudgingly took the German officer in his house. The mayor's house was large, and had several spare rooms. The apartment Julian Vincius could occupy was in fact an annexed wing, built behind the living space of the Baraines. It had its own entry corridor, as Baraine and his wife had thought of renting it out. That money, they would lose.

A lieutenant of the German staff brought Julian and Ernst to the place, hoping it would suit the distinguished Colonel Doctor Vincius. Julian had not expected much. He found the rooms large, well-furnished, and thus to his taste. For him and Ernst, he had two large rooms upstairs, a bathroom, smaller, but finely furnished. Downstairs was a sitting-room, a large kitchen with a dining table and chairs for four. A small room could be used as a pantry. Behind the house lay a large garden. Ernst could drive into that vast garden via a gate that could also be used by the Baraine Family, though they had an access farther on. The corridor of Julian and Ernst's quarters upstairs continued into the Baraine living rooms, but the door between the two spaces was thick and closed by a key Julian did not receive. Ernst could place their Audi under a covered shed. The car would at least be shielded from the natural elements from above, from heavy winds, rain and snow.

Julian wanted to be polite. He understood the Baraines would not like having him in their house. He went to present himself to Monsieur Baraine, knocking on the front door. When he explained who he was to Monsieur Baraine, the man didn't seem particularly vengeful. He had received some time to console himself, or ease his anger. Baraine too acted politely. He was not taller than Julian, had a reddish, round face and a fine belly that rather indicated a man used to living peacefully and well. He was a negotiator in wines. His warehouse and caves stood on the other side of the Baraine house, which could in other circumstances have been called a small manor, in the centre of Longwy. Madame Baraine entered the living-room when Julian was given a seat. She was the typical French bourgeois housewife, but her appearance showed Julian instantly she was good-hearted. She was well in the flesh, as her husband, had already an honest smile on a face Julian found pleasing. She too showed no aggressiveness to a German officer who had usurped of her rooms and some hospitality. The Baraines accepted the gesture of Julian, to assure them of his respect, with some suspicious reticence.

The Baraine Family consisted furthermore of three children. The Baraines had a son of twenty, who was not in the house because fighting the Germans as a soldier in the French Army. Julian immediately said he regretted countries had to wage wars. He would have preferred peace. He spoke so well his French, the Baraines came to ease rapidly. Julian explained he had studied at Freiburg-im-Breisgau, not in Prussia. He knew the Alsace and Lorraine regions well. The Baraines had yet two daughters, which must at that moment have been busy somewhere else, for they were not presented to the German officer. Madame Baraine did mention one was seventeen, going on eighteen, the other was fifteen.

Monsieur Baraine and Julian agreed on how they would live together. Julian promised to disturb the family the least. Julian would have to warn the Baraines when he could or desired to take his déjeuners, his dinners, and when his suppers. Julian had not asked to eat with the Baraines, but that act seemed to have been part of some deal with the German staff, imposed

on the family. Julian took it for granted, then. Julian told his driver and orderly would dine with him. He explained who Ernst was, family of his, and a friend.

Théophile Baraine was the Mayor of Longwy. Julian began to explain he would need several places in which he could set up his *lazarettes*, his field hospitals for the wounded German soldiers who were fighting in the environs. Monsieur Baraine told Julian there was not in Longwy one house only, large enough to serve as one hospital for all. He showed his good will for the eminent professor of the largest hospital of Berlin. He mentioned several smaller sites, exactly what Julian wanted.

The main German lazarett could thus be organised in the currently empty *Hôtel des Récollets*, just in front of the Baraine residence. Actually, it was a building set up by the Longwy Commune to serve as a water spa, a water cure hotel. It should have been inaugurated the day of the declaration of the war, but the inauguration had been postponed. Baraine explained it had larger and smaller rooms, which could be comfortably used as halls for the wounded and the sick. Baraine bargained to have at least one hall dedicated to the French wounded and sick, whether French prisoners of war of the German Army, or Longwy civilians. Julian Vincius agreed whole-heartedly, though he wondered whether indeed the French civilians would show up. After all, the Germans were their enemy.

Julian insisted on Baraine's cooperation on all issues he might encounter. Baraine nodded to that. He pointed with a finger to him and then to Julian, telling they should for any issue talk together. Julian liked that. They shook hands on that pact, to ease the corners, Baraine with the higher French authorities or with angry citizens, Julian with the German Army. Julian had in fact promised to protect the citizens of Longwy as best as he could from German intrusions and violence.

Another building with free rooms was the private school of Longwy. It would be possible to have the children sent to the public school of Longwy. Julian immediately suspected Théophile Baraine to want to eliminate the private school. Baraine had an excellent occasion to do so now, with the German occupation requisitioning the building. He could not be blamed for that, couldn't he? Julian smiled knowingly, and gave in. Baraine remained very serious, and agreed. With the hotel and the nearby school in the *Rue de Metz*, Julian had a fine concentration of spaces for his hospital. He had always wanted two locations, hoping when one got cannonaded the other would remain standing.

Other sites the two men considered lay at Longuyon, a somewhat distant suburb of Longwy. Julian could have at his disposal a large house on a site called *La Machine*. It was a manor that resembled a small castle, more or less abandoned currently, though belonging to a man called Cochard, who rarely came to visit the site and even less in the circumstances of war. This stood at the end of the town of Longuyon, on the road to Marville. Other buildings that could be used were the school of Ste Chrétienne, the brick buildings of the woodwork manufactory Ganlier, and a large house on a site called *La Gayette*. More field hospitals could be set up at Montmédy.

Julian told Monsieur Baraine he wished to visit the sites, so Ernst rode the Vincius Audi to the door of the Baraine house. The three of them visited the sites briefly. Julian looked at them from the outside, walked around the buildings where he could, and peeked through the windows. Baraine explained the history of each of the buildings, told how they looked inside, gave approximately how many rooms could be used inside. Julian agreed to all the sites. He

would furnish them with hospital equipment the one after the other, and call in doctors and male and female nurses from the army.

During these visits, Julian noticed Baraine was not a bad man. He detected no open enmity, despite the man having as on in the French Army. Baraine told his son worked in the staff of a French general at the front of Flanders. Julian nodded and expressed his sympathy.

Julian Vincius discovered Longwy with Monsieur Baraine, who proved to be an excellent guide.

Longwy was one of the smaller cities of the larger Lorraine Region. It had remained French after 1871, when the German Empire had annexed the Alsace and Lorraine. The largest town of Lorraine was Metz, but Metz lay farther away from Verdun than Julian considered comfortable for the wounded. One good road ran north from Verdun straight to Longwy, and Longuyon lay close to that road.

Longwy could take pride in an extremely complex history, as Monsieur Baraine explained on the road. The town dated from the 9<sup>th</sup> century! It had belonged to the Duchy of Lorraine first, but had been sold early on to the Dukes of Bar, then ceded to the Dukes of Luxembourg, later given back to the Dukes of Bar. In 1648, the town had been captured by the French king, though returned to the Dukes of Lorraine in 1660. Attacked again by French armies, the town definitely became French in 1670. King Louis XIV fortified the town, the works being devised and executed by the famous military architect and engineer Sébastien le Prestre, *Marquis* of Vauban, commonly called Vauban. The great Vauban!

Longwy consisted of two, quite different parts, Longwy-Haut and Longwy-Bas, of Higher and Lower Longwy. In Longwy-Haut previously, a long time ago, lived the notables of the town, the wealthy, the traders and the authorities. The hill had been abandoned more or less by them, and now the population lived mostly in Longwy-Bas. The town lived of heavy industry. The first blast furnace was installed in 1848.

The most important iron industry companies of Longwy were the *Société des Haut-Fourneaux de Longwy et de la Sauvage*, and the *Société des Haut-Fourneaux de la Chiens*. The Chiens was the name of the river flowing through Longwy-Bas. In a large bend of the river stood the railway station of the town. The blast furnaces stood at Longwy-Bas and at the suburb of Gouraincourt.

Worth to mention also was the enamelling industry of the town. The pottery factory of Longwy turned out cups, dishes, vases and other table utensils enamelled in garish, hard colours of small surfaces. Julian loved all art. After a while, and after having visited the factory, he came to love the Longwy enamelled pottery, and bought several high-priced pieces.

The town had an important branch of the *Banque de France*, the French State Bank, which Julian suspected would be coveted by all the regiments come to occupy the town. He expected trouble there. Its director was a Monsieur Boyer. Julian learned early on most of the funds held by the branch had been hidden in a cave of the *Société des Aciéries* on the Mont Saint-Martin. He never told anybody he knew about this.

On Longwy-Haut stood the original centre of the town. This was the *Longus Vicus*, the Latin name for ‘long village’, built on the rocky, high and elongated hill above the rest of the later expanded town. The fortifications of Longwy, among which its citadel, surrounded Longwy-

Haut in the typical Vauban star form. When Julian Vincius arrived, the town had been cannonaded so much Longwy-Haut was almost completely destroyed! The old city within the Vauban walls had almost disappeared. The hand of war had thrown down most of the house, including the Town Hall. The old Town Hall of the town had stood in Longwy-Haut, and had been destroyed almost entirely during the bombardment of the town by the German Army during the siege of the town. Longwy-Haut could be called a fortress, though a destroyed fortress.

The town prided in tramways, but those had been closed and requisitioned by the army, the German Army currently.

Longwy-Haut lay in ruins, including its fortress and citadel. The old walls had not resisted for long to the modern guns of the German Army. The town had surrendered to the Germans on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, after flames also had destroyed a quarter of Longwy-Bas. Julian Vincius feared he could not count much on the sympathy of the population!

The German soldiers had entered Longwy-Bas on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August. The Regiment 122 of the Saxon *Landwehr* occupied the town, holding its headquarters in the small castle, a manor really, of Monsieur Emile Thomas. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, the Regiment 122 had been replaced by the Regiment 102. The German *Kommandatur*, the highest military authority, demanded straightaway the sum of 400,000 Francs as indemnity for the destruction of a convoy of 18 lorries, burnt there by a patrol of French soldiers. The town had to pay. The sum was finally handed over by the *Société Nancéienne*, the Bank of Nancy, at which the town had an account.

Later still, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1914, the Regiment 102 left Longwy to participate in the constant Battle for Verdun. The next day, a battalion of the *Landsturm* of Württemberg 54 of *Biberach* entered the town. The military authorities were the Captain Baron von König and a Colonel of the Uhlans von Hule. Their main hand was the Adjutant Kraft. Kraft found out where the money of the *Banque de France* had been hidden. He took the money that remained in the branch of Longwy, as well as the funds hidden at Mont Saint-Martin. Later still, the German Army set up their post office in the building of the *Banque de France*. These German occupation troops equally left Longwy between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup> of January of 1916. A battalion of the Saxon *Landsturm* of Rochlitz replaced them, and stayed at Longwy until the end of the war.

The city suffered much under the German occupation! At the beginning of 1915, the German authorities requisitioned several houses of Longwy. They pillaged the residences. Monsieur Baraine appealed to Julian Vincius. Julian intervened to stop the Baraines being pillaged. As of the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1914, the Germans requisitioned all automobiles and a little later all the bicycles, the phones and the telegraphy devices. In the summer of 1915, the German troops demanded about 80% of the harvest of grains, and 75% of the potato harvest. Famine set in, though the population reverted to massive smuggling. Julian and Ernst Vincius brought in much food to the Baraine Family. The Germans had already taken most of the livestock, of the chickens, and the town went out of eggs. The deportations of young men who could work began. The youth were sent to Germany to work in the German industry. Many of these did not return after the war.

On higher orders, the occupying German troops dismantled the industrial sites of Longwy. Entire iron works were dismantled and transported to Germany. Then, the Germans placed

mines in the manufactories, and blew up the buildings. The plundering and dismantling had been ordered by the *Schutzverwaltung der Französischen Bergwerke und Hüttenbetriebe*, which had as its aim exactly the pillaging of the conquered French metal industry, and also by the *Rohstoff und Maschinenverteilungstelle des Kriegsamts*, or the *Rohma*. These laid hands on the machines, utensils and the stock of iron and coal in Longwy. When this plundering went on, Julian Vincius did not dare showing himself too much in the town nor in the house of the Baraines. He considered his shame justified. But there was a war going on, and these were the spoils of that war! All Julian could do was spare the Baraines from being pillaged too.

The real heart of the city was Longwy-Bas now, where the *Hôtel des Récollets* stood. This was a really large building in U-form, with a central, rather monumental entry at the end of a majestic courtyard, and two large side-wings. The building was truly impressive, and would suit well as a prestigious *Kriegslazarett* for Julian and the German Army. Julian already thought by then, the German Army would be blocked for a long time near Verdun. His suspicions brought him the beginning of terrifying reflections on the course of the war. The *Hôtel des Récollets* stood in the *Avenue de la Grande-Duchesse Charlotte*, where also the house of the Baraines could be found.

Further on stood the large industrial sites. Longwy had coal and a little to the south, near the city of Briey, had been found iron ore. The combination of iron ore and coal gave life to the iron industry of Longwy. The German Army wanted the iron ore fields of Briey, of course. The suburb of Gouraincourt, held the streets of small houses built for the men who worked in the iron manufactories of Longwy. In all, the Longwy population was about 12,000 people.

The organisation Julian worked out had its basis in the normal, standard three level system of field hospitals of the German Army. Julian would not change that scheme.

In the entrenchments, the wounded soldiers would find a first, immediate help in the *Sanitätsunterstand*. Bones would be set in the right position, morphine could be administered to ease the pain, cut wounds were hastily cleaned, as wounds often would be smeared with mud and congealed blood. The wounded would then be brought on a stretcher or on the shoulders of other soldiers taking turn, to behind the lines in the *Feldlazarett*, the field hospitals. Here, there would usually be a doctor to classify the wound and intervene as far as he could. Did the wound consist of a fraction of bones or was it merely a flesh wound that could be closed by knitting, had the soldier been subjected to a severe psychological shock, did the wound have to be properly cleaned, had he a gas sickness, or worse? Good care would be dispensed here. Then, if necessary, the wounded would be transported to a *Kriegslazarett*, organised as a first-class hospital. The extremely wounded could be transported to a finer hospital still in a large city of the environs, which meant for Julian's sector to Metz, to Stuttgart or to Frankfurt, or even Köln. To be moved to these cities, the wounded would have to wait for a *Lazarettzug*, an hospital train, to bring them on.

A *Sanitätsunterstand* existed in each entrenchment. The *Feldlazarett* had to be organised a mile or more behind the first lines, and Julian used the places of Longuyon and Montmédy as such field hospitals too.

The *Kriegslazarett* would be from five to ten miles behind the front. Julian used the *Hotel des Récollets* and the Private School of Longwy as such. It took him three weeks to get all the furniture he wanted, but arrive they did, and a little later the doctors and male nurses came in, too. This used up all Julian's energy, for he had to insist, insist and insist again to obtain all

he needed. When he had all the equipment and the doctors and personnel, he felt exhausted. But his tiered organisation of the hospitals was in operation.

Julian and Ernst Vincius tried to have their dinners at regular times with the Baraine Family. Especially Julian did not always succeed in holding the agreed hours. When this happened at noon, he had asked Théophile Baraine to wait no longer for him than a quarter of an hour. He would then skip a dinner, or grab a piece of hard bread where he could. He was inspecting the trenches, complaining of the conditions the soldiers had to live in the trenches or in the field. He demanded better fortifications at places along the war line, he demanded to deepen the trenches where victims fell, or demanded higher breastworks where trenches could not be deepened, because the soldiers hit rock. He made the soldiers work more to protect the nursing stations in the trenches, or he was discussing war movements of troops at the generals' staffs. Generally, he was well aware where the German next attacks would come, though from the end of 1914 on, these gradually became less important in men and means. He would also move his personnel from point to point. He organised his medical aides so that they could move with the troops, rather than keep at fixed places of medical help.

When Julian had his supper with the Baraines, the situation of the war remained always the first item of conversation. Julian and Théophile had learned to explore each other's mind to touch the limits of the acceptable, of the words one could say and the ones not, how much to accept of the other's logical patriotism without coming to anger or even violence. They could talk and stay polite, as objectively as they could, despite their deepest convictions, of seeing each other as an odious enemy.

The second item to talk about were the exactions of the German occupying troops and the newest, often very restrictive and even punishing rules devised by the German Army for Longwy. Julian often agreed with Monsieur Baraine on this subject. The officers in charge of the town were not always fine, educated men. Some of the officers were scoundrels, thieves even, men who raped. Monsieur Baraine agreed such kind of men could be found in any society, in any organisation. Julian and Théophile had common enemies in such men, and despised these examples together. They found themselves comrades then in the same disgust of bad people.

After these topics, on which they could agree and without words fought together, Julian and Théophile could talk about anything, from the quality of the served wine to the weather outside. They never let themselves be led to angry or aggressive words. With time, they reached an intimacy of thoughts that should have been regarded as rare in a war, and respectful. Julian asked where he could help, which was often very difficult, for aggressive German soldiers or officers were also hard to manipulate for Julian. Théophile Baraine still told Julian where he could help, and how. Julian considered Baraine smart, devious sometimes, but efficient in what the man had found as possible solutions, involving Julian once every while. Julian understood the difficult position Baraine had to live in. Baraine was French, a civil servant, but he was helping a German officer! He would not remain very popular in his town, now and after the war, by running on the sharp edge of a knife, torn between his own people and the enemy. Julian also once remarked he had not come to remain popular with everybody, least of all with his own superiors. That was fine, but Julian would return home, to Germany, after the war. Baraine had his house and his business here, in Longwy.

The two children of the Baraines and, of course, Madame Baraine, ate with them in the evening. Julian and Ernst laughed with the energy and the good humour and the never ironic, usually quite naïve remarks of the youngest daughter of the family. They then had to explain better.

The older daughter of the Baraines proved to be another matter for Julian. She usually stayed quiet during the conversations of her father and Julian. She hardly ever mentioned what had happened in town. She withheld her comments, sat, ate meticulously, and merely talked about her school, the lycée, in short phrases and only when asked to do so. She remained a reserved girl.

Julian was practically thirty years old. He possessed by far the highest erudition and education at the table. He spoke several languages. His knowledge of Latin and French authors went wider and deeper than those of the Baraines. He sometimes explained to them who the best German authors were. Ernst was listening to what he said as much as the Baraines. Often, Julian had to restrain himself from not to sound outright pedantic. Ernst had picked up French much faster than Julian would have thought possible. Julian talked about Berlin, about Königsberg and Thorn. He always tried to manage his enthusiasm.

Charlotte Baraine was almost seventeen, still in the secondary school as a student. It did not even come to mind to Julian to be interested more in the adolescent girl of her age than as the child daughter of a friend. Yet, often, during supper, when he explained something, she would smile at him, and he smiled back. Their eyes met briefly, yet without any special feeling, and intimacy set in between them, as innocently as if he had been her own father. Julian refused seeking the girl's eyes with special wonder, though they were of the finest grey he had ever noticed.

Charlotte Baraine obviously would turn into a beauty, a true French beauty, paired with a distinction and attraction only the finest French young women of the old French bourgeoisie could display. She was not the tall, slim, blond, athletic German girl. She looked as if she had been born to attract, console, be desired sensually, to be cherished, adored, loved, provided for by men, proudly shown about, the future typical splendid French mother to bear and to bring to life and to care for offspring of a man of the highest distinction in French society. She was very intelligent, witty, had a character, and no doubt would impose her will on men in certain aspects, aided by what she knew very well men wanted from her. Her face was rather round, everything but angular in traits, agreeable to look at, quick for a laugh that brought the joy in her eyes. Her hair was dark, a soft brown crowning her face in any way she wanted. Her eyes were of the brightest grey, light, almost transparent. Such eyes could haunt and imprison, in any way astonish men every time they looked at her and she at them. Her nose was straight, her cheeks flawless and not too heavy, her lips ample and rosy, her mouth neither too small nor too wide. Her teeth were flawless, formed an unbroken line.

The inhabitants of the Greek island of Melos could have chosen Charlotte Baraine to serve as a model for a classic white marble statue of Aphrodite. Yet for months, Doctor Julian Vincius could not look at her as on a woman to admire. She was still a child. He could reflect on how this Charlotte could become a mature beauty, but think no further, not phantasize on her body. The idea of seeing her as anything else but a work of art, untouchable but fine, did not even once happen to come to his mind.

Neither did it come to the minds of Monsieur and Madame Baraine, so they innocently let their daughters sit at the same table as the German soldiers, as Julian and Ernst. Moreover, Julian Vincius had aged at what he had seen of the war. He had his mind full with his work,

with the scenes of desolation he occasionally saw in the trenches of Verdun and in his hospitals. These images poisoned his mind to a gloomy disposition in those days, so that he usually remained a sad sire, a closed, taciturn man. He had quickly learned a man who spoke seldom inspired more charisma in soldiers, and was more looked at with deference than a raucous, supercilious, loquacious officer. It became his normal attitude. He limited his conversations in the field to what had to be organised, be bettered. Only at the suppers of the Baraine evenings did he open a little to the demands of a usual, normal, gentle life as people could want in a family.

## On the Eastern Front. 1914

Julian Vincius felt interested in more than what concerned his everyday life, however much his work at Longwy occupied his thoughts. From what he heard at some of his staff meetings, he knew Germany was on the offensive against Russian forces, and was being attacked by the Imperial Russian Army in the east. Germany was fighting in the east and in the west against very powerful Allies! The strategy of the German General Staff, which mean mainly of Helmut von Moltke, was to attack on the western front and defeat France, while holding a defensive stand in the east against the Russian Imperial Armies. From what Julian heard in these staffs of the generals fighting in France, the war raged also in fierce clashes in the east, with the territories of East Prussia in the front line.

Imperial Russia had launched 21 infantry divisions against Germany's 13 divisions in the east. Russia's first conflict, though, was with Austria-Hungary, so the czar had launched 53 divisions against Austria's 37 divisions. It must be noted the Russian divisions were generally much larger than the Austrian ones, in men and equipment. Russia's Army far outnumbered both the Central Powers' Armies. For instance, the Austrian *Landwehr* divisions or the Hungarian common Honvéd divisions, drew with them only 42 field cannons, whereas the Russian divisions brought 48 cannons with them. Of course, the typical German division carried 72 guns! The Russian divisions held from 60% to 70% more soldiers than the Austrian ones, 30% more heavy artillery, and 8 times as many machine guns. In all, The Russians threw no less than 750,000 men in 4 armies, the 3<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup>, against the German-speaking Central Powers. The Russian command against Austria was with General Nikolai Ivanov. His chief of staff was Alekseyev.

Also, Austria had to fight on three fronts at the same time, against Italy (which had remained neutral so far, but would soon choose the Allied side), against Serbia and other Balkan Lands, and against Russia. Austria-Hungary had therefore formed three Army Groups. *A-Staffel* was an army group that had to defend the north-eastern border of the empire, along the Galicia frontier. *B-Staffel* would fight in the Balkan, but also and primarily take on northern attacks of Russia. Lastly, the *Minimalgruppe Balkan*, mainly had to fight in, or possibly capture Serbia and take Austrian revenge for the constant conflicts with Austria, as well as for the murder of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand, the crown prince, for which Austria blamed Serbia more than Bosnia.

The German forces, the German 8<sup>th</sup> Army, with its 13 infantry divisions and 1 cavalry division, drew in total 774 guns. General Max von Prittwitz commanded it. The orders he had received were to not take the offensive, and merely defend East Prussia. The German Staff deployed in the east only second-rate troops! The 8<sup>th</sup> Army formed about one tenth of the global German forces. The intention of von Moltke had clearly been to defend, not to attack in East Prussia.

The Russian General Paul von Rennenkampf led the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Army. He was of German descent, though in the service of the czar. He had 6 ½ divisions of infantry, 5 ½ cavalry divisions, and 492 cannons. This army invaded the area of the great lakes of Prussia. Meanwhile, Russia's 2<sup>nd</sup> Army under General Alexander Samsonov, of 14 ½ infantry

divisions and 4 cavalry divisions, with 1160 cannons, attacked the north-west of Prussia. It was generally not good strategy to divide one's forces. Moreover, the Russians had overseen that the Germans could use the Interbrug-Osterode north-south railway to defeat the two Russian forces separately! Anyhow, also the German forces seemed to have, at least at first, overlooked this possibility, as did the German General Staff. The Russian enemies had no access to local railways, so they were slow to move. They had no telegraph lines, no telephone, no wireless communication services. Even the German troops had no more than 25 telephones in their entire eastern Army. And the Russian Armies early on lost each other's communication codes!

The Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army was the uncle of the czar, Grand Duke Nicholas. His Chief of Staff was a man called Janushkevich. The Russian General Headquarters, called the *Stavka*, held the Quarter-Master General Yuri Danilov, the brain of the Army movements and the Russian attack plans. The operational leader on the north-west front was General Yahou Zhilinski. With Samsonov of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, he was member of a fraction favouring Sukhomlinov. This was not the case for Rennenkampf, the other leader, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army. These men did not necessarily trust each other. They did not necessarily want to cooperate, unless they found personal advantage in doing so.

The Russian attack started on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1914. The Russian Armies advanced slowly and took a pause on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The German General Hermann von François, the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of von Prittwitz, attacked the Russians. At the Battle of Gumbinnen, the outnumbered German troops suffered a disaster, losing 8,000 casualties out of a total force of 30,000 men. The German force had to retreat. Actually, they more fled back!

The Russian General Samsonov followed, and attacked von Prittwitz's rear. Von Prittwitz may have panicked in that very bad start. He let von Moltke know he wanted to regroup on the Weichsel, on the stream called the Vistula in Polish. If that had happened, Germany would have lost East Prussia and a large chunk of Middle Prussia too. The Russian troops would have run in one movement to up the city of Thorn! Von Moltke could not accept such a terrible defeat.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August therefore, he replaced von Prittwitz by General Paul von Hindenburg and gave him Erich Ludendorff as Chief of Staff, instead of Georg von Waldersee, who had held this position under von Prittwitz. The duo leadership of von Hindenburg and Ludendorff worked wonders. It proved to be an almost genius combination, and that not only on the eastern front with Russia. In the meantime, the Russian General von Rennenkampf blockaded Königsberg. Two very large battles then decided on the outcome of the Russian offensive.

From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1914, the greatest encirclement operation of the war took place, leading to the Battle of Tannenberg. General Hermann von François, aggressive as no other in war, attacked Samsonov's left flank, afraid of nothing. He thrust deeper into the Russian troops on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, so that the Russian officers and soldiers lost their enthusiasm for war, and got demoralised, assailed from all sides by their enemies. In this large battle, the Russians lost 92,000 prisoners and 500 captured cannons, with 50,000 soldiers dead or wounded. The German casualties amounted to from 10,000 to 15,000 men. Tannenberg's spectacular outcome shook even the staffs of the belligerents in the west. The Russian General Samsonov, realising the catastrophe, considered his honour lost. In view of

the disaster, he committed suicide. Tannenberg was a major German victory, but a far from decisive one.

The other battle was waged from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. This has been called the Battle of the Masurian lakes, which stood in the way in the centre of East Prussia. Ludendorff had to confront the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Army, but he enjoyed a numerical advantage. Once more, he unleashed General Hermann von François, who broke through the left wing of the Russian troops once again, and routed them. Here, the Germans took 30,000 Russian prisoners. Still, Ludendorff failed to destroy entirely the Russian centre, so that Rennenkampf could retreat and save the Army. Ludendorff launched his divisions in pursuit, but he encountered issues with his supplies in these vast regions, and had to stop.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1914, the Russians counter-attacked, so that the German troops had to retreat to the Angerapp Line, where they took a new, defensive stand. In all these September armed conflicts, the Germans lost over 100,000 casualties. The Russians lost even more men. Both Armies stopped and like on the western front, a temporary stalemate set in.

More southernly, the Russian Armies, of course, also attacked Austria by Galicia. Here, far larger forces clashed than in East Prussia. The Austrian Commander-in-Chief was Archduke Friedrich. His *Armee Oberkommando* or AOK, his staff in operations, was led by General Conrad von Hötzendorf, as always. Conrad had ordered a general mobilisation of the Austrian military forces on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July of 1914. He postponed the concentration of his troops until the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, in Galicia. At first, Conrad had 31 divisions in Galicia and about 500,000 men. He reached 37 divisions on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, when the *B-Staffel* group arrived. The Austrian 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies grouped together from east to west, from north of Lublin to the Dniester River. But the Russians had assembled 45 infantry and 18 cavalry divisions! These troops would soon be joined by 8 ½ more infantry divisions!

At the end of August, Russians and Austrians delivered the titanic main battles of Krasnik, from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, and of Komarov, from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of August. Both were declared Austrian victories. In the meantime, the Russian 9<sup>th</sup> Army advanced against the Austrians, and between the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of August also the Russian 8<sup>th</sup> Army led by the excellent General Alexei Brusilov. These defeated the Austrians at the Battle of Gnula-Lipia. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, the Russians could take Lemberg, or Lwów, the capital and large fortress of Galicia.

Conrad of course counter-attacked. The Habsburg Empire would not give itself defeated so easily. This led from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of September to the Battle of Rawa Russka. Conrad chose to retreat to the Carpathians in the south, and to the fortifications on the River Denajec, east of Cracow. Although Conrad's eastern Armies were also thrown back by the Russian advance, the front stabilised. The Russian Armies suffered supply issues. They stopped at Przemyśl, the formidable town-fortress, which held an Austrian garrison of 100,000 troops, and which the Austrian soldiers defended with 50 kilometres of trenches around the fortress.

The formidable Russian August offensive devised by Yuri Danilov had achieved its objectives. The Austrians lost the Bukovina region, with the fortresses of Lemberg and Jaroslav. This was very rich arable land, also rich in oil. The Austrian-Hungarian losses amounted to 100,000 men dead, 222,000 wounded, and 100,000 taken prisoner. Austria lost

216 cannons and 1,000 locomotives. The Russian losses were substantially lower: 250,000 casualties, including 45,000 prisoners. The result of such losses for Austria meant the country was now unable to win from the Russians without additional German help.

In the Balkan, Serbia had managed to assemble the substantial force of 350,000 men, of which 185,000 troops of fine quality. These were organised in 11 infantry divisions in 3 Armies. Moreover, Montenegro was on the side of Serbia. Montenegro's king Nikita was almost bankrupt. He had 30,000 to 40,000 soldiers under his command, but had to wait for Serbia to deliver him about 100 cannons to bring his troops in the field.

The Austrian command in the Balkan, of the *Minimalgruppe Balkan*, was General Oskar Potiorek. Potiorek, in fact, was a rival of Conrad. He did not report to Conrad, but directly to Emperor Franz Joseph, and that independently from the AOK. Potiorek commanded 2 Armies of each 140,000 men, formidable forces in their own right, though nevertheless smaller than what Serbia had been able to bring together.

A great battle was fought between these Armies on from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, the Battle of Cer Mountain. Potiorek's forces broke through the Serbian centre, but had to retreat later on. Potiorek fell back to Austria on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. The Austrian casualties amounted to about 24,000 men, including 4,500 prisoners in Serbian hands. The Serbian casualties in defence, amounted to about 17,000 men. The plan of Potiorek had been set up in haste. His forces proved inadequate, and the Serbian defence had been particularly strong, in terrain the Serbians knew well, the Austrians less so. By mid-September of 1914, the Austrian invasion of Serbia had proven a failure. And the Austrian-Hungarian forces had just been able to stop the Russian thrust in Galicia, losing important terrain. Here too, as in Prussia, the casualty rates had been astonishingly high. This was a surprising conclusion, only foreseen by the best military analysts of Europe.

At the end of September, Falkenhayn launched a limited offensive by the German forces of Mid-Prussia south-eastwards to the Vistula and Warsaw. By then, Russia had 98 infantry divisions in the field, against about 80 German and Austrian divisions. The Russians had halted temporarily, then they decided on two offensives more.

In the first Russian offensive, the Russian General Ruzski, in replacement of Zhilinski, was to invade East Prussia directly on the north-west front. The German divisions stopped this attack at the Battle of the Augustowa forest in the period of from 29 September to 5 October of 1914.

In the second Russian offensive, Grand Duke Nicholas moved troops to defend Warsaw. He attacked the oncoming German invasion of Poland. The Germans defeated the Russian divisions, led by the General Ruzski. Ruzski had let the Germans cross the Vistula, aiming to destroy them all with their back at the stream, but his divisions could not win in battle from the German disciplined troops. The results of this battle were terrible once more in numbers of casualties. The Germans lost 100,000 men, of which 36,000 had been killed. The Army of the Russian Ruzski lost about 50,000 men.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, Falkenhayn and Ludendorff once more met in Berlin. They agreed to give the supreme command of the eastern war theatre to von Hindenburg and Ludendorff. It

would now be called *Ober Ost*. As Hindenburg took supreme command, General August von Mackensen replaced Hindenburg at the head of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, this 9<sup>th</sup> German Army went in the offensive out of the environs of Thorn. Immediately, they routed a Russian Siberian Army Corps. The Germans advanced and took Lodz on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, making no less than 136,000 Russian prisoners. The Russians had called off their own offensive, fell back to Lodz, and accepted a siege of that fortified town by the Germans. Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff received 4 new Army Corps, released from Flanders on the western front. Early December, the German troops took Lodz.

In December, the Russian Army tried yet another offensive to take Cracow and threaten German Silesia. This offensive was halted by the Austrians. After the Battle of Limanova-Lipanow, the Russian troops retreated to the rivers Nida and Sunajec. The Russian supply issues now crippled them for months, and a new stalemate began. The Russian soldiers dug trenches.

Meanwhile, on the Balkan front, the Austrian General Potiorek launched his second invasion into Serbia. This offensive, also began in November of 1914. It was larger than the previous one. The Austrian troops crossed the Danube. Potiorek could restore discipline in his troops. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, raged the Battle of Kolubara. The Serbs won the battle! They recaptured their capital Belgrade. But the cost was terrible.

The Serbian losses were 22,000 men killed, 12,000 men wounded and 19,000 captured or missing. These losses were comparable to the Austrian losses of 28,000 men killed. But Austria suffered 120,000 wounded and 76,500 taken prisoner. The Austrian new *débâcle* in the Balkan cost Potiorek his command. From then on, the Serbian Army was too weak to still threaten Austrian territory, as it had done previously by sending murderous raids into Hungary, and by invading Bosnia. The Serbs got to 20 miles near Sarajevo, but were stopped.

Germany failed to win decisively on its eastern front, but it had done much better than merely defending itself with inferior troops. On the western front, German soldiers stood on enemy soil, on French territory, a definite advantage during negotiations. The German troops remained there for the next 3 years! In the east, the Germans had stopped the Russian offensives. The Russians remained on their positions, plagued with severe provisioning issues in shells and other equipment.

The winter of from 1914 to 1915 was one of the coldest in living memory. Also, the autumn of 1914 had brought very rainy weather. The armies counted their dead and other casualties. France had suffered 528,000 men killed, wounded or missing. More than 265,000 French soldiers were dead. Belgium had lost half of its strength. The British Expeditionary Force counted almost 90,000 men dead. In the east, Russia suffered 1.8 million losses, of which almost 400,000 men killed and 486,000 men made prisoners. In total, the Austro-Hungarian Empire lost 1.25 million men. Germany lost 800,000 casualties, with 116,000 dead, of which 85,000 on the western front. And yet, the slaughterhouse of Europe had only just begun.

In east Prussia, the Russian troops conducted themselves correctly to the civilian population. In Galicia, however, they robbed and killed tens of civilians, mostly Jews. The Germans killed 5,521 Belgian civilians in August of 1914, and 906 more in France, on suspicion the

men were partisans that had treacherously attacked passing troops. For the first time, a town, Liège had been bombed from the sky, out of Zeppelins. Turkey had joined the Central Powers, Germany and Austria. The fronts ended in stalemate. The war in the trenches began.

## The ongoing War, the Years 1915 and 1916

### On the Western Front in 1915

By the beginning of 1915, the western front on the French border with Belgium and Luxembourg had stabilised. Nevertheless, heavy fights were going on from December 1914 to March of 1915 in the Champagne Region of France, where General Joffre launched an offensive against the German trenches and reinforcements. These forceful attacks changed very little and cost the French Army more than 100,000 casualties. The belligerents had to recognise the Germans had shown, as feared, far greater tactical and operational efficiency than any other country of Europe. Their generals excelled in the art of war. The stocks of war equipment, and in the first place the ammunition for rifles, for machine guns and the shells for the guns of all sorts, then came to be in short supply. The industries of the countries had to redirect their resources in great urgency toward the war effort. The same was true for the financing of the war.

Especially the Russian Army staged a remarkable recovery in the year 1915. Other countries entered the war. Japan had already in August of 1914 joined the Allies. In October of 1914, though it had remained neutral till then and had signed the alliance with Germany and Austria, Italy declared it would fight on the side of the Allies. In October of 1915, Bulgaria chose the side of the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, against Russia.

Germany already thought of peace negotiations in 1915! The front had stabilised, victory seemed far off. The German political and military leaders wanted first to retain the Hohenzollern hegemony over the empire, and then to consolidate the status of the country as a world power.

Kurt Riezler, the private secretary of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, drafted the papers of the 'September Programme', the German demands for a peace treaty. The Germans wanted to annex Luxembourg entirely, the Belgian cities of Antwerp and Liège, the French Briey iron fields near Longwy, the western parts of the Vosges Mountains in France, as well as in France parts of the coast along the Channel on the continent, around Dunkirk and Boulogne. The Belgian railway system was to be transferred to German management, so that Belgium would be reduced to being but a vassal state to Germany, under German military occupation. Germany wanted a European Customs Association to be founded. Poland had to give up additional territories, and Russia was to hand over Lithuania and Kurland.

Especially von Hindenburg and Ludendorff sought more annexations, supported in their claims by the German public opinion. They continued to believe in an ultimate, splendid, glorious victory for Germany. The Allied Powers of France, Great Britain and Russia rejected the claims. In their 1916 Declaration of Sainte Adresse, the Allies together promised even to continue fighting on, until Belgium had regained its independence and had been compensated for the damage it had suffered in the war. The Allies reaffirmed their cohesion in front of Germany.

Nevertheless, politics being what they are and were, Great Britain's non-avowed aims remained also not to crush Germany so totally that it would no longer be able to keep in balance the powers of France and Russia! Lord Kitchener was the Secretary of State for war in Great Britain. He wanted the Germans and the French to exhaust themselves in fruitless attacks. He was the main British strategist. Kitchener wanted Russia and France to suffer the highest strain of the war. Then, at the nadir of violence and exhaustion of resources, when the one or other side did openly ask for negotiations, Great Britain could exert the highest influence at the peace conference.

Until the summer of 1915, the British Empire limited its presence on the western front, although the British still showed they were willing to do their part in the conflict, to fight hard.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1915, the BEF launched an offensive at Neuve Chapelle. Heavy cannonades were supposed to create a surprise. Then, British and Indian troops attacked and broke even through the first German defence trenches. But already in the evening, German reserve troops held the English progression in check.

From May to June, the French armies staged attacks in the Artois Region of France. This proved to be their single greatest effort of 1915! The French forces of General Philippe Pétain breached the German lines, but additional French troops arrived too late at the breach, before the Germans had the time to close the gap. General Joffre believed the Allies had to continue harassing the enemy with assaults, as defence only would sap the morale of his troops.

The Allies attacked a salient in their lines, called the Noyon Bulge, where the German forces had advanced the most towards Paris. Joffre used heavy cannons to pound the German defence into the ground. Joffre had removed the heavy calibre cannons from French fortresses. The French attacks never came even close to a decisive breakthrough! More assaults in the Champagne equally failed.

The British Expeditionary Force was to attack at the same time at Loos. They, however, carried no adequate, heavy artillery with them. The BEF used poison gas instead, released from cylinders brought to the trenches. On the day this gas was used, released in the air, the wind stopped. The gas hung over the land between the trenches, and then even turned back to the British lines. The use of gas as an offensive weapon was thus inconclusive. The BEF did capture Loos, however, at least taking the first German defence line. When on the second day, 2 new British reserve army divisions attacked again, they ran into as yet uncut barbed wires and very well-trained German machine-gunners. The attack failed. In one hour of assault, the British soldiers left thousands of casualties in the field!

In France, a military intrigue caused furore. The Commander in Chief, General Joffre had dismissed General Maurice Sarrail. Sarrail was a well-known officer in French leftist political circles. No second affair Dreyfuss! Sarrail had to be sent to Salonika to make the affair be forgotten in Paris. In Salonika, Sarrail was to launch an attack against Bulgaria. Thus, the French politicians sent him out of the public opinion in France. Sarrail indeed advanced out of Salonika into Bulgaria, but he arrived too late to help and save the Serbs, attacked by the Austrian and German forces. He fell back to Greece, where he realised he was much of an

unwanted presence. The Greek King Constantine wished to keep out of a devastating war, denying equally he was obliged to assist Serbia.

In France, all during 1915, Raymond Poincaré was still president. René Viviani was prime minister and Théophile Delcassé foreign minister for most of the year. This changed in November. Prime Minister became Aristide Briand, who also took on the role of foreign minister. The minister of commerce was Etienne Clémentel, who would until 1918 organise France's economic planning. The French colonial minister was Gaston Doumergue. Aristide Briand wanted the French military to keep a foothold in Salonika. He let the French Army grow there until it reached 500,000 soldiers in 1917. The main enemy of those troops were not the Central Powers, but malaria! It may have been a waste of resources to have kept a large French Army in that region.

In December of 1915, the Allied Powers held another conference at Chantilly in France. The highest commanders of the armies discussed the war effort in the grand castle and magnificent horse stables of the former dukes of Condé and Aumale. They agreed on new offensives for 1916. Their main idea was to wage an attrition war on Germany, until the German troops would withdraw from France. Germany was the main enemy. Everybody knew by now what offensives and attrition meant: hundreds of thousands of soldiers lying dead or severely wounded on the battlefields. The commanders decided on better coordination for their offensives and for better communication among their armies. The assaults on the German lines would become still more tenacious, and hence with increased violence, mainly of cannon fire, more destruction, and ever more casualties. Yet, the decision was accepted. There were also important changes in the command.

Already in September, the Russian czar replaced Grand Duke Nicholas, taking the supreme command for himself. This was everything but a wise move. Any lack of breakthrough, of decision, on the eastern front, or worse: any defeat, would henceforth fall on the shoulders of the czar.

In December of 1915, the new BEF commander became Sir Douglas Haig. Haig pushed Kitchener to the background. He was a blunt, forceful man, out for victory by directly beating the German Army. His Chief of the General Staff in London was Sir William Robertson. Another kind of warfare would henceforth drive the BEF.

The year of 1915 was a period in which the beast held its breath, paused, gained strength, seemed to grow, gained in muscles and energy, and readied to leap. Then, 1916 would become a year of major battles, of terrible expenditure of life and blood. 1916 would be the year of two of the greatest and largest and longest battles humankind had ever experienced: the Battle for Verdun and the Battle of the Somme.

## **The Battle of Verdun**

The German Verdun offensive lasted from February 1916 to August of 1917, with intense and quieter periods in between. It was a battle that lasted for 10 months, but major skirmishes continued for more than a year and a half, including the French counter-attacks of from October to December of 1916 and more of those attacks as late as August of 1917.

In February of 1916, the German Army went once more on the offensive. The thrust at Verdun was not really meant as a massive new thrust forward. The original objective was a limited assault. In the end, however, it grew to the largest violent conflict between the powers of Europe on the western front.

In 1916 alone, the battle cost the French Nation over 379,000 men, of which about 160,000 killed. The total figures depend on whether one adds the casualties of the constant skirmishes fought in the trenches outside the battles or not, and whether one counts the victims of the later August battle of 1917 or not.

The German casualties amounted from 337,000 to 434,000 soldiers, of which about 143,000 killed. During the long period of struggle, each side, Germany on the one and on the other side France and Great Britain, lost their most courageous and intelligent men in a frenzy of horror.

In this conflict, also, new technologies were used for the first time: flamethrowers and phosgene gas, as well as tantalising new, heavy artillery. Each major attack came preceded by unheard-of artillery fire, which for days long pounded on the terrains occupied by the enemy with unprecedented intensity. Like the Allied commanders had done at Chantilly, the German Commander of the General Staff Erich von Falkenhayn thought the French army could still be defeated if it suffered a sufficient number of casualties. Verdun was intended by both sides as an attrition conflict. Yet, when the artillery had spent its thousands of shells, in the trenches, men covered in mud and blood still stood erect in a landscape of huge, deep funnels around the trenches, and the men were ready to absorb and then throw back the enemy's tens of thousands of assault troops. Each side misjudged and underestimated the resilience of its opposers.

The German Chief of Staff von Falkenhayn's aims for the year 1916 were to exhaust France's armies at Verdun, to inflict such casualties on France she would sue for peace. He considered the British Expeditionary Force but a minor extension, an addition to the French power.

In the end, von Falkenhayn misjudged France's resilience and her will to fight. The German generals stood before an enemy who could be as tenacious as they themselves were, and the French soldiers stood on the defensive.

The Germans could not but think back in time, to when the French armies of Emperor Napoleon I had defeated and subdued all the armies of Europe. The fury and discipline, the courage and the glory of those armies had not been forgotten in France! The German generals thought themselves superior in all the aspects of war. Here, they had to experience French resilience, France's power to slash back and to stop the German onslaughts. That came as a surprise. It was a surprise they at first tended to push aside, away from them, until after the battles had ended, and of which they did not draw the logical conclusions: this war could not be won anymore!

Verdun! A small French town in a vale. Fortresses ringed the city on the wooded heights, east and west of the Meuse stream, all around in circles of defence. The heights were what the German officers coveted in the first place. If they could take the heights of the valley, they could throw the full power of their artillery down, on the town and its defenders. The French battalions would have to counter-attack uphill to dislodge the Germans and their artillery, a

titanic task sheer impossible to realise. The battle was about those hills. The forests on the slopes gave the occasion to launch surprise attacks!

The German armies used several months in 1915 to conceal their preparations. They hid their assault troops in concrete bunkers, in a network of vast underground shelters called *Stollen* in German, built strongly though in haste, in the woods. They hid their amassed heavy artillery among the dense trees. To provision their divisions, the Germans built additional railway tracks and railway stations, and laid thousands of kilometres of telephone cables. Repair shops had been installed and manned.

The German 5<sup>th</sup> Army commander was the German Crown Prince Wilhelm! The Germans sent only 9 divisions of infantry into the assault, where probably twice as much would have been needed for instant success. The German 5<sup>th</sup> Army attacked straight in the centre, just north of Verdun. They fought against the forces of the *Région Fortifiée de Verdun*, the fortified Region of Verdun, and those of the French 2<sup>nd</sup> Army on the east banks of the Meuse. The German Army had used the relative calm of 1915 to bring massive quantities of heavy artillery and high explosive shells to Verdun. The exploding shells could make entire sections of trenches and French fortification collapse. The weapons of doom had been transported to the sector of Verdun by about 1,300 ammunition trains in over two months. As of the 21<sup>st</sup> of February of 1916, the attacking Germans used more than 1200 cannons, mortars, howitzers and other heavy artillery pieces. These fired over 2 million shells in the 8 hours of the opening fire preceding the infantry assault, along a 13 kilometres front.

At the last moment, the attack had even had to be postponed for 9 days due to bad weather, without the French armies suspecting the ordeal they were going to face.

Verdun had seemed for France a quiet sector at the extremity of the line. Its troops were light, its defences were light, due to the difficult terrain in the woods. The trenches had remained incomplete and un-deep, for it had been hard work to dig among trees. The fortresses had been depleted of most of their cannons, to be used by General Joseph Joffre as field artillery on other fronts.

Verdun lay far from Paris. The French armies felt relatively at ease near Verdun. Surely, attacks would come in the centre, due north!

The deputy of the Commander in Chief Joffre, General Noël Edouard Curières de Castelnau, had inspected the sector a last time in January of 1916, without noticing much unusual. He had received some warnings, but he and other officers had greatly underestimated the German concentration efforts.

Germany finally sent 46 ½ divisions into the ordeal. The French divisions were rotated every two weeks due to the intensity of the struggle. In total, 70 divisions of the 96 available French divisions on the western front passed through the inferno that Verdun became. The French generals re-provisioned the forts west of Verdun to shoot east, where the German attacks at one point seemed to succeed most.

The French forces had only one road to link Verdun to the rest of France, one road in the valley. This road came to be called the 'Sacred Road'. French lorries rode night and day in both directions, one lorry approximately every 15 seconds.

The German troops knew early successes. The formidable fort of Douaumont, the most powerful fort east of the Meuse Stream, fell almost undefended to a lucky German attack, and that already at the end of the first attack in the first week.

During March and April of 1916, General Joseph Joffre appointed General Philippe Pétain to command the 2<sup>nd</sup> French Army at Verdun. The French Prime Minister Aristide Briand urged Joffre to hold Verdun. Joffre knew very well that if Verdun fell, he would fall too.

In March and April of 1916, Erich von Falkenhayn tried to clear the west bank of the Meuse, the higher hills of the valley there, of French artillery and of French soldiers. He had counted on the terrible shelling of the woods, but the trees granted more protection to the French forces than he had hoped for. The attrition rate of the French soldiers reached only half-and-half what he had hoped, and expected. The *Obere Heeresleitung*, OHL, soon realised the capture of the fortresses of Verdun was not to be completed easily. Their second aim became to inflict as many casualties as possible to the French forces in the shortest time possible. What had started for the German headquarters as a limited battle, then developed into a prestige battle. The Germans did manage in the end to capture the heights of the west bank of *Mont Hamme* and the so-called *Côte 304*. Then, they turned east.

In March of 1916, the small city of Verdun on the Meuse Stream lay in a French bulge in territory won and occupied by the German advancing Army. The bulge or salient stretched in the north to the village of Étain, to the fort of Douaumont and the nearby village of Vaux. In the west, the front descended from the village of Avocourt to Vienne-le-Château. Varennes, just to the north and in the centre of the front line, was already in German hands. A little farther north-west lay Montfaucon.

On the east side, the German front ran from south of Étain to the villages of Les Éparches, Combres and Vigneulles, to St Mihiel. All these were situated east of the Meuse. St Mihiel lay on the stream, but the Germans always remained on the east bank of the Meuse. Saint Mihiel formed another bulge or salient, into French-occupied territory. The east side of this salient ran from Apremont over Fleury to Pont-à-Mousson in French lands, except for Apremont itself.

Until February of 1916, several attacks, French and German, had tried to modify the front line, and they had overall failed miserably. German attacks on the banks of the Biesme River had tried to reach the village of *Le Four de Paris*, in the north of the Verdun French-held territory. They lost the villages, and failed, though the Germans had made some progress south. German attacks in June and July of 1915 in these places, had equally failed. Much gas and enormous bombardments had taken place in October 1915 on the front called of the Argonne, to the west of Verdun.

One road had remained open always to the defenders of Verdun, the one now called '*La Voie Sacrée*' to Bar-le-Duc, and also one railway in the middle of the Verdun salient, which ran from Verdun over Souilly, also to Bar-le-Duc and from there to Commercy.

Of course, from the end of 1914 to the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1916, the date of the first German attack of what had been called the Battle of Verdun, the front had never been quiet here. The

French Army stood like a thorn in the foot of the German left wing of the entire front. It was one of those places on the eastern extremity of the front, which could open the roads to Paris.

### **The initial Attack, from the 21st to the 26th of February 1916**

In and around Verdun, the French held the 30<sup>th</sup> Army Corps to the north and north-east. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps held the eastern part of the heights of the valley. General Frédéric-Georges Herr was the commander of these forces. Herr had 8 ½ divisions on the front and 2 ½ divisions in reserve. The General de Langle de Cary had the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and the 20<sup>th</sup> Corps with 2 divisions each in reserve, plus the 19<sup>th</sup> division in his *Groupe d'Armées du Centre*. Joseph Joffre kept 25 divisions in the French strategic reserve. Verdun had in total about 388 field artillery pieces and 244 heavy cannons, against 1,000 German cannons, of which two thirds could be called heavy or super heavy, and over 200 mortars. The Germans had 8 specialised flame-thrower companies in their 5<sup>th</sup> Army.

The initial attack of the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of February threatened Verdun seriously. Only the arrival of French reinforcements could save the town. Each day of that week, the German infantry advanced a little. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, the Germans opened cannon fire early in the morning on a 40 kilometres long front. Also, Verdun itself was shelled, and its forts, by super heavy artillery.

The German cannonade built up slowly, to reach what the Germans called the *Trommelfeuer*, a firing so intense only one constant rumble could be heard. In all, the bombardment lasted 10 hours. Then, as the German troops advanced, the artillery would fire at the positions in front of the advancing troops to stun and kill all resistance. The German artillery of over 800 guns fired more than a million shells on the French lines.

The French Army evacuated the last inhabitants of the town by noon. The German infantry assault began somewhat later than 17h00. Three German Army Corps, the 7<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup>, advanced against the French 51<sup>st</sup> division, the 72<sup>nd</sup> division, 30<sup>th</sup> Corps. The Germans used flamethrowers and storm troops armed with hand grenades to eradicate the last French resistance. Nevertheless, for three days, the French forces succeeded in slowing down the German assaults until French reinforcements could arrive. On the first day, the Germans took the wood and village of Haumont in fierce fights.

General Joseph Joffre did not believe anymore in fixed, fortified defences. He had ordered the forts around Verdun to be stripped of 54 artillery batteries. Plans had even been made to demolish the forts of Douaumont and Vaux, to deny them to the Germans. The French soldiers had already placed more than 5 tons of explosives to explode the forts. Verdun had 18 large forts and other cannon battery places around the city. It had fewer than 300 cannons remaining and only the necessary garrisons to maintain them. The cannon sites or batteries were built to overlook each other for mutual coverage under attack.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, in the snow, the Germans once more sent heavy cannon fire against the French positions. Assaults happened in the *Bois des Caures*, the Wood of Caures. Colonel Émile Driant had held the wood for two days, but he was forced back and was killed somewhat later.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the assaults of the German infantry intensified. In the night, the ruins of the village of Samogneux fell to the Germans. The Germans captured the village of Brabant and in the east, the woods around Herbébois fell. The front line then ran from Samogneux over Beaumont to Ornes. French troops succeeded in repulsing a German assault on the wood and on the village of Herbébois.

The next day, the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, east of Samogneux, the German infantry took the woods of Fosses, of Le Chaume, and finally the village of Ornes entirely. But then the French reinforcements arrived, under General Maurice Balfourier. He rushed forward! In all, 20 ½ French divisions had been assembled in and around Verdun by then! General Balfourier took command of the Meuse district too and, on the east side, of the Woëvre Region. On the same day, General Noël Edouard de Curières de Castelnau could advise Joseph Joffre to hand over the command of the army of Verdun to General Philippe Pétain. The German infantry took the villages of Champneuve and Beaumont, the *Bois des Caurières* and *Bois des Fosses*.

The German attack continued on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The German infantry of the 24<sup>th</sup> Brandenburg Regiment advanced, with several added battalions. The German assaults proved particularly strong. The Germans advanced to and took the village of Louvemont in the centre of the front. They took the wood of Vauche, advanced up to the large fort of Douaumont and took it by surprise. The fort had only been guarded by a small maintenance crew led by the Warrant Officer Chenot. Machine-gun bunkers had been left unmanned! The French forces had to abandon the *Côte du Talou*. The snow began to fall on Douaumont.

General de Langle de Cary doubted the east bank of the Meuse could be held, but Curières de Castelnau disagreed. He ordered Frédéric-Georges Herr, the Corps Commander, to hold the bank at all costs. Herr transferred a division from the west bank. He ordered the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps to hold the front from Bras to Douaumont and Vaux. General Herr did so, against all expectations.

General Philippe Pétain, having taken effective command in the night, reorganised the French resistance in four groups. His Chief of Staff was Colonel Maurice de Barescut, and his Head of Operations Colonel Bernard Serrigny. Pétain received a scare on hearing Douaumont had fallen. He ordered the remaining forts to be re-garrisoned. He placed General Georges Bazelaire from Avocourt in the west to the Meuse, Guillaumat from the Meuse to Douaumont, General Maurice Balfourier from Douaumont to the Woëvre Region, and Duchêne on the Heights of the Meuse, east. There were practically no trenches in the wooded terrain. Pétain ordered to connect at least the forts by a continuous defence. He used 13 battalions to maintain on good order the road of Verdun to Bar-le-Duc. Pétain also set up a second, ultimate line of defence through the forts of Belleville, St Michel and Moulainville. He obtained the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> Corps during the period from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, increasing his divisions to 14 ½. Later, between the 26<sup>th</sup> of February and the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, he could increase the defence of Verdun to 20 ½ divisions.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, the French defence stopped the German offensive. The General Nourisson held the Côte du Poivre, in the centre, and the French recovered Douaumont. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, the Germans captured Douaumont once more. But there, the German attacks

got so much slowed down, they stopped. They had advanced a mere 3 kilometres, over a front of 10 kilometres long. The French losses so far amounted to about 24,000 men. The Germans losses were comparable, about 25,000 men. As a thaw set in, the ground became swampy, hard to advance in. And the French reinforcements began to make a difference.

The German Army had enlarged its attack front. It tried to outflank the French resistance on the sides of the Verdun salient, but failed. The French defences strengthened with new forces and provisions of weapons and ammunition, brought in by road and by rail. As so many other battles, attrition combats followed. The German pressure continued unabatedly, but Verdun held.

On the first of July 1916, the French Army and the BEF went into the offensive on the Somme Stream, leading to other large battles farther to the west of Verdun. The German pressure at Verdun diminished, but never relented totally. The German attacks faltered. The French forces managed even to win back some of the lost territory, in three movements. These were the battles of the 24<sup>th</sup> of October around Douaumont and Vaux, of the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1916 at Louvemont and Bezonvaux, where the French did advance still a little farther to the north, pushing the Germans back again, and lastly, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August at the Battle of Samogneux and *Mort-Homme*, in the north-west. These three operations chased the Germans from the terrains won at the beginning of 1916.

### **Longwy and Julian Vincius in 1915**

Julian Vincius had not really taken up the word of the *Geheimrat* Pütter to not hesitate writing to the *Charité* when he needed something medical the German Army could not provide him. In truth, he could put his hands on all the medicines he needed, including the many doses of morphine to ease the pain of the extremely wounded. He had only to ask the higher command of the medical branch of the army, and received what he needed, delivered at Longwy. His title obviously was a great help.

Julian stored the medicines in a special room of the *Kriegslazarett*, in the *Hôtel des Récollets* of Longwy, in a room he was the only one to have the keys for. Once every while, he glued a hair over the top of that door to make sure nobody had entered the room but him. No hair had ever been broken. On the rare days he was not in Longwy for some time, he gave the key to one of the doctors working in the hospital, a man who seemed sufficiently trustworthy.

Very many wounds the soldiers suffered were caused by shrapnel metal balls, by iron pieces thrown around by exploding shells, and by bullets in bodies. These all caused ugly flesh wounds, or terribly broken bones, or damage to vital organs. Legs and arms, shoulder bones, and even skulls had to be operated upon.

Julian noticed quite rapidly an X-Ray device, as he had seen in the *Charité*, could prove extremely useful for such, often delicate, surgical work. For many wounds where bullets remained in the body, it was vital to know where exactly the bullet had lodged itself, near which organs, how far.

X-Ray devices were quite new. Julian met German doctors in Longwy, who hadn't even heard of the technology. The doctors didn't know such devices existed. Yet, Julian had heard of them, already while in Freiburg-im-Breisgau.

X-Rays had been discovered by Professor Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen in a Würzburg university lab in 1895. Röntgen had been experimenting with Crookes tubes, an electrical discharge lamp, invented by the English physicist William Crooke around 1869 to 1875. Röntgen, while working with such a cathode-ray tube, noticed crystals on a table near the tube, were glowing green. He concluded a type of invisible rays emitted by the tube, stimulated phosphorescent particles in the crystal. He soon discovered also the rays could pass through solid materials, and thus also through human skin. By doing so, the rays cast a shadow of solid objects in the skin. X-Rays, he concluded, were a form of electromagnetic radiation, which passed through softer tissue such as skin and muscle, but was absorbed by denser material, such as bone. This allowed him to see through human skin and tissue, and to produce an image of the bone within. As Röntgen did not know the exact nature of the rays, he simply called them X-Rays. When paired with photo-sensitive plates, the process could be preserved as an image. Röntgen made a wonderful picture of his wife's left hand. The bone structure of her fingers, and her wedding ring, were clearly visible on the photographic plate. The discovery earned Röntgen the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1901. Röntgen did not apply for patents to his invention. Later, he also donated the money of his Nobel prize to the university of Würzburg in Bavaria. The first patent for a complete X-Ray machine was published in March of 1896 by the German Siemens&Halske Company.

In 1896, an X-Ray machine was shown by Henry Louis Smith. A truly, well-functioning unit was presented to the public at the 1904 World Fair by Clarence Dally. Then, in 1913, William Coolidge invented a high-vacuum X-Ray tube, which could withstand higher power voltages, giving rise to clearer images still.

When he arrived in Longwy, Julian Vincius had already seen X-Ray devices at the *Charité* Hospitals of Berlin. He had seen several images in the bone surgery department, in the cancer wards, and in the dentistry building. He had been convinced of their use. He had considered them far more than a new gadget, even though it took over an hour of exposure to form high-quality images. Here, in Longwy, he had no doubts the devices could help a lot in pinpointing the exact places where bullets or pieces of shrapnel from cannon shells had lodged themselves in human bodies. Julian had then talked to the officers of the higher ranks in the army, but despite insistent messages, he still had not received such a device. He finally wrote to the *Geheimrat* Pütter in Berlin, to pull some strings with the military. Pütter knew high-placed people at the court, and generals in the army. If Pütter could not succeed in getting Julian such a device, Julian would have to give up in despair.

He received no quick answer. Then, on a fine day, an army truck rode into Longwy and stopped at Julian's quarters. Julian was not in. He was on an inspection tour in the *Feldlazaretten* on the eastern front line of Verdun. But Ernst Vincius and Théophile Baraine were at home. Ernst explained in somewhat broken French what the device was, how it had to be handled with care. It was an instrument that could look inside the human body. Baraine thought Ernst had gone crazy, or had explained matters badly, and Ernst could give no other explanations. What had been brought was merely a huge wooden box, as many labels as possible glued on the box, on which was written 'Handle with Care' in German. That, Ernst could translate. Baraine knew of a small room in the *Hôtel des Récollets* that seemed perfect to place the device in. Other labels indicated it was a Siemens&Halske device.

When Julian arrived in the late afternoon, Ernst could announce him his X-Ray device had finally arrived. It had already been installed. In a folder of explanations on how to use the device, a letter had been found addressed to Julian Vincius. Ernst gave that envelope now to Julian. It did not say very much. Pütter declared he was glad to hear Julian was still alive. Pütter had obtained him his X-Ray machine! He urged Julian to take care using it. The rays, he explained in a few words, seemingly could produce nasty effects on people working too long with it. Pütter added, repeated, Julian could ask him whatever he urgently needed at the front.

Julian could almost have wept for gratitude. He wanted to run out to the hospital immediately, but Ernst and the Baraines held him back. There was time tomorrow to look into the machine, to install it properly, for which Julian was needed anyway. They had better have supper first.

The news of Longwy having an X-Ray machine reached the German field hospitals, the German military doctors in the environs, and also the French civil doctors of Longwy and around in no time. Soon, the machine would have been working from morning till evening. Julian had to reorganise! When the military doctors of the *Feldlazaretten* had difficult cases of wounded men, cases involving bone fractures or unfound scraps of metal, they sent these wounded soldiers far more than before to the central *lazaret* in Longwy, so that X-Ray photographs could be taken.

Julian had to order large quantities of the photographic material. The wounded men were then either operated upon in the hospital of Longwy, or sent on farther, to the hospitals of the larger cities of Germany, accompanied by their X-Ray photo. More surgical operations could be done immediately at Longwy.

Julian reserved a time in the evening for local, civil use, for the civil patients of the town. He limited the hours the device could work, and he also regularly changed the people who worked with it. Around the device, an entire service was set up, with a waiting room, a discussion room to decide on the way to help the patients, X-Ray photographs in hand, and surgical operations rooms nearby.

More patients, not needing X-Ray photographs, had to be redirected to the private school of Longwy. The X-Ray device and its director, Julian Vincius, got famous in the *lazaretten* of the front line. Other doctors on the front asked for such devices.

Life at the stabilised front continued. Julian lived in Longwy, and never returned to Berlin or to Thorn in those years. Neither did Ernst. They could live an almost normal life, having found something of a family home with the Baraines. They did not feel lonely or homesick. There was always too much to do. Julian's greatest sorrow was that he was so taken by his administrative tasks and duties at the *lazaretten*, he could scarcely find the time to serve as a doctor by himself. He tried to hand over many of his administrative tasks to Ernst, and that worked fine!

Julian now saw the misery of the ugliest war wounds on the German soldiers. He found the trenches and fortifications places of the greatest horror. If there existed a god, how could the deluges of pain and suffering not be heard anywhere? How could the General Staffs and the Chancellors of the countries not react in horror to the human pain inflicted in the battles? Still, the war and the attacks and the hundreds of thousands of victims in pain, shock and distress, continued to pour in to the *lazaretten* on the front! Julian heard of the huge numbers

of casualties everywhere on the front. Killed men remained lying in the fields and in the woods around Verdun, in wind and rain, for many days before they were even found. Many other men had been buried alive under earth thrown up by exploding shells.

When Julian rode with Ernst to near the front, they rode on the *Route Nationale 8* leading from Longwy to Verdun. They could only advance slowly on that road, for it was constantly clogged up by all sorts of other vehicles. Lorries laden with ammunition passed them or preceded and followed their car. Lorries loaded with soldiers rode to Verdun. Lorries with wounded men rode to Longwy. Often, Julian and Ernst could hear the low rubble of heavy bombardments around Verdun.

Ernst did not ask what was always on Julian's mind. Why had this war started, and why did it continue when the front was blocked? Were so many young men being killed only because one man, though an Austrian prince, had been killed in a place where there had been no real need for him to be? Why would Germany want to capture Paris, then? It had done nothing with Paris in the war of 1870 and 1871! The army had not even entered the city after France had surrendered! Was this war only to satisfy the vanity of a few men? Was Germany not large enough for it to be accepted and regarded as a superpower? Did the army have to satisfy the pride of one man, even if that man was an emperor? Did the German people really want satisfaction and revenge, when tens of thousands of men had already been killed and many more of them been wounded, maimed even? So many would have scars in body, heart and brain! Lasting severe handicaps in mind and body would haunt for lifetimes the survivors of the battles. Why not stop all this madness? Why let hate rule the world? Julian could provide no answers. Julian would have liked to better the well-being of his fellow citizens, instead of having to patch them up in a frenzy to sad human shadows, destroyed in mind and body in a foreign land they had never seen before they fought in it.

German soldiers came and went in the environs of the Verdun front in 1915. The cannons and mortars in this part of the front remained almost never silent. Julian Vincius inspected the sanitary and direct medical installations in the trenches, first, second and third defences. He saw the batteries of Krupp cannons. He saw how miserable life was in the trenches. Nobody could stand the constant pressure, the tension of the always to be expected attacks, days and nights, the danger of the sharp shooters who took aim at each head that passed over the borders of the trenches by merely a few centimetres.

Even in the best of seasons, it often rained in these lands of high hills and low valleys. Woods remained damp always, pastures were water-logged. It made standing or sitting in the trenches dire living. Soaked, all soldiers trembled from the cold, however heavy their woollen cloaks. They walked in mud. Everything on them and around was dirty. Mud hung on them, from their boots to their helmets. Julian knew too well the danger of dirt in ugly, open wounds.

The officers could find shelter in the *Stollen*, the bunkers, made of whatever material was at hand, mostly built of wood. Not so most of the common soldiers! Roofs leaked, of course, rats fancied the shelters too. Yet, these were still infinitely better than having to sleep outside, often standing, as the common soldiers did.

The trenches were dangerous always. One could stand up, stretch, have a look at the landscape or at a dawning sun, but the German soldiers quickly learned their French opposers also had very good sharpshooters among their men. These cowardly men hid in the trenches of the adversaries, well-protected, waiting for imprudent enemy to show a head or an arm or a helmet. Well-targeted bullets, shot from short distances, pierced through steel helmets! Sharpshooters could lay in waiting for hours, looking out for victims. One could easily become negligent when one lived in trenches and had not suffered for days an all-out storm attack. One bullet by a sharpshooter was enough to be killed.

Julian had heard about bullet wounds in heads. He saw no such patients in Longwy. They died either instantly where they stood, or rapidly, in the trenches. Julian only saw men horribly wounded from bullets in the chin or cheeks or noses. Such wounds could bring atrocious pain, so much morphine was necessary in the defence zones. Julian and his doctors could do little for these men, but sending them in the next train to the larger city hospitals of Germany. Men hit in the face would be maimed for life, their suffering worse inside their brains than on their face. Often, Julian wondered whether it had not been better for such mutilated men to die by a bullet placed straight in the brain. Death could be messy. But living with awfully changed faces, making scaring monsters of them, was far worse.

During skirmishes or small battles, Julian's *lazaretten* rapidly filled with such men. When all the beds he had were occupied, less suffering men had to be sent back to the trenches, or to the other towns in the region. Many men liked to be sent to Metz. Julian managed to find sufficient orderlies and male nurses. He had some female personnel. He used many men to ensure he did not have to put beds outside or in hastily mounted tents. When necessary, he could double the number of beds in one day. He also tried to ensure he got enough help in his hospitals. His men and women seldom came to utter exhaustion.

In 1915, Julian succeeded well in that objective. What the future would bring, and did bring in the great battles of 1916, he wasn't sure of. It seemed he and his staff experienced an ever-growing escalation of horror. He suffered bouts of depression. In general, though, an evening with the always realistic Ernst and with the Baraines sufficed to give him renewed faith in human nature.

Once, after having inspected a *Feldlazarett* near Longuyon, Julian Vincius thought he recognised a face. This had happened to him many times before. He was not good in recognising people he had known. Often, he had been disappointed. This time, he looked closer. The signals were stronger. The man who lay in an improvised bed in a corner, almost fully clothed still, was an officer. He was a *Hauptmann*, a captain. Julian Vincius noticed the iron cross medal for special bravery in combat at the man's neck. His shirt was still tightly buttoned, his uniform muddled, but otherwise in good shape. The man's face was long and angular, an eagle's face, in which stood glowing, light blue eyes.

Julian came closer still, and thought to recognise Otto von Chrapitz, a far member of his family. The officer looked at him too, the eyes staring at Julian with the same astonishment, as of having seen a ghost of past times. A short, almost sneering smile or grin appeared on the man's face. He seemed to recognise Julian, but his first glance of recognition was one of a certain contempt.

'Otto von Chrapitz. Is that you?' Julian mumbled.

‘Otto it is, *Oberst*, von Chrapitz,’ the officer threw back in a sharp but steady voice. ‘It has been a long time. We played together when we were young. You are far family. So, you are a doctor here?’

‘Forget the rank. We know each other too well,’ Julian gave back, now rather harshly. ‘Yes, I am a doctor, not a fighting officer. How have you been doing? What happened to you? How did you come to my *lazarett*?’

Otto answered, drawing himself somewhat up in the bed, ‘the same many men are here, Julian, the ones who fight, indeed. The French sent us a few tons of shells, this morning, to wake us up. One exploded too close. These things happen!’

‘Where have you been wounded, Otto?’

‘Shrapnels. Both legs, tiny little scraps, left shoulder, head wound. Flesh torn. No bones hit, thank God. I think no shrapnel tore into bone. Only a loss of blood. Shell shock. I feel a bit weak for now, Julian. Damn French guns! The French guys learned how to shoot, finally. They have been building up their artillery, lately. Wouldn’t be surprised if they launched an attack, one of these days. You’d better prepare more beds!’

‘Are you in pain?’

‘Wounds are always painful, Julian. You should know that. Pain is good. It is when the pain disappears that one should be worrying. It may mean one will not feel anything at all, soon.’ Julian then noticed the blood stains on the uniform. Clearly, nobody had taken much care of Otto. Other wounded men lay on the beds around. Men of Otto’s company? The men had been newly wounded. Blood still seeped out of wounds and bandages.

‘Can you stand?’ Julian asked.

‘I can stand and I can walk, not far. I feel weak. Lost quite some blood. When are those damn nurses coming to bandage and disinfect me?’

‘I don’t know. They shall come, though. They must have more urgent work elsewhere. I have a car outside. I can help you to it, if you can walk. I’ll take you out of here. In half an hour, we can be at the *Kriegslazarett*. Not really necessary, but you’ll be helped faster. I would like to have a look at those wounds myself. Let me help you out of this bed. You can also lie down in the car. You’ll get better care and better food, half an hour from now. Tempted? Come with me.’

Julian put his shoulder under Otto’s right arm and drew the wounded man up. Otto let him do, assisted. Together, Julian supporting the heavy soldier, they stepped haltingly out of the room. They went on through a short corridor. A male nurse protested.

‘*Hauptmann* Otto von Chrapitz is being taken to Longwy,’ Julian mentioned. ‘By orders of *Oberst* Vincius. Shut up!’

The nurse was a *Gefreiter*, a corporal. He sprang to attention and saluted.

Julian shouted, ‘have *Hauptmann* Chrapitz inscribed as having left the *lazarett* for Longwy!’ The man nodded and disappeared.

Julian led Otto to his car, the grey army Audi. He drove off. He drove his car himself, today. Otto lay behind him, as long as he was on the leather-covered seats, groaning of pain.

Julian soon reached Longwy. He rode to the *Hôtel des Récollets*, handed Otto over to other doctors, shouting he wanted the captain undressed, cleaned, washed, his wounds cared for.

Turning his head away from Otto, he left the hotel. He came back half an hour later. He found Otto in a very clean bed, near a window, in the standard white shirt and trousers of the hospital. That had been quick! A nurse was bandaging his wounds. A doctor entered, saw Julian, came to stand next to Julian and looked down on Otto.

‘How is he?’ Julian asked.

The doctor looked up, at Julian. He was a man of few words, a capable man.

‘He’ll manage. He was hit six times by various shrapnel. I got the metal out. It had stayed in him. We disinfected the wounds. I had to stitch him up in a few places. I wonder how long he had been lying before he reached here. Too long is my idea. Should be looked into. A tough one, this man. He didn’t even shout once. Only grinded his teeth while we stitched! We did morphine him somewhat, afterwards. He’ll make it, easy! In bed for about six days. He lost a lot of blood. His underwear got soaked. Tough guy. He’ll sleep soon. He was too tense to be good for him.’

‘He is a tense man, yes,’ Julian smiled and acknowledged.

He saw Otto was slowly closing his eyes, probably against his own will. He seemed to be ignoring Julian and the other doctor.

‘I’ll come back tomorrow. Take good care of him,’ Julian warned.

It was getting late in the day. Julian was expected in the Baraine house. He nodded to the doctor, smiled gratefully, and left.

The next day, in the morning, Julian returned to the hospital. Otto still lay in his bed. He had received a small breakfast, and was sipping at his second, large cup of coffee. The coffee was good at the Longwy hotel.

‘Aha,’ Otto welcomed Julian. ‘The *Herr Oberst* in person! The boss has come to see me. Satisfied? Like what you see?’

Otto was being sarcastic, his usual tone.

‘I did,’ Julian smiled. ‘You are much better already. Biting and tough. Your wounds are deep, but they remain superficial. No muscles are torn, no bones touched. In a few days, we can send you back to Verdun. Some rest and peace, here.’

‘Thank you. Yes! My men are waiting for me.’

‘How did you get here?’ Julian wanted to know, the small talk welcome now.

‘Oh well, I have been a soldier since always, not a childhood soldier, as you know. It was at the front of Flanders before, in the von Kluck Army. I really found it too wet, there. When you have stood in a Flanders trench, rain splashing on you for weeks, your feet in the water all the time, those damn Belgians taking you for target practice and laughing at you, because you cannot possibly attack over a hundred meters of seawater you don’t know just how deep it is everywhere, then you definitely can be laughed at. The only thing that comes to your mind then, is wondering how you can get as far away as possible of that damned land. This, of course, is the realisation of a personal defeat, not so easy to accept by any man of some honour. I too asked for the other end of the front. When I got assigned to Verdun, I leapt in the air for joy. The other officers envied me. So, I arrived near Verdun. I still have my feet in the water, it still rains all the time, and I the cannons shoot fiercer. At least, here, I can be a real soldier at times. And there are woods. I like trees.’

‘What does it mean to be a real soldier?’ Julian wondered.

‘I can shoot back. I can force attacks with my troops. I can shoot back when we are shot at, earn a reward or something. I want to return to good old Prussia with a reward or one more medal. I want to return to our Prussia with some reputation on my name. And I should have a rank of *Oberst*, as you have.’

‘So, you are enjoying yourself?’

‘No,’ Otto agreed. ‘This is not a war as I would have expected. The damn French are stronger, more tenacious than we expected. They are no Prussians, but they can shoot. They are no cowards. I learned to respect them, the hard way. Lost many men. Must have learned something from us in 1870. We are not losing this war, Julian, but as things stand, we cannot win it either. Stupidest situation in the world! I understand better, now, how that man Napoleon defeated all the armies of Europe. Frenchmen are not brilliant in war, neither their generals nor their common men, but they are so goddamned tenacious, headstrong guys! They keep to their bit of land. And they have more soldiers than we have, and machineguns by the hundreds! They just rake over the terrain, ratata ratata, and mow us down. Our artillery is better, of course, heavier, and we have more of them than they, but that too is rapidly changing for the worse. By the end of this year, I tell you, the French will have as many artillery pieces as we brought in the field, maybe even more. They have discovered gas. Our fault, naturally, we started first. Damn bad, gas, you know. Terrible! They shall use more gas in the future, even more than the damned English.’

Otto held a silence. He moved painfully in the bed. Then, he continued.

‘It is. Germany should start peace negotiations, arrange an armistice. We have not reached our objectives, and are not bound to. We have to get out of this infernal stalemate of forces. Else, we will just continue killing each other for years to come. What is the sense in that? Or, we have to throw all our weight on this front, which, in fact and of course, we cannot. We have the Russians at our gates too in the east, and the Austrians are too weak to fight on without us. Having the whole world on our back may soon get too heavy! I don’t see how, politically speaking, we can get out of this quagmire. Too much pride and sense of revenge involved everywhere!’

They paused. That had been defeatist talk. Julian should be more prudent to hear out calmly an embittered veteran. Otto von Chrapitz never was a pacifist, and he was a very proud man, very proud also of the realisations of the Prussian armies in war. What if even such a man broke? What remained of the German Army? Apparently, some of his opinions on the capabilities of his higher officers had evolved.

‘How can you on fighting?’ Julian wanted to know.

‘I am a soldier, Julian. I do my duty. I never give up. A soldier never gives up. He fights till the end, but he’ll never give up. I even try to win, now and ever. Not that it matters much. I’ll stand in the trenches or be running to the enemy until I’m killed, or until an armistice of sorts gets signed.’

‘How does your wife think about all that?’ Julian probed on.

‘Elisabeth? Elisabeth wants a hero and a rank to take pride in. She needs a man on her back, a cock in her, entering her deep. The rest, she doesn’t care much for. She is rich, you know. Very! She wants me, to boast about among her friends, whether I am dead or alive. Being rammed, she can get all day. Me being alive or killed must be about the same for her, and probably easier dead than alive.’

Great bitterness sounded in these words. Julian didn't think there was much love lost between Otto and his wife. Otto had married for money. His words were rough, now, the words of a man used among less sophisticated, less educated soldiers. Had he married Elisabeth von Grabia only because she was of an old, aristocratic family of Prussian nobles, was rich, had a great name and owned vast domains of woods and fields, castles and manors, woods of rare oak and rivers and lakes with fishing rights on them? Did any warm feelings lay between Otto and Elisabeth? Probably not! What a waste! Could Otto bring up feelings for anyone, but himself?

'Well,' Julian wanted to conclude, 'we'll have you back on your feet and in fine shape within a week at most. I would have liked to hold you here for a little more time. I've seen other scars on your body, even burns. But I suppose you shall want to be out of here as fast as you can. We'll indulge you.'

'I damn well would want that. Patch me up, and I'll be on my way. You will see me back soon, I'm afraid. What I do is dangerous. But it is my job, and it is what I do best. I kill. Every guy should have something to do he is good at. How was Freiburg? We haven't met for years since you left Thorn, have we? I heard you worked in Berlin before the war. The *Charité* isn't it?'

'Yes. Freiburg was fine. Peaceful. Nice. And yes, I am, or rather was, a doctor at the *Charité*, a professor even. I met Dorothea in Freiburg. You know Dorothea!'

Otto suddenly turned his head and paused. Then, he seemed to emerge out of his thoughts.

'Dorothea! Yes, she told me she had met you. You were her lover in Freiburg, weren't you? She followed you. You are no angel either, Doctor *Oberst* Vincius! You can't deny all that. She got married, you know. She married a rich guy, 17 years older than she is. The guy could be her father. He even looks older than he is. Why, the hell, did she do that?'

'No idea,' Julian whispered.

He took for the door. 'I have to go. I'll drop by soon. Stay quiet, rest, and you'll heal well.' Otto seemed surprised. It was so obvious Julian didn't want to discuss about Dorothea Gomolenski.

Julian fled; his head filled with very contradictory feelings.

At about the same time as Julian Vincius met Otto von Chrapitz, Théophile Baraine asked to talk to Julian. It was late in the evening. Madame Baraine and her children had left the dining table. Julian heard rummaging in the kitchen.

'Fine,' Julian sighed.

He didn't know and couldn't guess why Monsieur Baraine would want to talk to him. One more worry, and he would drop.

'We can talk now, if you want,' Julian said. 'I can ask Ernst to leave us alone awhile.'

'No, no,' Monsieur Baraine refused. 'Tomorrow, first hour. At 9 o'clock in the *Hôtel des Récollets*?'

'Yes. Come to my office at the hospital. Anything special?'

'Maybe,' Baraine answered mysteriously. 'Not now. Tomorrow.'

Baraine finished his Marc de Gewürztraminer, and left the table. Julian wondered what was going on. He too left the table. Baraine had drawn a dark face. Usually, he was the last to leave the table. The matter had to be grave for Baraine to worry about.

The next morning at exactly 9 o'clock, Théophile Baraine showed up at Julian's office. The door stood open. Baraine had only to step in. He knocked, and drew Julian's attention. At breakfast, taken together, the two men had not exchanged a word. Théophile Baraine was not in the mood for small talk.

'I wanted to talk to you about my wife,' he began.

'Yes.'

Julian sat, after having closed the door of his office behind Baraine. He too went to sit, facing the wine merchant.

Julian was quite surprised, again. What could they talk about Madame Baraine? Had they had a dispute? Would they be divorcing? Did Madame Baraine object to having German soldiers in her house?

'What about Madame Baraine?' Julian asked impatiently.

'She is sick,' Baraine burst out.

Julian looked up. Possibly, yes. He too had noticed Théophile's wife spoke less than before. She looked pale and drawn. She remained more silent than months ago. Sick? Of what?

'What do you mean?' Julian wanted to know.

'She is sick. She lost her balance a few times, yesterday again. She fell. Not badly. One of these days, she is going to hurt herself. A couple of days ago, she couldn't get up after having fallen again. She couldn't stand on her feet. The room danced around her, she claimed. You didn't have supper with us that day. You were on the front. She got up the next day, and got on with her work, as before. She is tough. She had to vomit. She hasn't eaten since. She is not well. I'm afraid she is going to fall over one of these days, and not be able to get up at all.'

'She lost her balance,' Julian mused. 'She must have a drop in blood pressure. She vomited. She could be pregnant. But no, not at her age. She might have caught a nasty microbe or something.'

'No. It is more serious,' Baraine objected. 'I can feel it. She has been sick for over a month. In the beginning, I didn't notice much. Microbes or bugs couldn't get her down. Down she is, now. Can you have a look at her? Can you? She agreed. I talked to her. Do you want to?' Théophile seemed very worried. Suddenly, Julian got cold. He realised this was more serious than he would have thought. He shouldn't have joked with it. Also, many other men but Monsieur Baraine would have sent their wife to a local doctor, not to a German.

'Of course,' Julian answered quickly. 'When do you want me to see her?'

'We don't really want a doctor,' Théophile almost wept.

'I'm no doctor. I'm a friend, Théophile.'

Julian was determined, now. 'I'll talk to her. This afternoon? I'll be at the house by two o'clock. Can you keep her in the house? Don't tell her long beforehand I'm coming. Leave me a moment alone with her. I'll have to examine her.'

Baraine hesitated.

Then he said, 'is there anything between you two? She likes you.'

At first, Julian didn't understand the meaning of what Baraine had said.

Then he reddened all over the face, felt the warmth, and exclaimed, 'good heavens,

Théophile, no, no, no! There is nothing between Madame and me. Nothing at all! Don't even

dare think such a thing. For what do you take me? I wouldn't, never! Madame is married. You have been very kind to me and to Ernst. No! I consider you a friend. No!'

Baraine seemed relieved. Julian noticed Théophile Baraine was close to collapse. The man seemed to have shrunk in his chair.

'Théophile,' Julian said in a consoling, soothing voice, 'what happens to Madame is most probably nothing that cannot be healed. I have nothing against your being present when I have a look at her, but your wife speaks more easily to a doctor, seeing in a doctor just something of a neutral object, not another man. I know how to speak non-committingly. She will most probably tell me more than she would to her husband. I'll be like a cupboard, like a table, like a lamp. She'll tell me more alone than in company. It is like that with all patients. Best would be for you to take a step aside when I examine her. I am used to speaking to female patients alone. And I promise you, I swear, I'll be nothing else but a doctor. I wouldn't dream of having anything to do with her.'

'Well, I wondered, you being a soldier, and alone...' Baraine stammered.

'Yes. No! I am a soldier, yes, but I have a long and painful story behind me in Germany, a sad story, Théophile. I'd rather not talk about it. It will take this war to put it behind me. A war is going on, Théophile. My first and only aim now, is to get out of this war. Aren't we all? I don't particularly like it. I'm not one who frolics about with married women.'

Baraine then grinned, 'I noticed. You don't like this war. So do we, not, I mean. There is something about you. You are not a German like the others. Why that is, I don't know. Maybe it is because you are a doctor. You seem more intelligent than the others to me.' 'I am not, I assure you, Théophile. Had we the same business, I would have been in ruins long before you. Now. I'll examine you wife, discreetly, at two. In your house. After dinner. Manage to give us some time alone. Don't worry too much. I understand you're very worried. She has probably never in her life been sick, has she? Let me see her. Then, we'll talk. It is most probably nothing bad. Seeing her sick must be unusual for you, and quite a shock. Now, go off, and don't keep on that worried face permanently. She'll notice it. Smile. I'll not be long.'

Baraine, obviously, was not very reassured. He remained sitting for a while, then sighed and put his hat on, not really something to do in a hospital before he was out of the front doors. He looked miserable. He left. Julian stayed in his office. He went to a cupboard and took out a stethoscope and a thermometer. He put them on his desk, so as not to forget them at noon.

'The weapons of a doctor are so puny,' Julian thought.

He looked at the objects he had placed on the table.

'How can I find out what she has? Ask her where she is in pains.'

Then, Julian reminded himself of the X-Ray machine.

Julian had dinner with the Baraines. Madame Baraine and her maid had prepared the dishes. 'She cannot be that sick,' Julian considered.

Julian sent Ernst off. That was the sign for Monsieur Baraine to urge his two daughters to come with him into the garden. It was sunny weather outside.

Julian stayed a few moments alone with Madame Baraine. She stood up to clear the dishes. 'No, Madame Baraine,' Julian stopped her, grabbing her arm. 'Please sit. We have to talk.'

Mrs Baraine seemed too tired, suddenly, to protest. She sat. she placed her hands in her lap and bowed her head.

‘You are tired, and you look tired,’ Julian began softly. ‘You have lost colour. You are not well, I can tell. Please, what is happening?’

As happened often with his patients, Madame Baraine seemed relieved somebody wanted to talk to her about her worries.

‘I feel sick,’ she granted.

Julian waited. He wanted her to go on talking.

‘I am sick,’ she repeated. ‘I don’t know what happens. I lost my appetite. I eat, because I feel obliged to do so, but I will probably have to vomit all before the afternoon is over. I often feel dizzy, sometimes very dizzy. My stomach aches.’

‘All right. I brought a thermometer. Put this under your arm, will you?’

He used a commanding tone, hoping she would follow him, now.

She did as asked. Julian got his stethoscope from his pocket. He opened her shirt, which she let him do, and he listened to her heartbeat. The pulses were there, regularly, but weak. He took the thermometer. She had no temperature. He could measure her blood pressure in the hospital. He knew already that would be low. Julian went to the sofa, asked her to lie down.

‘Where are you in pain?’ he asked.

She pointed to her belly. He drew up her shirt and her robe, and even her underwear, and slid his hands over her stomach. He was instantly horrified by what he felt, hard knots under her skin, at various places, not the normal feel of skin, tissue and fat. There could be no fat!

Slowly, he drew her clothes back in order. He looked at the clock. It was late in the afternoon already. He was confident no other doctor was using the X-Ray machine at this time. He had checked the schedule before coming. He came to a decision.

‘I would like to take a photograph of the inside of you, Mrs Baraine. Yes, I can do that. I have a machine on the other side of the street. You need to come with me to the hospital, to the *Hôtel des Récollets*. Your husband can come with you. Would you like that?’

She nodded.

Julian called in Monsieur Baraine. The three of them went to the other side of the street, to Julian’s domain. The X-Ray machine was free. Julian, helped by a very anxious Monsieur Baraine, had Madame be undressed. He took three photographs of her belly. This took him about two hours. He asked another military doctor to assist him. After the photographs had been taken, Madame Baraine seemed exhausted. Julian and Théophile helped Madame return to her house.

Julian returned to the hospital. When he entered the X-Ray room, he saw the other doctor studying the photographs. The doctor sat at a small table. He said nothing to Julian, who was standing behind the man. The doctor moved his finger over several vague surfaces on the first photograph. He did the same over the two other images. Julian nodded each time.

‘Should we open her?’ Julian wondered.

The doctor didn’t answer at first. He looked again at the photographs.

‘Would you operate on her?’ Julian insisted.

The other doctor shook his head for ‘no’.

‘Very dangerous,’ he said then, ‘and I don’t think we could get all of it out. Moreover, see here. It spread from the pancreas, I believe, or from the colon. You know what that means. It

is working its way up the colon. And down. What is hidden behind? No, hopeless! We risk multiple haemorrhages if we open and try to get it out. She won't survive surgery. Hopeless!' 'How much time does she have?' Julian asked, although he knew. He just sought confirmation.

'Two weeks, maybe three. This must have spread quickly. She let it come too far.' Julian nodded. They remained silent, still looking at the images.

The other doctor then said, 'that was your landlady, wasn't it? A Frenchwoman.'

'She is,' Julian nodded again. 'Her husband is the mayor of Longwy. He was very helpful in showing me several buildings for our hospitals. He is not a bad man.'

'Would you want me to tell her?' the doctor asked.

'No,' Julian refused. 'I shall have to do that. Her husband is a friend. Do you really feel surgery on her would not be possible?'

'You would not even be able to make out normal, healthy tissue from other,' the doctor replied. 'I have seen quite many such cases, not on X-Rays, but in the real. The three times I operated, I regretted afterwards. She would suffer, or die under our knife.'

'I agree already with you,' Julian decided.

'So sad. Was she anything to you?' the military doctor wanted to know.

'She was my landlady. She prepared dinners for me. She washes. Otherwise, no. No. She gave me a bed, shelter, a nice place, small but nice. And she spoke to me as a normal human being, friendly even, not as some men in the town do. Between enemies, that was a rare example of simple human kindness.'

His voice broke. She was not a normal patient for him. He cared.

The doctor nodded in his turn.

He said, 'we don't go in surgery with her. We have morphine. She will need much morphine. You have to give her the bad news, then.'

'I know.'

Julian returned to the Bazaine house. He first went to see Monsieur Baraine, who was arranging wine bottles in his warehouse. Baraine looked up, hoping on good news.

'So?'

'Sit down. Be strong. Cancer. Stomach and around. Widespread. No surgery possible. Would probably kill her under our instruments. You have two, maybe three weeks at the most. She and you should bring your affairs in order. I would spare the news to your daughters. The last days, she will be better in hospital, away from them. She will be terribly sick. We have nurses who are used to dying. We'll care for her. You will be able to visit her whenever you want. We still have enough morphine to make sure she won't suffer. It is better she dies in an ever-clean bed, you at her side, and not suffering, but she may lie in a haze and not recognise you anymore, nor anybody. She will sleep. That would be the best we can do.'

Baraine sat down on the damp, cold floor of his warehouse. Julian caught the bottle of red wine that slipped out of his hands.

Madame Baraine died in January of 1916, a few days more than the three weeks Julian had given her. She died in the hospital, after staying there for four days. She died with Monsieur Baraine sitting in an armchair next to her, holding her hand. She did not die alone.

Madame Baraine was buried three day later in a cemetery of Longwy. Julian did not attend the funeral. A German uniform would not have been welcome among the mourners. The next days, Monsieur Baraine entered a period of deep depression. He seemed not to care for anything anymore. Julian organised the house as best he could, with the oldest daughter Charlotte. The two of them spoke to the notary. He and Charlotte arranged for the heritage. She went to the bank and Julian told her what to do. He told her to insist on the payments that were still due. She knew to whom her father sold wine. She went to see these men, telling them she now led the business. Julian thus spoke a lot to her, and admired her courage and intelligence. They became very intimate in those days. Julian told her Monsieur Baraine needed time, but he would get better. Théophile would emerge out of his lethargy, though when, he didn't know. He would come to his senses when he saw his friends and his daughters close to him. Baraine's mourning and depression could last for months, but he would come back to his senses and re-enter the reality of the world. The daughter, Charlotte, nodded. She understood, and did what might have been expected of her. When she wasn't sure about what to do, she referred to Julian or to Ernst, not to her father. For the most practical matters, she referred to Ernst. Ernst dug into the bookkeeping and explained to Charlotte. For all matters of payments or incoming funds, she asked Ernst and Julian.

'My father is not well in the head,' she told Julian, with great distress.

Julian had to talk to her. If not, she would break.

'He is stricken with grief, your father,' Julian tried. 'He is out of balance since your mother passed away. He doesn't know anymore how to live. Don't worry too much. He will come to his senses. In the meantime, you are doing very well. Don't let your courage down.'

Julian consoled her. In the end, she put her head to his shoulder and wept. He caressed her long hair, her shoulders. He said nothing anymore.

There was something else he dared not tell Charlotte.

Before she died, Madame Baraine had whispered to Julian, 'my husband will get over me. We loved each other dearly. We truly did. We married for love, and I have been very happy with him. He needs somebody to take care of him, of his world in the house and in the town. He'll get by. He'll find somebody. I am worried about Charlotte. She is in love with you. She doesn't understand the feeling well for what it is, but I've seen her eyes. She admires you, although you're not a Frenchman. You could do worse marrying her. She is a beauty, a rare beauty. She is smart. She is capable of warm feelings. She is good-hearted. She will be an excellent mother. That is how we brought her up, Théophile and I. You have my blessing. I feel I can trust you with her. I can look over the grave. You will have a fine marriage. Respect her. She is worth more than you think. She will be good to you. Please take care of her, even if you don't marry her.'

'I shall take care of her,' Julian promised, 'but she is so much younger than I. And I am German! Soon, I shall not be feared anymore at Longwy, but considered an ugly enemy. I don't want to expose her to the hatred of her own people.'

'Take her to Berlin before the war ends. You must take her out of Longwy, before neighbours who know and other people will take revenge on her. Teach her your language. There is only one thing I regret. I won't see my grandchildren. Promise me to be nice to her. Don't be cynical with her. Be tender. She will be fine at your side.'

‘Of course, I’ll be nice to her. But I am a German.’

‘So what?’ Madame Baraine had coughed. ‘I thought a man like you could easily overcome the hatred of the world. I am sure Théophile will, if he hasn’t done so already. It would be a sad world, indeed, if we would let hatred stand between us and give in to it. You are German. And then, you aren’t. There is something in you I cannot put my hands on. You are a strange German. You are more human, and much more intelligent and complex than the common man. How is that possible? I don’t know. Yet, you love your fatherland. That, I felt, too. You must have had a bad and sad experience, though you are still young. I don’t care. Just make my girl happy. Marry her! It takes a lot of attention to make a woman happy! Give her that, and you’ll feel richer by it, your entire life.’

Julian had not told Madame Baraine he had been born a Jew. Neither had he to Théophile Baraine, and certainly not to Charlotte. At one moment, he would have to tell them. He knew that. But for the moment, he had enough issues to think much of that. He had been surprised Madame Baraine has wished him together with her daughter. For some time, this remained for him an almost obscene thought. Lately, however, his opinion had changed a little. Or totally. Charlotte had aged in a few weeks. Not in looks. In mind. She seemed to him now as mature as a fully grown-up woman. Maybe she had been that already since quite a while. She talked to him as the lady of the house. And yes, of course, she was such a beauty, a true beauty! In Berlin, in the higher society he also moved in, she would be the queen of the evening. Germans stood in awe for French elegance, for French sensuality, for French women’s impeccable taste in dresses and in tenure. Charlotte was the personification of the dazzling elegance French women displayed. They could attract any German man, of whatever rank. Her elegance and beauty intimidated Julian too. They got on well, he and the seventeen years young girl. They were also a lot together! Julian even discussed with her what they would eat with the other members of the family at noon and at supper, he and Ernst part of that new family. They were quite intimate. Often, he now forgot the difference of age, even though it took him several months to arrive doing so. More often than before, he managed to arrive early at home in the evening. He was surprised how easily he spoke of the Longwy house as his home.

The year 1915 ended. Winter had set in with cold, rain and snow. Longwy looked if possible greyer and darker than Julian had seen when he first set foot in its streets. Julian found the city as typical as some towns of the Wuppertal regions of the German industrial sites. The industry of Longwy had stopped though, the factories were being dismantled by German engineers. Everything of use had been sent to Germany. Julian regretted this. Germany was not a thieving, plundering nation! It couldn’t be and shouldn’t be. He felt ashamed, of the many ugly deeds he saw officers and even non-commissioned officers commit in the town. Sometimes, really bad men, greedy men, vengeful men, were in charge of Longwy. When their stealing and abuse touched Julian’s hospitals, or even the house he lived in, he grew very angry. The officers soon learned he could draw on strings. Officers who bothered him, got displaced to far more dangerous corners on the front. His reputation thus was made. The motto he heard was, don’t touch anything to do with Julian Vincius! He laughed at that, but the reputation pleased him. The officers went out of his way. Julian Vincius could not intervene on anything, however, and not when men from the first families of Prussia were involved. He then fell back on his work.

Julian had organised the Longwy *lazaretten* as examples of well-managed institutions, where good cares of the best quality were provided to sick and wounded. His centre, the *Hôtel des Récollets*, knew a reputation as one of the best along the front. Even officers with great authority preferred to be taken to Longwy, rather than to other centres.

Then, at the end of February 1916, the great horror started. Each side, French and German, launched attacks and counter-attacks. Bombardments of hundreds of guns firing at the same time were terrible. Julian's hospitals filled and became over-crowded. He had to install beds of fortune in the corridors. His small lab and his X-Ray device worked almost day and night. Luckily, the machine proved robust. Julian had asked for spare cathode-ray tubes, and received two. The X-Ray machine was a vital asset against infections by small metal fragments in bodies. Throughout 1916, Julian Vincius almost never ate at noon. He ate only late in the evenings, when everybody already slept in the house. Charlotte only then warmed him up something. He then rarely spoke much to her. He was too tired and too horrified to tell her what he had seen. He turned into himself.

Monsieur Baraine's state of mind evolved in the other direction. He got better. He started working again. He sold his wine again. He was a trader by character, and had the talents needed for a trader. True traders always found something to deal with, to buy and sell. For Monsieur Baraine, this was mostly not anymore wine! Only very cheap wine was now being sold. Baraine traded in meat, in legumes and fruit. Prices rose. Julian knew well Baraine was getting richer by the day. Julian knew also Baraine could sell so much, because he had suppliers the German authorities had no grip on. Baraine worked on the black market, and he was active in contraband. There was so much activity going on in fraudulent transactions, however, only a small fraction of the illegal trade could be caught by the German military police. French police still existed, but watched with smiling eyes, and did nothing. And there were enough Germans in uniform around to cooperate with cunning men like Baraine, and get moderately rich along with him. Moreover, Baraine still was the mayor of the town. Although the German commanders wielded power of life and death, and could grab whatever they wanted, they knew they also needed the cooperation of the town inhabitants. The French authority, who could launch disorder and resistance in Longwy, was mainly Baraine! A lot more Frenchmen lived in Longwy than German soldiers slept in the town. The Germans walked in arms during the day. They stood on guard. The German officers knew far more weapons, rifles and grenades, were hidden in the town than they had in their hands. Better not to antagonise Monsieur Baraine too much! A balance of understanding, of live and let live, permeated Longwy, the balance rarely disturbed, except when new German officers took command in the town, and that was now very rare.

Julian Vincius spent a lot more time in the trenches and in the *Feldlazaretten* than before February 1916. All that year, fierce combats raged in the hills around Verdun. He saw a lot of misery. It happened he was lying deep in mud, waiting for a French bombardment to stop. He stood in a trench, and not a very deep one, when a French attack was launched on the section of the front he was inspecting or simply helping in. Bullets and shrapnels whizzed around his ears. He experienced the fears of seeing tens of French infantry run exactly to where he stood. He heard the cries of agony of these men a little later, when they ran into barbed wire, in

front of the German trenches and breastworks. He saw the men being mowed down callously, pitilessly, by German machineguns positioned correctly left and right, being taken in crossed fire. He saw German soldiers being killed by hand-grenades thrown into the German positions at night. He saw French airplanes dropping bombs at villages held in the quiet places behind the lines. He saw houses explode, roofs being thrown high, not far from where he worked on German wounded men. Several times, he had helped carry casualties to field hospitals. Most of the time, however, he wandered on inspection tours in the field hospitals, asking what kind of medicines were most needed, or bringing medicines in by car, from Longwy, with Ernst as his driver. Julian had now also an army truck to bring in heavier materials. He used the lorry rarely, only when he and Ernst had to bring heavier materials to the front, such as stretches and beds and tents.

Julian applied surgery on wounded men only in the Longwy hospitals. He had not much experience as a surgeon when had arrived at the *Charité* of Berlin. It was not his preferred specialty. Now, he could call himself an experienced surgeon. Hardly a day passed, when he did not assist another surgeon in Longwy, or was the main surgeon of the most difficult cases. He learned the hard way.

During one of those tours in the defences of the German troops, inspecting the nursing stations of a long part of the fortifications east of Verdun, mostly simple lines of breastworks behind which German soldiers lay, the French troops launched a vicious surprise attack. Julian had been in a section of trenches when the attack began. He glued himself to the corner of the trench, against wooden planks that consolidated the walls. He then could not move for hours, because shells fell to all sides, exploding in fountains of water, mud and trees. The trees were most dangerous, for spiky shards of pine flew everywhere around. One such shard could pierce your body and kill you.

At one moment, at a place where the breastworks had entirely been demolished, Julian had to escape from the trench, on which cannons and mortars had taken aim in a deluge of fire, pinning him down. He threw himself in an earth funnel almost completely filled with dirty, muddy water. Soldiers had told him before not to jump deep into such funnels made by the explosions of the heaviest shells. True, shells rarely fell twice at the same place. But in the water, more often than not would float bodies and torn limbs or rumps. Many of those funnels contained red water, in which blood had mingled with the mud. Julian fell down so that he could remain above the water, just below the rim, his head lower than the ground around the funnel. Next to him, one after another, came several other German soldiers. They were ashamed to be so close, in such circumstances, next to a colonel, but they remained. Julian was certain the men felt some comfort of being close to a medical officer. Julian had to stay so long there, lying, hearing the explosions, fearing for his life every minute, he only got back to Longwy the next day. He had not slept one second in the night. He felt lucky not to have been wounded by the shrapnels he had heard whistling above his head.

At another moment, days later, he reached a village of which nothing but ruins remained, when a group of stormtroopers passed. Suddenly, shells began to be dropped on the village. Shells exploded everywhere, with nagging fury, not one shell after the other, but really showers of shells falling on almost the same place. Of the maybe twenty soldiers Julian had seen advance, few survived. Shells exploded in the middle of the group. Grenades, worn at the belts of the soldiers, exploded with the shells. The bombardment didn't last very long.

The expenditure of shells was enormous in a short time. Clouds of shrapnel would have hit anything higher than a few bricks. Julian had dived behind a wall of not more than five bricks piled one on top of the other, the odd remnants of an old wall, and he lay totally outstretched, face sideways in the mud, hands on ears to not be entirely deafened by the changes in air pressure.

After the cannonade, Julian stood and went from man to man lying as inert bodies in the street. He found three wounded men, which he drew aside, behind a ruined wall of maybe still one meter high, hoping to protect the wounded somewhat there. He feared a second wave of exploding shells. An officer had headed the group. The man had been walking some paces ahead, far enough in front to throw himself in a funnel made by earlier bombings. The bombardment with heavy explosive shells had lasted only a quarter of an hour or so, but had proved enough to eradicate several groups of German soldiers. A French infantry attack followed the forward-moving shelling. Sufficient German soldiers had run to the border of the village to stop the attack. Afterwards, after an hour or so, many dead bodies of soldiers of either side lay on the paths and roads of the ruined village.

Julian emerged from behind the protective wall of his wounded men. He ran to the rests of a small room of a farmhouse. There was no roof above what rested of the house. These rests amounted to the walls of from a few bricks high, certainly not more, behind which he could find better protection from next attacks. Julian wore a handgun in a holster at his belt. He had no intention to use the weapon. He never had. Julian stood up, only when the noise of the skirmish had ended. He then headed back to where he had seen the stormtroopers disappear. He wanted to search on for wounded men. He found the officer a little farther.

The man lay on his belly, head down, in a pool of brackish water mixed with blood. At least two other men hung half in the funnel, half at ground level. These men were dead! Their blood seeped down. Julian reached the officer, turned him over, felt the man's neck for a pulse, and concluded the officer still lived. Julian noticed two bloody wounds high up in the man's chest, but on the right side. A lung might have been touched, not the heart. Had the bullets entered the left side of the man, he would have been killed almost instantly, his heart exploded. The wounds he had now were sufficiently bad, however. He needed care immediately.

Julian did not shout for help. None would come, he knew. He drew the man over his shoulders, got with extraordinary effort on his knees and then on his feet, and walked with the man on his back, the soldiers' way. He advanced very slowly, painstakingly, to the other side of the village. The man he wore was unconscious. The body thrown over Julian's shoulder was heavy. The officer had been tall. Julian staggered on, plying under his load. He reached the end of the village, where he hoped to find his car. He had come alone, but parked his car in a small wood, quite before the village. That had been a wise decision! The car still stood there, one side behind the rests of a very old wall. Julian then got help from two other, strong German soldiers, who relieved him of the body. The men swung the officer's body into the car, on the seats behind. Julian thanked them briefly, told he would drive the officer to hospital, turned the car, and rode off to look for the *Route Nationale* leading to Longwy. The road was clogged by lorries and cars driving hastily in both directions, while gunfire still rumbled behind him. The war was back on.

An hour later, Julian drove into Longwy. He stopped in front of the *Hôtel des Récollets*, where he found other hands and strong arms to bring the wounded man inside. Julian told the men to bring the body to the surgical room. Julian ran to his office, wiped the mud and dirt from his face and uniform as best as he could, decided to get out of the wet grey, and drew on a pair of white trousers and hospital shirt. He went to the surgical room. He knew he would have to probe deep into the inert body, in search of bullets, shrapnel balls. X-Rays to look for small pieces could only be made afterwards. Meanwhile, two female nurses had worked on the body, washing it, as well as they had could. They had undressed the man and put him on the operation table. Julian had recognised the man already in the village, when he had picked him up. The officer was Otto von Chrapitz.

Otto remained unconscious, which Julian appreciated, for the man would have lain in excruciating pain. Julian would not have to lose time on morphine. A doctor had entered the room to anaesthetise the wounded, but for now, Julian waved him away. Julian worked for the next hour on getting out the two bullets that had hit Otto. The lungs had been spared, but the shoulder-blade had been hit badly and had been fractured at several places. That was not only difficult and long to heal, but Julian had to assemble tiny pieces together to give Otto a shoulder more or less complete. Julian placed the bones together until they fitted, as best as she could.

The nurses helped him disinfect the dirty wounds. They closed the wounds and a nurse stitched the wounds closed. Julian felt totally exhausted by then. He went out of the room, letting the nurses continue their work and finally place Otto in a clean bed.

Julian went to the Baraine house to wash up decently, and put on a clean uniform. He spent the evening with Monsieur Baraine, Ernst and Charlotte. Monsieur Baraine had sent his other daughter to family in Metz.

The next day, rather late in the morning, Julian went to see how Otto von Chrapitz went. Otto had been placed in a bed, in a small room of his own. The nurses told him the man was a captain, a man Julian knew already. He but nodded. A *Hauptmann* of the stormtroopers had to be handled with care and deference! Entering the room, Julian noticed Otto was conscious, weak, but fully alive. The man's fiery eyes took in his new environment. He was still eating a light breakfast of bread and ham.

'I didn't expect to see you back so soon,' Julian exclaimed.

'Neither did I,' Otto replied ironically. 'This time, it was close. You carried me to safety, I heard. I'm sorry not to have been able to assist you.'

'Don't mention it,' Julian gave in the same tone. 'I didn't even know who I tore from the ruins of the village. You were covered in mud and muck.'

Otto could laugh at that, 'I was, wasn't I? I noticed too late I dove into the rests of a pigsty. But my group was annihilated. Most of my men must be dead. I could see that in the last seconds before a shell hit not far from me. I'll have to start training other men. Damn Frenchies! They do seem to have learned how to shoot and drop shells more accurately. They have become veterans in killing, too. Well, all for the best. I prefer fighting against men I can respect. The French indeed have taken our measure.'

'I suppose they did, yes,' Julian wryly answered.

Julian paused, then said, more seriously, ‘It was a carnage, in that village. I can witness. I happened to be there, looking for a *lazarett* that must have been cannonaded into the ground long ago. Is it every day like that near Verdun?’

‘It has been since some time,’ Otto agreed. ‘I’ll go on with my job, which is killing. I have to admit, though, we can hold them back scarcely. We, Germans, launched an attack. Now, I’m not sure who is attacking who. We don’t advance anymore. We cannot win from them. They have too many guns, too many men. They are in the same quagmire as we are. They also cannot win from us, although they are coming in higher numbers and have shells as numerous as pebbles on a beach. Our diplomats had better start talking fast. We kill, but is it all necessary?’

‘The diplomats are not yet ready for that,’ Julian rather callously whispered back. ‘Our soldiers are. They are getting desperate. They do not see any sense anymore in this kind of war. The men from Berlin are not yet ready. They continue to dream of victory! They still seek an unattainable victory. The people want to revenge the dead and the wounded.’

‘Both sides seek revenge. What revenge can they ask for, what revenge can they get? Each attack from either side, only makes more victims. This induces more desire for revenge. Hence, yet more dead are made. How can the spiral end? Who can make it stop? So, I go on with my trade, which is killing. I became quite an expert in that!’

Julian merely nodded, ‘well, I thought this time you were a goner. I am most astonished to see you up and kicking. Have you found yourself in other such dire situations? How many times, now, have you been wounded? I did not count the scars. This must be the fifth time or so, you spent weeks in a hospital. This time too, you will have to take weeks to recover. If you don’t, that shoulder of yours will almost not work anymore.’

‘I am a soldier. I feel good only among soldiers. My friends, I find now among the soldiers and nowhere else. One seeks friends only among who can understand how one feels. I seek honour for my people. Not revenge, though. Revenge is sterile.’

‘How is it in the war?’ Julian asked. ‘I see the war mostly only in its consequences, in the wounded and maimed that enter here. I do my best to patch you people up, but what good is that? I am only sending you back to death or to more wounds the next time. Is that why I became a doctor? A doctor should heal and make people happy. Not heal and sent them back to be killed. And I send people like you back, only to kill more. Does that make a murderer of me too? I would do better finish the job, then, instead patching you guys up. I would do humanity a good deed to let you die.’

As Julian had said these words, he regretted having said them.

He bowed his head, ‘I didn’t mean that. Forget it. Sometimes, I can get depressed too. Then, I say all kinds of stupid things. Everybody wants to live.’

‘Such is indeed how matters stand,’ Otto nevertheless agreed. ‘We, men like I, we continue to do our part. Without us, the French and the English would arrive in Berlin. Is it that what you want?’

‘No,’ Julian replied, ‘no, surely not. There must be other solutions.’

‘We should not even have started,’ Otto said in bitterness.

Otto did not add arguments in their debate.

Suddenly, without transition, as if something had remained nagging at his mind, he said, ‘I was lucky you of all people were near. Once more, I was lucky. I may not be so lucky next

time, I know that. Who else would stop the French, now? If I die, and you learned about it, would you pass a message to Dorothea? I could not write it down and send it to her.’  
‘I haven’t seen Dorothea for years,’ Julian evaded. ‘I’d rather not seek her out once more.’  
‘She’ll get back to you, sooner or later. The war has reset many strange things. We were more than cousins, Dora and I,’ Otto confirmed. ‘We were lovers once. True lovers. All the way. I was rather wild, probably still am. Could only become a soldier. She left me for you, for no other. Maybe she fell in love. Maybe I was too wild and too posh and stupid for her, too much a boy, too much the dominator, too violent. She wore my child.’  
Julian looked up. He had suspected something like this, but then, he had rejected the idea. He felt appalled. He tensed.

‘I know,’ Julian admitted, ‘she once wore a child. She lost it. I didn’t know by whom she had the child.’

‘I think it was by me. I don’t think she had other lovers at that time, but me. But she drifted to you. You came afterwards, as a lover, I mean, for you knew each other before I started to look at her. She lost the baby, yes. I was not ready for marriage, probably never shall. You may seem astonished, but all sorts of men live on this planet, you know!’

Julian knew so much. He nodded.

‘She lost the child, one way or another,’ Otto continued. ‘I suspect she provoked an abortion. There existed women in Thorn, who knew all about babies and who knew about herbs and means to provoke abortions. Strange. Strange that when I heard about what she had done, when she told me there was no baby anymore, I got very angry. Maybe she just told me that story. Maybe she lost the child because of consanguinity. Dora is the only one to know the truth. Most probably, she got rid of the child. She may have done it for you. If so, it backfired on her. She told me later she got very sick, and could not have more children. A punishment waits for us all. It waits to redeem or to condemn and punish us for our sins. When you see her, just tell her that despite all my stupidity, I truly did love her. The rest is superfluous.’

Otto laughed raucously.

‘I wonder what my punishment shall be. Death in a cesspool. I got close to that, then, yesterday! But I don’t care about where I shall die. Deaths are all the same. I just want it to be swift. There are worse punishments than swift death on a battlefield!’

‘Are there?’ Julian wondered, sarcastically. What would his punishment and his death be?

‘Oh,’ Otto replied, rather talking to himself than to Julian, now. ‘I have seen ugly deaths, but quick deaths. And slower ones. I have seen men stand not far from me with torn off limbs, watching in surprise to what had happened to them. I have seen arms and legs flying up in the air, hanging in trees, even. I have seen so many, many men, in the trenches, standing up rifle in hand, and then suddenly being blown back, slowly fall to the other side, with a neat hole in their forehead. And, of course, a big hole at the back of their skull. Many, many deaths come like that in the trenches. Victims of snipers! Damn cowards, snipers. Sharpshooters lie in luxury, and kill without running any risk of being killed for their nasty work. They don’t have the guts to come out and fight with you.’

Otto paused, found new breath, and continued. He talked slower, voice down.

‘I have seen men walking around with the contents of their insides holding in their hands.

One spread his entrails for meters behind him. Then, he dropped and died. Some men shout,

cry out loudly, like pigs in a pigsty. Other do not say a word, sit down, and die just the same. I saw men standing next to me, though some distance from me, and then, the next moment, I heard a bang and heard nothing for a while anymore, and then I couldn't find anything at all of him, nothing, until one of my men pointed at a hand and a piece of arm hanging in a tree. I am a stormtrooper, Julian. We, stormtroopers, we attack with revolvers and grenades and machineguns to clear sections of French and British trenches. Offensive grenades make the nastiest of wounds. The grenades burst open and send hundreds of shrapnels, red-heated iron pieces all around. As many bullets hit flesh, but the bullets from grenades have sharp edges and sides. Ever seen a man after a grenade exploded near him? I have. More than once. Ever seen the effect of a flamethrower on a man? Only a heap of charred, black flesh and bones remains. A truly terrifying weapon, a flame thrower! A dirty weapon. Should never have been invented, yet we, Germans, use it with great skill. And have you seen in a bombardment of three successive days a landscape of funnels dug by shell explosions? I have. Nature doesn't exist anymore on such grounds. I have seen such landscapes more than once. The generals also come to visit, long times after all bodies have been removed. I have seen a man, still a man, lying in a deep funnel of dirt, stones, mud, charred wood, a man of which only a trunk remained. No legs, no arms, just a trunk with a head on. I wanted to shoot the rests, kill the poor guy, so that he suffered no more. He saw himself die. Can you believe that? But he died from losing blood. I had not to kill this friend of mine. I just turned my head and fought on.

Lucky are such men from whom also the head is blown away. I have seen some of those too. You are a military doctor. You must have seen faces with bullets gone through cheeks, noses torn off. Anyway, I have seen all of that. You become a man without feelings, in the end. Feelings are a luxury you can't have! I have seen enough to make any man go mad. Ever seen men in a gas attack, without gas masks? There are always men who forgot their gas masks, Julian! They die particularly slowly, their lungs burnt, or poisoned. They die in ugly cramps, they vomit blood. I can still hear the men scream in my nightmares. I am a stormtrooper! I was always among the first to see casualties like that in attacks! When you have seen such things, and you are with comrades-in-arms, men you have ordered to follow you to hell, you have brothers for life. And you lose brothers then, almost each and every day.

This war is atrocious, Julian. It should be stopped. And yet, there are people like me, and like you, who do everything they can to make it last longer. When shall this madness end? I am a soldier, and a damned good one. I have a lucky star, too! I am still alive. So many have died. Yet, I can get killed any day. I don't even think I want to survive this war. My soldiers like me. They think I am lucky? They follow me, because I have been wounded so many times, and I survived. They think with me, the same will happen to them. Well, yesterday that thought had been damned too. I lost them all. My entire group. I guess I have quick reactions. I survived. There is very little religion in the trenches, Julian. Very strange. We don't believe in a god anymore.'

Julian remained stunned. He had not expected such a streaming, horrible confession from a man like Otto von Chrapitz. Otto was more man than he had thought. How could any man continue to fight, having known such horrors? Julian could but nod and bow his head. He said, 'Dorothea and I, we broke up a hundred times and started again as many times. I don't think I was any match to men like you. Far better and dashing men conquered her over and over again. I didn't even know she was married, until you told me. She is a desperate

woman. She cannot resolve her despair. She threw herself at so many men. I could not forgive that.'

'Yes. You are a man of virtue. You were a hard man in your own right,' Otto continued.

'Seeing you, and not being able to live with you, was a constant torture for her. Dora realised you were purer than any of us. There she was mistaken, you see? You only patch men up, however badly wounded, to send them back to hell. To kill some more! How many men have you killed, Julian, by sending such men back to war? It simply makes no damn sense. Yet, everybody wants to be patched up and live and by necessity, kill. You continue this war and the horror, as much as we all do. You are not purer than us. Dora was mistaken about you too. But that is how she thought. She saw a saint in you, and saints one cannot come near to, let alone marry.'

Otto had by then spoken so much. He looked pale and exhausted. Tired he was, lying in that bed, the drugs taken power from him. He wanted to sleep, now.

'Go,' Otto said, 'go! And don't come back. You destroy my courage and my hopes. I'd rather be on a battlefield than stay close to you.'

Julian stood, sighed and left the room. He didn't visit Otto thereafter. Two weeks later, Otto had been released from the Longwy *Kriegslazarett*. Julian didn't hear of him again soon until very later, in quite other circumstances. He did hear Otto had wanted to be sent back to Verdun. But he hadn't. Many, many years later only, did he learn Otto von Chrapitz had survived the war, had received the German Order *Pour le Mérite*. He lived with his family and wife and children in Castle Grabia in the district of Thorn. By then, Julian lived far from Thorn, and even far from Berlin.

### **Verdun from March to Autumn 1916**

In March and April of 1916, the German forces attacked in the east and in the west of their captured zones of the battle from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of February.

The 5<sup>th</sup> German Army asked for more troops, but Falkenhayn refused.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of February, the Chief of Staff of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, Konstantin Schmidt von Knobelsdorf, had succeeded prising two more divisions from the OHL reserves. He argued that when his troops could occupy the heights on the west bank of the Meuse, the attacks on the east bank would succeed too. The 6<sup>th</sup> German Reserve Corps and the 10<sup>th</sup> assaulted a line from Avocourt to the *Côte 304*, *Mort Homme* and the *Côte 205*, to destroy the French artillery there. The French batteries of field cannons were sheltered, and held their positions. Several German assaults failed!

The German troops halted in front of the French-defended line running from Avocourt to the *Côte 304* of *Mort-Homme* to the south of the villages of Corbeaux to Cumières. There, definitely, the German offensive stopped.

From the 6<sup>th</sup> of March to the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1916, the German troops advanced once more, taking several villages in the west of Verdun. Several more attacks of the German troops, launched on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March failed to let the German forces advance much. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, the Germans took the *Bois de Malancourt*. They

suffered 20,000 casualties there. On that 30<sup>th</sup> of March General Max von Gallwitz took command of a new assault group, which took the village. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, the village of Haucourt fell to the Germans and on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April also B  thincourt. Other, several, German attacks failed. By that end of March, the Verdun offensive had cost the German Army more than 80,000 casualties. Erich von Falkenhayn began to think of ending the offensive, for too costly. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, Falkenhayn told the 5<sup>th</sup> Army commanders his resources in the German Army did not allow him more expenditure of soldiers and ammunition.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, the Germans launched their last attacks of their first new assault. They attacked once more in the west, where they got stopped at *Mort-Homme*, even if they won some terrain. They also launched an attack in the east, against the *C  te-du-Poivre*, which remained in French hands. The two enemies had reached a balance in cannon fire power. Then, disagreements rose in the German General Staff, between von Falkenhayn and some of the commanders around Verdun and in the Argonne, who wanted to continue the battle, but needed more troops. Falkenhayn and Knobelsdorf ordered limited attacks with storm troops. Army leaders who disagreed were sacked. This was the case for General Mudra, the commander of the Assault Group East. The storm troops consisted of two infantry squads and one squad of engineers, armed with automatic weapons, hand grenades and flame throwers, to attack in front of the main infantry groups. It meant the end of all-out offensives. The German troops reverted to defence.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, General Robert Nivelle took over the command of Verdun from General Philippe P  tain, who had been given the command of the French Armies of the Centre, the *Groupe d'Arm  es du Centre*.

From May to August 1916, a real battle of attrition lasted again between the German and the French troops at Verdun. In April still, the Germans took the village of Vaux and attacked the French fort there. It took them a full week to take it, in the beginning of June. About 10,000 German troops attacked Fort Vaux on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June and took it on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The last French survivors only surrendered on the 7<sup>th</sup>!

At the end of May, the German Army still held more than 1,700 heavy cannons at Verdun, the French Army only about 550. These last batteries sufficed to hold Verdun and hold back the Germans, though not enough to risk serious counter-offensives.

The aim of an attrition battle of the German Staff never realised, as the German Army lost about as many soldiers as the French. Erich von Falkenhayn had been forced also to commit far more forces than he had intended.

To the west of the Meuse, under constant German attacks, the front remained substantially the same as it had been reached end of April. Attacks and counter-attacks, capturing some terrain and losing it the next day, engagements between tens of thousands of enemy soldiers changed almost nothing to the German advance.

In the north-east of Verdun, from the 9<sup>th</sup> of June to the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, the Germans did advance some more, from the fort of Douaumont to Fleury, past this village, to the fort of Souville. This last fort they could not take. They did capture fort Vaux in June. Several more forts lay beyond, still in French hands: Souville, St Mihiel, Tavan  s, Moulainville, and Belleville, defending Verdun.

Against Fleury and Souville, the German generals launched at one moment more than 40,000 men, without being able to invest Souville. They did take the village of Fleury.

The Germans came to within 4 kilometres of the citadel of Verdun, but in July the German General Staff reduced its troops at Verdun for other battles along the western front. The battles raged hard. From the 23<sup>th</sup> of June to the 17<sup>th</sup> of August for instance, Fleury changed hands 16 times! In a three-day counter-attack for the fort in the Bois Cailette, the French lost 5,640 casualties from the 12,000 soldiers they had thrown in the assault. The Germans suffered 4,500 casualties. Not much remained of Fleury.

The German generals knew how expensive attacks could be. Therefore, the German offensive at Verdun was only supposed to be a limited attack, to draw all French reserves to this part of the front.

Until June of 1916, gas had practically not been used in the battle. On the 22<sup>th</sup> of June, the German artillery fired 116,000 diphosgene gas shells at the French artillery positions. They caused over 1,600 casualties in the French lines, and silenced part of the French batteries. The German infantry then attacked, and formed a small salient in the French lines. The German assault almost reached the fort Souville. Villages like Fleury and Chapelle-Ste-Fine were taken. The Germans stood within 5 kilometres of Verdun. But the French counter-attacked the next day, and this German assault too was checked. Fleury changed hands once more. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the French received reinforcements, and the French batteries recovered. The French troops cut off the German lines from the rear.

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Knobelsdorf stopped also this German attack. By the end of June, both armies had lost about 200,000 soldiers.

Verdun had been under siege for 5 months. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, the Battle of the Somme started. The German generals had to withdraw part of the German artillery from Verdun to direct them to the Somme. Assaults, terrain won and terrain lost continued in the following months of from July to September. Verdun was saved. It remained French.

A stalemate set in then, also at Verdun, as the German generals concentrated their forces and attention on the Somme. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, Erich von Falkenhayn was replaced by General Paul von Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff, the Quartermaster-General Erich Ludendorff. A new period in the Battles on the western front started.

### **Julian Vincius in Longwy during the Battle of Verdun, 1916**

Practically during the entire year of 1916, the *Kriegslazarett* of Longwy worked at full capacity day and night. Nurses, male or female, were always on duty, day and night. Not the doctors.

When an emergency happened at night, which did come once or twice a week, the nurse on duty could run to the other side of the street and wake up Julian Vincius. Julian thus worked on every wound possible on the German soldiers. He came to respect wounds. He knew by heart, now, how to handle them. Wounds opened when soldiers moved wildly at night in their sleep, or gangrene set in suddenly, risking the life of the patients. Julian never refused to get up in the middle of the night, and go to help. The nurses knew him as the calmest doctor of the hospital. He never panicked. He could solve anything. When nurses got very nervous,

standing next to him, always caring about the life of a soldier, he stayed calm and took his time. He refused to let panic guide what he did.

However critical the situation, Julian knew too well he had to keep his head, look, observe, probe, reflect, and especially read the inscriptions on the forms he had introduced to be hung at the end of the bed. On that paper, he read the name of the patient, his record of temperatures and medicines, indications even of the man's character such as violent or calm. Only then did he begin to work, and by then he knew exactly what to do. Sometimes, he was astonished at how much he could do, sometimes how little. He saved many patients, and patients died under his hands. He found it harder to feel the young men go than the older ones. Every loss was a defeat.

After each major attack in those months, so many soldiers got wounded the hospital was almost constantly overcrowded. Instead of seeking yet another site, for which he had no doctors anyway, Julian had beds be placed in the corridors, one bed against the other. He found tents, placed those in front of the building, and send beds even to the entrance hall. Julian was convinced his hospitals, also his *Feldlazaretten* in the second front lines, were among the ones that had the best ratio of soldiers saved.

After more than six months of this regime, Julian felt he had become exhausted, not really in body, but in spirit. Lately, he had to drag himself to the *lazaretten*. He needed rest. But in view of the heavy, continuous attacks from both sides near Verdun, he could not bring himself to take some time off. He didn't drive to Berlin to visit his family and friends there. He did not step in a train that would have taken him to Thorn, to see his parents, uncles and aunts. He had become a loner, a lonely man, who would work till he fell under the strain. At that time also, Monsieur Baraine was still not well enough to be left alone. Baraine dwelled in apathy, caring little for his two daughters, although one was safe in Metz. He traded in a frenzy, not to have to be reminded of his wife.

On one of such particularly tiresome days in the early autumn of 1916, Julian saw no end anymore to the fighting, to the killing, and to the misery around him, either on the battlefield or in Longwy. Famine slowly set in among the population, as prices of decent food soared. He had worked late at the *Hôtel des Récollets*, and went home to sleep very late. That evening, he didn't even see Monsieur Baraine, nor Ernst, nor the Baraine daughter. He had found some food in the kitchen of the Baraine quarters, ate a little, and then sat in a chair in the large dining-room, feeling so tired he sat with his head in his hands at the table. When he went to his part of the house, he saw the door of the corridor that linked the two quarters, slowly, cautiously open.

In came Charlotte Baraine, dressed only in an almost transparent night shift. Sufficient light came through the windows from a full moon. She walked on naked feet like a white ghost in the night. She came up to him, put her arms around him, and kissed him. She kissed Julian on the mouth, something they had never done before.

He had no courage left to refuse her. They kissed. Charlotte pressed her body against him. His arms went around her. The kiss lasted. The embrace tightened. Desire mounted. When they released each other, Charlotte took Julian's hand and drew him to his bedroom. She

pushed him in, but entered too. She opened the bedcovers. The whiteness tempted. Charlotte began to undress Julian, and he let her. When he stood naked in the dark, she also drew her nightgown over her shoulders. Then, she drew him into the bed. He went to lie down in the bed. She came next to him, and drew the covers over the two of them. Charlotte moved to lay in his lap. She drew his left arm over her, and his hand to her right breast. They then didn't move any longer. They slept.

The next morning, Julian stirred and woke up. He still found himself in bed with the naked girl, the woman, at his side, blotted against him. His hand lay still over her right breast. Julian was awake, then. He didn't jump away from her. He turned his hand around her breast, felt the nipple harden. He thought Charlotte still asleep, but she put her hand on his, and made his hand mould her breast more. She sighed, moaned. She turned in the bed, lay on her back, looked at him, and drew him on her. They made love. He entered her and felt her gasp. He knew she had still been a virgin. He felt a pang of sorrow at that moment. Still, it was too late to stop. They made love. They received the nadir of their lovemaking together, fast, and strong. They remained together for a long time still. Finally, the girl moved and stood. She said nothing. She bowed over his face and kissed him all over his eyes, nose and mouth, a light, quick kiss, lips closed. Then, she drew her nightshift over her, and left the bedroom. Not a word was said.

Julian remained a while yet in bed. He felt extremely tired, but also very happy. The tension had gone. He had to get up. He washed, dressed up in his uniform with a clean shirt, and went down for breakfast. He felt more bewildered than the days before. What had he done? He had slept with a young, French girl. The girl was so very young. This fact alone made his night a total non-conventional time. More than one man or woman could reproach him for having taken advantage of a very young girl. And the girl was French. She was the enemy. He could defend himself with words, but what was right? Could Charlotte defend herself against French and German accusations? Her French neighbours, friends and relatives, the citizens of Longwy who knew her, how would they judge her? A girl raped? Had she collaborated with the enemy? She could be hanged for treason by the lesser intelligent townspeople! Her hair might be cut off. She could be called a whore, a debauched woman, a traitor to her fatherland. She had slept with a German, and thus shown herself a traitor to the country and the suffering people of France!

Charlotte was extremely beautiful. She was maybe the most dazzlingly beautiful woman in town. Many women envied her. Many men desired her. They all, would take special pleasure in humiliating her, in hurting her. What had he done? How tell Théophile Baraine he had abused of the man's hospitality, and of the man's daughter. Baraine and his wife had shown him so much kindness! He, Julian Vincius, was the traitor, the vile seducer.

At breakfast, Charlotte served them all at the table in the dining-room. She did this every day now, since the death of her mother. She did not look at Julian. He too, averted his eyes. Julian then remembered the last words her dying mother had told him. Madame Baraine would not have been shocked at what Julian Vincius and her daughter had done. Neither he nor Charlotte tried to do anything different from the previous days. Their eyes crossed. Charlotte gave him a triumphant and tender look when he also, finally, stood up from his chair and readied to leave for the *Hotel*. He answered those eyes, and would have liked to embrace her.

No, this would not remain a one, single event. Her eyes told him they now belonged to each other. Those eyes pleaded, asked, and would receive.

Julian left. He returned but late, as late as the previous evening. Charlotte came down. They were alone for a while in the dining-room. Charlotte saw him eat. She didn't hesitate. She came to sit on his knees and they kissed, as they had done the night before. Julian ate only a light, cold and short supper. They went together to his room, hand in hand. She stayed in his bedroom for this night also. When he awoke, however, she was already gone. He heard her working in the kitchen below, preparing breakfast. He heard her break eggs. She even turned on the radio to wake up everybody.

From then on, Julian Vincius and Charlotte Baraine slept together most nights. They were lovers. Sometimes, she stayed in her own room and slept when he arrived. Her father would then have insisted she went upstairs early to rest. One time, she told him she would not come to him that night, for she had her women pains. Julian remembered the aversion of Jews for women declared unclean, in their menstruation periods. He too preferred not to be together with her at night, then. A few nights later, she would come back.

Julian was a doctor. He knew as well as anybody what would come next if they continued this way. They had not used any contraceptives. Charlotte would get pregnant. She was too much woman, and much too happy, not to get pregnant soon. He had to talk to her. If he was certain of one thing, he would not want Charlotte to seek an abortion. He loved her too much, and he would love her child. The very idea of wanting to get rid of an unborn child was what he abhorred. So, he would have to marry Charlotte. She was all innocence and gentle. He would give the child his name. Julian absolutely had to talk to Charlotte, and the talk would take long, for there were many decisions to be made.

Then also, he needed to talk to Théophile Baraine, and to Ernst. He had to think about what to do at the moment of the birth of the child, no, long before that. Could Charlotte give birth in Longwy? Would he have to find another solution for her? Well, all of that lay in the future.

By the autumn of 1916, however, the matter became urgent. Charlotte whispered to him on an evening of October, she was probably pregnant. Soon, the baby would grow in her. It would be visible to everybody she was with child. Julian would have to tell what had happened, to Ernst and to Monsieur Baraine.

Julian first spoke to Ernst. He explained. Ernst was quick with a reaction.

He said, 'I knew, of course! I heard the door of the corridor open and close at night. I saw the faces of you two. She has done you good.'

Ernst laughed, 'but she is French and still a very young girl. You could have done worse. She is charming. You should marry. But how can you marry a French woman in the middle of war? Do the military even allow such a thing? The higher command may be tempted to call you a traitor to the fatherland, and forbid you. Oh, I am sure not everybody will nurture such an opinion. The better generals and colonels will not. But don't forget you are a professor of the *Charité*, and of Jewish descent. That alone should be an excellent argument for whoever envies you. Many envy you! For a few, you have thwarted their ugliest acts of trying to get rich on the war. You have stopped many an officer from stealing big in Longwy and at the

*Hotel*. You have kept truly bad men from pillaging banks and residences. You have been very successful with the management of the *lazaretten* in Longwy and around. That also will have brought up envy. I think you may now have quite a few silent enemies within the German Army. One drop more may drown you. It is ugly, of course, within one's own army, but very human, and very real. I know people who will not wish you many good things. And then, Germany, most probably will not win this war. So many dead has this war caused, the French will not just do good to women who collaborated with the Germans, even less to women who slept with the enemy. What will they do to her? You should take her away from Longwy before this war ends! She is in risk of losing her life, of being disfigured, or other nasty revenges like that. Moving her to Germany will not be easy, too. She doesn't speak German.'

Ernst had spoken of many of Julian's worries for Charlotte.

'I've given all that some thought,' Julian said. 'I cannot marry her during the war and antagonise the military. I do can discreetly recognise the child she is wearing. The child will then have the French nationality, and that is exactly what Charlotte desires. She told me so. The child's nationality may protect her and the baby. At least, I think so. When the pregnancy becomes obvious, here, we can keep her in house. We can invent some story of a French cousin of hers she fell in love with, or something like that. She could give birth here, in Longwy. When the war ends, hoping on a German victory, I will have to return to Berlin anyway. I can then take her with me, and simply disappear, together with the last, returning troops. An alternative, if the end of the war gets tragic for us, would be to bring her to Belgium, maybe to the town of Spa. The headquarters of the German Emperor are there. I can get her an apartment in that region, preferably in Spa itself, or nearby. One much speaks French there. Later, I can fetch her and take her to Berlin. I have a job waiting for me at the *Charité* hospitals. We can live well in Berlin.'

'Yes, something like that will have to be done,' Ernst agreed. 'I'll help, of course. I can drive her to wherever is necessary. You can count on me.'

'I never doubted that, Ernst. I would like you to stay in Berlin. I could need a driver, a helping hand for everything, somebody to guard Charlotte in Berlin, maybe teach her the language, and keep the apartment. There are rooms for you. I own an entire floor of a large apartment house in Berlin, you know.'

'Fine! I accept. I would like that. It will be good, already, to have a job right after the war. Later, I must think of what I can become and do on my own.'

A few days later, on another evening, Ernst had left the table. Remained Théophile Baraine, Charlotte and Julian. Monsieur Baraine asked Julian whether he wanted to finish the evening with a brandy. Julian accepted. He could need a brandy for what he had to tell.

When Théophile sat again, he began, 'Monsieur Baraine, I have wanted to speak to you for some time. This is about a serious matter. It is about me and Charlotte. We have fallen in love. I would like to make her my wife. She agreed. We'll not separate.'

Théophile Baraine looked up.

'Are you asking her hand, or are you telling me just you are going to marry anyway?'

Julian understood he had made a mistake with his last phrase.

'I would have hoped the two could be reconciled, Monsieur Baraine.'

‘The prediction my wife made me a long time ago will then come true,’ Baraine answered quietly. ‘She warned me. She predicted, actually. You two were in love, but you didn’t know it yourselves, she said. I never believed what she prophesied. I thought she was a little delirious, then. Yet, women have a sixth sense for such things. I don’t. It really is true, then?’ ‘It is,’ Julian confirmed.

Charlotte moved her chair closer to him, and she grabbed his hand.

‘Monsieur Baraine,’ Julian continued, ‘when two people, a man and a woman love each other, it is difficult to keep them apart. I ask you for the hand of your daughter in marriage!’ ‘Yes, you ask,’ Baraine answered bitter, ‘but if refused, you will take her anyway. You are a German on French soil. An abomination! You take what you want.’

The faces of Julian and Charlotte went blank.

Baraine cried out, ‘how can I do that, Staff Colonel Doctor Julian Vincius? Tell me how, for heaven’s sake! Have you any sense? Charlotte is so much younger than you. She should marry a youth of Longwy of her own age. You are German and she is French. When this war ends, she will be considered a traitor if she went with you. The story of Romeo and Juliet is a nice tale, but one that ends badly! I do not dare to think of how she may be punished by the population of Longwy, legally or illegally. All collaborators with the enemy will be punished hard, put against a tree or a wall and executed, if not tortured first. Charlotte will be considered a harlot, a whore, and a traitor. The mob will be terrible with her. They will get to her, past me. There will be no mercy for her. No, marriage is out of the question.’

A tense silence remained hanging in the room.

‘Monsieur Baraine,’ Julian said softly, ‘we want to marry. We must marry. Solutions, there are always solutions.’

Baraine began shouting, ‘why should you marry?’

He wanted to say more, but suddenly, he seemed to understand, and he stopped.

‘Jesus, Maria, Joseph,’ Baraine exclaimed. ‘Don’t tell me you made my girl pregnant! Is she with child?’

‘I am, father, and I am proud,’ Charlotte answered, before Julian could intervene. ‘And I do want to marry him. He is a good man. I want no one else. Give us your blessing, father.’

A silence once more fell in the room.

Baraine poured himself a second glass of brandy. He looked at Julian and filled Julian’s glass, too. Julian felt then, he and Charlotte had won the discussion. Monsieur Baraine cared and feared. He was not truly angry. He was a father who had lost a daughter.

‘You are not the man to rape a woman,’ Baraine said to Julian, ‘and not one to seduce her with fine words too. You are an honourable man. I would not have helped someone else. But you will have more issues than shall please you.’

Baraine still said after a while, ‘have you given all the issues some thought? I guess not.’

‘I have,’ Julian said, determined now. ‘I know what to do. Let me explain.’

Baraine filled their glasses a third time. Julian would wake up with a very bad headache tomorrow morning. The people of Lorraine knew how to distil a tough alcohol.

‘Charlotte wants to give birth to a French child. She must therefore give birth here, in Longwy. It is her dearest wish. I don’t object. Yet, we cannot marry now, here. It would rise

the population against her, and we cannot flee, for I am a German soldier. So, Charlotte must stay in Longwy at least, until she gives birth. I will recognise the child immediately. So you, Théophile, must inscribe the child yourself in the registers of the town, with the child having my name. That must remain secret. I am sure you can do this easily. You have access to the registers.

Before the end of the war, and that might be the trickiest part, I shall bring mother and child to a safe place. She should live there until the war is definitely and officially over. Then, I will be able to bring mother and child to Berlin. Ernst agreed to help. Charlotte and I will marry officially in Berlin. There shall be a religious marriage. Charlotte may have to convert to Prussian Evangelism. That should present no great difficulty. Priests are always eager for converts. I must remain Protestant in Germany. There is not really any other choice.

Evangelists are Christian, too. Then, we will live in Berlin. I am already a professor at the *Charité*, at the Berlin University, and I can have a private practice in Berlin. We shall be at ease. My family has money. We will come to see you and Charlotte's sister, or you can come to Berlin.'

'And what if the war ends earlier than the birth?' Théophile Baraine wanted to know.

'Then the same, but earlier,' Julian calmly gave back. 'We have only one issue, really. That is, to keep Charlotte away from the wrath and hatred and lust for revenge of a part of the Longwy population, although I am sure many will understand. All this, while having her child be French, a citizen of France. We shall have to smuggle her out of Longwy before the war ends, then to a safe place in France, where she can give birth. If the Lorraine and the Alsace regions return to France, we can send her first to Metz or Strasbourg or even Colmar. Nobody will know her there. The baby born, I can get her to Berlin, with me. She will learn German. That should not be a great obstacle.'

'You have thought out matters well,' Baraine agreed. 'Yes, there is no other solution. I should of course be proud to have you as a son-in-law. I am. I feared already some dumb-ass from around here would want her. True, I would have preferred her to marry a decent French chap, but I grant, from what I hear, that is now impossible. When Charlotte had something in her head, I see no way to get it out of her. The child needs a father, the true, natural father, and a father who loves it. That can only be you. Come, here, child, sit with me. You are my beloved. I bless you.'

'Let's drink on this then,' Julian said, fully relieved.

He took Charlotte's hand too. Baraine put his hand on top, 'blessed be you, my children.' Julian addressed Charlotte directly, 'you will have to wait to be married, darling Charlotte. But marry we shall! I just don't know yet when.'

Charlotte laughed. She drew with one arm Julian's head close to her, with the other her father's head.

## Verdun from October to December 1916

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1916, began a French offensive, led by the Generals Nivelle and Mangin. The French forces gathered at Verdun 290 field cannons and more than 300 cannons of heavy artillery. The French called this their '*Première Bataille Offensive de Verdun*', for yes, the French went in the attack! The preliminary cannon barrage lasted 6 days. The German Army still waited at this front with 7 divisions.

The French attack of the 24<sup>th</sup> of October began at 11h00, after long bombardments by the powerful French artillery. The French infantry then assaulted the German positions from Fleury to Douaumont. Two French Saint-Chamond railway cannons fired super-heavy shells at the German positions. These shells hit Fort Douaumont, practically blowing up the fort when they reached German munition depots.

The French troops halted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, practically at the positions previous French divisions had stood on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February. Douaumont had been retaken, but attempts to take back the fort of Vaux failed. The French took more than 6,000 German prisoners and 15 cannons. Fort Vaux fell in French hands a little later, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November. And then, they stopped.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1916, General Nivelle received the supreme command of the French Army after Joseph Joffre. General Guillaumat replaced him at the head of the French Verdun forces.

General Mangin had already prepared a next French offensive, which started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December. This has been called the *Deuxième Bataille Offensive de Verdun*, the French second offensive. The French attacked with 4 divisions, holding 4 more divisions in reserve. They had brought 740 heavy cannons in support. They stood against 5 German divisions and 533 cannons on the defensive. The German divisions were understrength, though.

The French assault was a success. Vacherau and Louvemont became French again. French Army won back Hardaumont and the Côte du Poivre. The French divisions made more than 11,000 German prisoners, among whom 300 officers. They captured 115 German cannons and hundreds of machine-guns. Nevertheless, the French soldiers won no more than 5 kilometres northwards! On the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, the Germans had lost all the terrain it had taken them 5 months to conquer in 1916!

For several months, the cannons would then remain almost silent around Verdun. Other large battles held the attention of the enemy armies: the Battle of the Somme, of the Chemin des Dames, of Flanders, and of the Isonzo river in Italy.

General Philippe Pétain ordered a new initiative at Verdun only in August of 1917. This attack began on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1917. The French artillery opened fire. The Germans before Verdun knew a major offensive was to follow. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 8 French infantry divisions went in the assault. They took much of the territories lost to the north of Verdun, such as *Mort-Homme*, Cumières, and the *Côte du Talou*. The French troops won back Samogneux and Régneville. They reached Béthincourt in the north-west of Verdun, and Forges. In the north-east, the French reached Beaumont. The French troops threw the Germans 11 kilometres north. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, the French divisions once more stopped their assaults.

Verdun was one of those places along the western front line, where the German offensives failed. The German forces stood before Verdun, and attacked its hinterland, suffered counter-attacks, and brought at different moments more than 80 divisions to the site, a total of 1,800,000 men. This all, to try to pass beyond the town, which they never could move beyond. The battles around the town finally exhausted the German Army as much or more as in other places along the western front. Verdun had been the longest battle of the war.

After August of 1917, and during the winter of from 1917 to 1918, the front of Verdun remained silent. Finally, in September of 1918, the French and American Armies, led by the French General Gouraud and the American General Pershing, would reduce the St Mihiel salient in French territory, and push the German soldiers back to a straight line from Les Éparges to Pont-à-Mousson, into the plains of the Woëvre.

## On the eastern Fronts from 1915 to end 1916

### 1915

The war on the fronts to the east and south of Germany continued unabatedly, in all force, during 1915 and 1916.

In the winter of from 1914 to 1915, the Russian Army repelled Turkish attacks in the Caucasus. British troops stopped a Turkish attack on the Suez Canal. Turkey had already joined the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, in October of 1914.

The German warships the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* navigated into Turkish waters, where the Ottomans agreed to purchase the ships. The Turks even held the German commander of the small flotilla, Admiral Wilhelm Anton Souchon, as their Turkish Navy's commander-in-chief.

Souchon was a Saxon, born in Leipzig in an old Huguenot family. On 29 October 1914, Souchon had taken the initiative for the *Black Sea Raid*, which brought the Ottoman Empire into World War I. His ships laid several sea minefields. They had cannonaded the Russian Black Sea harbours of Sevastopol, Odessa, and other vessels, destroying Russian ships in the effort. British ships retaliated by sinking Turkish merchant ships off İzmir.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1914, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, Great Britain had equally declared war on Turkey. Then, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1914, the Ottoman government officially declared war on the Allies.

For the next three years, Souchon attempted to reform the Turkish fleet. He commanded several attacks on Russian ships, on Russian harbours and installations along the Black Sea. Promoted to vice admiral in Germany, Souchon received the *Pour le Mérite*, Germany's highest military order, on 29 October 1916.

The war of the Allies against Turkey began in the Dardanelles. The Allied attacked with a joint British-French fleet. Troops went ashore there and engaged the Turkish Army. The campaign did not succeed well for the Allies! It lasted from February 1915 to January of 1916. The Allies had to suffer 205,000 British and 47,000 additional casualties in the disaster. The Ottoman troops lost more, 350,000 casualties, but they stopped the Allies from progressing inland.

The Dardanelles campaign had started with the English and French fleet cannonading the Dardanelles' Turkish forts. During the invasion, at Gallipoli, mainly the British troops failed. The Russian Army inflicted up to 3/4<sup>th</sup> of all the Ottoman losses.

The Russian General Nikolai Nikolayevich Yudenich overran Armenia in the spring of 1916. In April, the Russian troops captured the town and port of Trebizond on the Black Sea. In total, the British and Indian troops in Mesopotamia counted 890,000 soldiers. The Turkish forces opposed to them, were barely half as many.

From January 1916 to May of that year, François-Georges Picot, a former French consul at Beirut and now the representative of Aristide Briand for the future of the Ottoman Empire, and Sir Mark Sykes for Great Britain, arrived at an agreement of which nation would dominate what in the Far East. This became known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement. It defined the French and the British influence in the Near East.

In Germany, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg negotiated with Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff to remove Falkenhayn from the command on the western front. Falkenhayn had not been able to perform a breakthrough on that front. The Chancellor had already appointed Falkenhayn's deputy, Adolph Wild von Hohenborn, as Minister of War. Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff had been successful in their war campaigns, contrary to Falkenhayn. In the Winter Battle of the Masurian Lakes, they had inflicted 200,000 casualties on the Russian Army, and cleared the German soil of Russian soldiers. The German Army too had suffered tremendous losses, but how important was that, compared to a resounding victory?

The Imperial Austrian-Hungarian armies had not been so successful. The Habsburg Army was now relatively small, ill-equipped, and badly led. The Czech and Ukrainian troops that fought in the Balkan and against the Russians, soon proved to be unreliable against fellow-Slav opponents. In January of 1915, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf launched an offensive against the Russian troops in the Carpathian Mountains. He lifted the siege of Przemysl. The winter was hard! The frost and cold overall caused many casualties on both sides.

From January to April, the Austrian Empire lost 800,000 men. In March of 1915 already, Przemysl with its 117,000 Austrian garrison, surrendered to the Russian assailants. The Russians also launched fierce counter-attacks over the Carpathian passes, threatening the plains of Hungary. Erich von Falkenhayn then found enough soldiers to form an 11<sup>th</sup> German Army at the eastern front, to be led by General August Mackensen.

With this army, Mackensen attacked the Russian front from the south, while Hindenburg and Ludendorff pushed down from the north. The German attack and Battle of Gorlice-Tarnow broke the Russian resistance and shattered the Russian front.

Germany and Austria then launched 352,000 soldiers against Russia. They beat at the front with almost 1,300 field cannons, over 330 heavy guns and 16 mortars. Russia had still 220,000 men in the area, with only 675 field cannons and only 4 heavy guns. By the end of June, the Central Powers had once more taken Przemysl! They freed the Habsburg Empire of Russian soldiers. The Central Powers took very many Russian prisoners.

From July to August 1915, the German Army also attacked the Russian troops in Poland, taking Warsaw. At the same time, an offensive launched in the north took for the Germans the whole of Russian Poland, and Lithuania. The Russian casualties grew to 1.4 million soldiers. The Russian Armies retreated nearly 500 kilometres to the east. The German and Austrian casualties on this front amounted to about a million men. But the Russian advance had been stopped. Von Falkenhayn had allowed Hindenburg and Ludendorff to invade Lithuania.

The tzarist troops did recover after their retreat. They stopped the German attacks east of Vilna. Falkenhayn then sought a separate peace with Russia, but the greater the defeat of his troops, the less Tzar Nicholas II wanted to talk about armistice!

As of September of 1915, Erich von Falkenhayn then turned his attention to the Balkan. Bulgaria promised to help the troops of the Allied Powers. The troops of the Central Powers

soon captured Belgrade, while the Allies and the Russians could not help. Some aid from out of Salonika arrived too late.

The Serbian troops retreated in a terrible winter march end of 1915, through the Albanian Mountains to the Adriatic. There, Allied ships took the survivors on board, and brought them to Salonika. The Serbian Government went into exile on the Island of Corfu.

The Austrian troops marched on. Early 1916, they conquered Montenegro and occupied northern Albania. Germany's goal of dominating the Balkan States and especially Serbia, had thus been realised. Turkey had also been relieved in the region. But the czar of Russia still refused to have peace talks.

In December of 1914 already, the Italian Army mobilised and took to its concentration sites. It was very slow to deploy. Commander-in-Chief of the Italian forces was General Luigi Cadorna. Cadorna launched an offensive in the mountains of the Trentino Region. He also wanted to play a role in the Balkan battles. He made his men pass the Isonzo River, moving towards Ljubljana.

From end May to end November of 1915, no less than four major battles would be waged on the Isonzo. The Austrians had amassed an army of 300,000 soldiers to bring the Italians to the halt. The forces that faced them were 3 times larger! Still, they succeeded in repelling their enemies. The Italians lost in that year 62,000 men killed and 170,000 wounded or sick. The efforts of the Allies to stop the advance of the German and Austrian-Hungarian troops failed. So did the limited Anglo-French expeditions out of Salonika.

In the autumn of 1915, Serbia and Greece forged an alliance. Prime Minister Eleftherios Kiriakou Venizelos of Greece promised 150,000 soldiers to the aid of Serbia, on the condition the Allies brought as many men in the field.

In general, the year 1915 was a quite successful year for Germany and Austria-Hungary on the eastern front! They routed the Serbians and the Russians. The meagre Allied initiatives in the east had not realised much in terms of advance against the Central Powers. On the contrary!

## 1916

In 1916, the situation in the war did not change much. From May to June 1916, at the conflict zone of Verdun, the German troops took the fort of Vaux. They drew up to the edge of the Heights of the Meuse. General Joffre moved Pétain to a supervising command. He gave the conduct of the Battle of Verdun to the more offensive-minded General Robert Nivelle. But in June 1916, the morale of the French troops at Verdun was faltering. The French had arrived at a point, at which they had only one fresh brigade left to hold back any breakthroughs of the German Army. Which army would first collapse?

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, Erich von Falkenhayn had to order a pause in his offensives. He took 3 divisions away from the western front, to expedite them to the east. His offensive at Verdun therefore diminished in power. The despair could be remarked also in the use of weapons of the German Army. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1916, in a supreme effort, the Germans launched an attack on the French troops, using for the first time phosgene gas shells. Nevertheless, their

attack proved too weak. They could not prevail over the French forces. General Joffre, also at odds, noticing all his troops weaker and weaker, asked for assistance, as had been agreed in the Chantilly discussions.

The Russians reacted, the only forces to do so. Russian troops attacked at Lake Naratch. They had two to one numerical superiority in soldiers. Despite fierce fights, they could not advance much, and lost 100,000 casualties in the effort. The German Armies did even not have to move divisions from the western front to stop this Russian offensive.

On the Italian-Austrian front, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief Conrad von Hötzendorf planned an offensive to be launched from out of the Trentino, to chase the Italian troops out of the Alps and into the Lombardian plains. He tried to cut off the Italian Army that was assembled on the Isonzo, and pushed on to Venice.

He asked for 5 additional German divisions, telling the collapse of the Italian Army would release 250,000 Austrian soldiers to be brought against the Russians or into the Balkan. The German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was not at war with Italy. He wished not to be. Erich von Falkenhayn had formed 5 divisions at the western front. Falkenhayn did not have to direct those against the Russians or on the Isonzo against Italy. He rather sent them to Verdun, consolidating his troops there. The Austrian Commander-in-Chief Conrad therefore had to attack the Italian Army on the Isonzo with only a small numerical superiority, though he had a three to one advantage of heavy cannons.

The Austrian-Hungarian offensive against Italy began on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1916. The Austrians surprised General Luigi Cadorna, who had suspected no more Austrian surges against his soldiers. Cadorna hurried successfully to bring to the front his reserve troops, using his railways and Fiat lorries. The Italians had to retreat at first, but they could already launch a counter-attack on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1916, and won back half of the territory they had lost.

Like the French had done, King Victor Emmanuel of Italy then appealed to the Allies for help and initiatives on other fronts, according to the Chantilly Agreements. The Russian tzar was the only one, this time too, to react and attack the Austrian troops. The Russian Army did that with quite a success. The result was a series of initiatives of the Allies a little later, though these had been in preparation beforehand.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1916, the Russian Army launched a devastating assault against the Austrian positions. This attack became known as the *Brusilov Offensive*. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, the British and the French Armies on the western front attacked on the Somme in France. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August then, Rumania joined the Allies. Rumania had a large army! In September of 1916, General Sarrail moved his forces of Salonika inland. The Allies were once more on the initiative of their enemies!

First, we must explain the new Russian initiative. The generals in the Russian tzarist staff were not eager to indulge the Italians asking for a new front.

The Russian General Alexei Kuropatkin and General Alexei Evert had faced the Germans after the Lake Naratch defeat in Belarus. They were not eager at all to risk yet another Russian attack. However, the since only March new commander of the south-west part of the

Russian front, General Alexei Brusilov, a Georgian born at Tbilisi, was a brilliant strategist and tactician. He felt eager and capable to attack!

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April of 1916, at a Russian *Stavka* meeting, of the General Staff, Tzar Nicholas II allowed Brusilov to start an offensive. Brusilov would attack first and after him, a main assault would be launched led by General Alexei Evert.

Brusilov was a new man, with novel ideas of his own. He would attack on a very long front, hoping to break through at least somewhere. His tactics surprised the Austrian Army leaders. He attacked on a front of more than 400 kilometres long, with main assaults in the north, to assist Evert, and south along the Carpathians. He used bunkers to hide men and material. His attack fully realised the surprise he had sought.

The *Brusilov Offensive* began with a brief but very intense bombardment on the German defences with cannons, howitzers and gas, to overwhelm and silence the Austrian artillery, and their feared machine guns. Brusilov ordered not to cannonade along the entire front, only at significant points along the line, command centres, batteries, and so on. Then, Brusilov launched his massive infantry offensive.

Soon, Brusilov's soldiers forced a breach of 20 kilometres wide on already 75 kilometres deep into the Austrian front. The entire Austrian line risked to collapse. To stop Brusilov's rapid advance, the Germans had to step in.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1916, the German General Headquarter moved 15 divisions from the western front to the north-eastern front, in support of Austria. These stopped as well Brusilov's advance, as Evert's main attack. Nevertheless, Brusilov had advanced the front line 30 kilometres west and more importantly, taken about 400,000 Austrian prisoners. The Russians then launched a new initiative of attack at Korvel, with heavy bombardments and infantry assaults.

Such offensives did not work anymore on the German Armies. The German divisions absorbed the shock. After October 1916, Brusilov turned his troops, knowing a decisive breakthrough was not anymore to be expected. Brusilov used his troops to assist Rumania.

Brusilov's offensive was a fabulous Allied success. The Russian troops drove the Austrian and German troops back to at the deepest point even near 100 kilometres deep. Still, the only major town the Russians captured was Czernowitz. The losses had been terrible. The Russian casualties amounted to over 1 million soldiers killed, wounded or made prisoners. In total, the Russians inflicted 600,000 losses of killed, wounded and imprisoned soldiers to the Austrians, destroying thereby almost half of the Austrian-Hungarian forces. And Rumania had stepped in.

Nevertheless, by the end of autumn, many men at the court of Russia of St Petersburg, began to doubt the Russian Army could ever win the war.

As a result of the Brusilov Offensive, the Austrian General Commander Conrad von Hötzendorf could not launch an offensive against Italy in the Trentino. And the German Supreme Commander Erich von Falkenhayn had to stop pouring in additional divisions into the area and Battle of Verdun. One might argue that the Russian offensives and the resistance of the Russian Armies elsewhere, had saved France from very difficult times indeed.

## The Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme had been in preparation since February 1916, when the commanding Generals Joffre and Haig agreed to launch together a major offensive on the Somme Stream. Joffre and Haig agreed to launch their attacks on the Somme in the summer of 1916.

The commanders had thus planned the Somme initiative before even the German attack on Verdun had started. The commanders had even proposed a date, which had been agreed and the promise held, of the end of June 1916. By May, however, Joffre had to reduce these 39 French divisions, as originally foreseen, to a mere 22. Haig could throw 19 divisions in the offensive.

The Somme appealed to Joffre, as it was situated at the junction of his own divisions and the British forces. A joint attack could be much larger and more terrible. Joffre and Foch, once more, sought a campaign of attrition against the German Army, consisting of repeated, though limited assaults. France would put in the balance its new, reinforced artillery.

General Haig, rejecting the cautious plans of the commander of his 4<sup>th</sup> Army, Sir Henry Rawlinson, forced the initiative. Haig wanted to attack over a stretch of 30 kilometres on the front. Erich von Falkenhayn, at Verdun for instance, had attacked only on a length of about 13 kilometres. Haig doubled the target area for Rawlinson. His 1,000 field cannons and 400 heavy cannons, were insufficient to cover such a large area. Moreover, the British guns had showed little accuracy. Half their shells were shrapnel, instead of the high explosive ones that could effectively destroy trenches. Many British shells proved later to have been duds, shells that didn't even explode! The British would use no gas in the initial attack. Not only did the German soldiers have efficient gas masks, the first uses of gas seemed not to have a great effect on the enemy, and gas was fickle, depending on the wind, which could change unpredictably.

The first phase and first battle on the Somme began on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of 1916. It has been called the Battle of Albert, after a small town in the region. The phase lasted until the 13<sup>th</sup> of July.

The British and French armies attacked the German 2<sup>nd</sup> Army of General Fritz von Below. About 13 British divisions and 5 French divisions attacked. The plans of the assault had been betrayed by two politically disgruntled soldiers from Ulster in the British Army, so the Germans had known about it several weeks in advance. They had the time to prepare! The first Allied cannonade on German trenches and positions lasted from the 24<sup>th</sup> of June to the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

The initial French bombardment was twice as heavy as the British one. The British gunning on the first day of the British attack was not extremely impressive, however. The German 1<sup>st</sup> line remained almost intact. Nevertheless, the British sent their New Army infantry, the troops that had replaced and followed on the BEF, forward in waves, and at walking pace. This caused a generalised massacre of the British troops.

Of the 120,000 British soldiers of the New Army that had attacked the German trenches in this first phase of the Somme Battle, about 19,000 got killed in the first days. In total, 57,000 soldiers remained as casualties in the field. The British made no significant gains in their assault. The British attack was a disaster.

In comparison, the French casualties of the first attacks amounted to only 7,000 men. The German casualties stood then at 10,000 to 12,000 men.

The first days could be called a defeat for the Germans. Its 2<sup>nd</sup> Army was forced back by the French 6<sup>th</sup> Army, from Foucaucourt-en-Santerre on the south bank of the Somme to Maricourt on the northern bank of the Somme.

The Battle of the Somme, finally, proved a more concentrated battle even than Verdun. Both sides shot no less than 30 million shells at one another. The final numbers of casualties rivalled with Verdun in deaths per square metre.

Such went only the first phase of the Battle of the Somme.

Three successive phases would follow. In total, the battles lasted from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1916 to half-March of 1917. It was the largest series of battles fought on the western front, in which about 3 million soldiers fought. More than 1 million men fell casualty. The figures differ from scholar to scholar. Finally, the British and the French advanced about 10 kilometres deep on a front of about 26 kilometres. Yet, the British and the French armies involved failed to capture the town of Péronne, and they halted at 5 kilometres from the town of Bapaume. The battles mostly happened in a region within the villages and towns of Gommecourt, Bapaume, Péronne, Bray and Albert.

The total cost was terrible, of about 432,000 British casualties and 204,000 French casualties against 435,000 German casualties. That made the Battle of the Somme one of the very costliest series of battles of the war!

In view of these figures, it could also be counted as a German defensive victory.

The German General Staff rushed in reinforcements to the region.

In July of 1916, Germany had 112 divisions on the western front and 52 divisions on the eastern front. By end November 1916, Germany had 126 divisions on the western front and 76 divisions on the eastern. At the end, after November 1916, the defensive positions of the German Army were in very bad condition and the German soldiers nearly exhausted. The troops then began to withdraw in the operation called the *Halberich Operation* to the new *Siegfried Stellung*, also called the Hindenburg Line, a more modern and shorter defence front. The German soldiers withdrew in good order, mostly from the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1917 to the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, and then from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of March.

The second phase of the Somme Battle began in the summer. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, Joffre for France and Rawlinson of Great Britain launched a new assault, once more preceded by heavy bombardments. This attack too failed in its objectives. It has been called the Battle of the Bazentin Ridge from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1916. The Allied soldiers advanced behind a creeping barrage of cannon shells.

The fights on the Somme continued at a lesser pace from the 15<sup>th</sup> of July to the 14<sup>th</sup> of September. The battles were supposedly minor operations, but the British casualties rose steadily. The men sent to the assault by the British generals were not all of the English Isles. Regiments from Newfoundland, from Australia and New Zealand, as well as from South Africa, entered the attacks. But the Germans had developed schemes and plans of defence to stop further offensives by the Allied forces.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of July, the Allies fought the Battle of Fromelles. From the 14<sup>th</sup> of July to the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, the British soldiers fought the Battle of the Delville Wood to secure their right flank. Here, the South African 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade plus a contingent of the Southern Rhodesian played a role. From the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July to the 7<sup>th</sup> of August raged the Battle of Pozières, despite communication failures among the Allied forces, very bad weather, and supply failures. The German soldiers counter-attacked and battered at the Allied positions. The British Reserve Army took the plateau overlooking the fortified village of Thiepval from the rear. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1916 raged the Battle of Guillemont, joint attacks by the Allied forces. These attacks broke against the largest counter-attack launched by the German Army. Then, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, happened yet another attack of the French 6<sup>th</sup> Army in the Battle of Ginchy. The 7<sup>th</sup> division of this army took the village of Ginchy.

The British New Army persisted with the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1916, their generals launched two offensives using tanks for the first time. The tanks forced a surprise, so that the British could finally take the 1<sup>st</sup> German defence line. The Germans nevertheless kept their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> lines. They had also built 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> lines, between the actual front and Bapaume. In this month of September, the German soldiers moved in yet more artillery, and brought fresh reinforcements to the front. These held the French attacks in check. It proved to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final offensive mounted by the British Army to take Morval, Lesboeuks and Gueudecourt. Moreover, the French soldiers attacked on Frégicourt and Raucourt.

From the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of September then raged the Battle of Morval, as the French 4<sup>th</sup> Army attacked these villages. Combles, Morval, Lesboeuks and Gaudecourt were captured. The 4<sup>th</sup> Army advanced deep in territory held before by the enemy.

From the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of September happened also the Battle of the Thiepval Ridge, an attack of the Reserve Army led by Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough. The ridge was well defended.

By the end of September, the weather worsened.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of October to the 11<sup>th</sup> of November was fought the Battle of the Ancre Heights. The Allies took the villages of Beaumont-Hamel and Beaucourt. In this fight, the British tried new techniques in gas warfare. They used tanks and aircrafts. September of 1916 became the worst month with the highest number of casualties in the German Army. At the same time raged the Battle of the Transboy Ridges. Meanwhile, also pauses happened, of course, due to extremely bad weather, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of October and from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of that month. Larger offensive operations resumed only in January of the next year of 1917. Fresh German divisions counter-attacked frequently. The Allies won trenches north of Courcelette in very bad weather.

The Battle of the Ancre took place from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of November. It was the last of the British operations. The British Reserve, now called the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, attacked in the valley of the Ancre River.

After these fights, the British attacks on the Somme stopped because of the bad weather. The battles resumed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1917, lasting to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. The British soldiers threw back the German troops at first for 8 kilometres on a 6.5 kilometres long front, and then for 5 kilometres more on a 24 kilometres long front. But from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February

1917 to the 26<sup>th</sup> of March of that year, the Germans retreated slowly to their Hindenburg Line, their formidable new defences.

The British troops captured the heights of the Somme Valley. They could descend to the stream. They had advanced about 10 kilometres from where they had started. Had it been really worth to the Allies to suffer so many dead and wounded men for a mere 10 kilometres? This was a war of attrition, indeed, but was not the attrition as bad on both sides?

The Battle of the Somme had at least the merit it relieved the Battle of Verdun some. It wore the German Army further down, made them clear any claims on a final victory was illusory. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July of 1916, von Falkenhayn risked no further pressure of his troops on Verdun. He ordered the German divisions to a strict defensive position.

The Somme Allied initiative did not even prevent Germany from sending troops from the Western Front to the east, to contain the Brusilov offensive. The result cost von Falkenhayn his function. The German emperor replaced him by the triumphant duo of the eastern battles, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. By November 1916, it became clear to the Allies that their efforts in offensives at Verdun and at the Somme had caused enormous losses in men, losses quite disproportionate to the gains in terrain.

On German side, von Hindenburg and Ludendorff demanded to heighten the production of weapons, mostly cannons. On the seas, they placed new faith in the German *U-Boot* for *Untersee-Boot*, the submarine campaign. In France, they redrew the front line to shorten their front of defence in the west.

At the end of August 1916, Paul von Hindenburg was appointed Chief of the General Staff or CGS, and Ludendorff his principal assistant as First Quartermaster-General. This was despite the fact that Emperor Wilhelm II didn't like Ludendorff at all. He felt threatened by the man; he seemed afraid of Ludendorff. Ludendorff was too much the archetype of the warrior. The emperor dismissed Erich von Falkenhayn. Would the duo of Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff do better than van Falkenhayn?

## On the Balkan Front and Conclusion

In the summer of 1916, Rumania entered the war. Rumania was a fine asset for the Central Powers, until it chose for the side of the Allies! About 30% of the grain needed by Imperial Austria-Hungary in 1914 to 1915 came from Rumania! The Rumanian Army was quite large, about 600,000 men. But the Rumanian troops were poorly led, lacked modern equipment, and even the shells for their guns, at the rate they were spent in this war, were lacking.

The Rumanians were more than interested in the Hungarian parts of the land where many Rumanians lived, in Transylvania foremost. And the Hungarian frontier in Transylvania had been left almost undefended by the Austrians! Rumania's main General Bratianu delayed an offensive after General Brusilov's massive attacks had been stopped. Instead of launching attacks on Bulgaria, as the Russians had proposed, they immediately assaulted what interested them most, Transylvania.

From August to December of 1916, Germany and Austria attacked Rumania with imposing numbers of soldiers, with 33 infantry and 8 cavalry divisions. Some of these came from Verdun, other from the Russian front, by then stabilised. The German General von Mackensen attacked from the south. The Germans and the Austrians repelled the Rumanian assaults in Transylvania, driving the Rumanian Army back to the River Sereth.

Again, the Russian court reacted. They sent 11 cavalry divisions in to help reinforce the Rumanian front. By then, the Central Powers had already taken 3/4<sup>th</sup> of Rumania! This included the capital Bucuresti, Bucharest, and the port of Constanza, as well as the Ploesti oilfields and Rumania's wealthiest grain-producing territories.

At the same time, in July 1916, in Italy, General Luigi Cadorna stopped his Trentino offensive. He rushed in once more his heaviest artillery to the Isonzo. In August, Cadorna could take Gorizia. Other Italian assaults on the Isonzo dismally failed. Nevertheless, in September of 1916, the Italian Army remained on the offensive.

Rumania had been overwhelmed in record time by the Central Powers. The Somme offensive of the Allies had failed to force any decision or much gain of land. Verdun had entered more or less a period of stalemate at the time, after incredibly terrible combats. The year of 1916 ended, with the Central Powers still controlling more territories than at the beginning of the year! By the end of 1916, the time was favourable for political changes!

In England, in December 1916, Lloyd George became Prime Minister. He had been very critical about the outcome of the Somme offensive, so painful and expensive in British lives. He loudly suspected the French military leadership had been better than the British one! Lloyd George set in place a War Cabinet of which only himself and 4 other ministers would be members. One of the members was Bonar Law, a Canadian businessman, who had made a fortune in England. Law had led the Conservative Party since 1911. Another member was Lord Curzon, a former viceroy of India. Curzon could be regarded as the representative of the English nobility. Yet another member was Lord Milner, an intelligent and experienced British politician, a former, governor-general of the Union of South Africa. Lastly was a member also Arthur Henderson, a representative of the Labour Unions.

In France, Aristide Briand made of Maurice Joffre a marshal of France, and the Government's technical military advisor. Joffre was thus pushed on an honourable side track, without any effective power in the decisions of the war. When he realised this, Joffre resigned from his post.

The supreme command on the western front was given to General Robert Nivelle. Nivelle did not exactly receive the whole supreme command that Joffre had enjoyed in all domains of war. The real, supreme strategic authority would henceforth be held by a War Committee of ministers.

General Nivelle owed his promotion to, his efficient October-December 1916 assaults on the German lines near Verdun. Due to his actions, he had reconquered the forts of Vaux and Douaumont, and some of the territory east of the Meuse Stream.

Nivelle was a calm, self-confident man, persuasive in his arguments and conviction for the continuation of the war. Politically, he had nurtured sound leftist connections in the French parliament. The tactics he had used at Verdun included the creeping barrages in front of the assaulting troops, barrages that advanced as the troops stormed forward, as well as the organisation of groups of attacking soldiers in dispersed order, and the use of the new mobile 155 millimetres cannons. He started assaults with tremendous cannonades of the enemy lines, in which he applied 400 millimetres super-heavy railway-mounted guns. Nivelle had proposed a new strategy, which seemed to receive agreement with the joint British-French command. Another asset of Nivelle was that he spoke English fluently.

The new offensive would consist of a preliminary, British-led attack near the French town of Arras, followed by a massive stroke of the French Army against the *Chemin des Dames* ridge north of the Aisne River, to which the Germans had retreated.

In the German Army, the duo of Hindenburg and Ludendorff equally brought new energy and new ideas to the *Obere Heeresleitung*, to the OHL.

They stopped the German assaults at Verdun. At the Somme, they already applied another defence system, a thinner 1<sup>st</sup> line and assault troops behind, which could counter-attack whenever and wherever they were needed. They had therefore more troops behind the very front, in reserve, sparing them, and dedicated to counter-attacks.

They planned no new land attacks, but chose for a new submarine campaign at sea.

They did not really compromise over the war aims of Germany, though! They were still out to win!

But they put hard strains on Germany's resources and on the country's capabilities of arms production. Von Hindenburg also refused to send more troops to the Austrian Commander-in-Chief Conrad, for new Austrian offensives in the Trentino. In accordance with their new views for the war in France, they withdrew in February of 1917 to the 500 kilometres long defensive line called the *Siegfried Stellung*. The British called this the *Hindenburg Line*. The new front had been in preparation with a tremendous new trench system and defence fortifications. The Hindenburg Line shortened the front only by less than 50 kilometres, but it allowed to release 10 German divisions, which von Hindenburg and Ludendorff could use in reserve for counter-attacks. Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff finally built up a strategic reserve of 1.3 million soldiers!

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November of 1916, the Allied Powers met once more at Chantilly in France, north of Paris. They discussed their main future efforts, which would take place on the Western Front, though supported by Russian and Italian offensive initiatives. They decided on new attacks on the Somme. The Allies would launch attacks on a broad front there. In February of 1917, the Allies met again, this time at Calais. There, Aristide Briand and Lloyd George accepted General Robert Nivelle's plan of attacks. Sir Douglas Haig was placed under Nivelle's command for the campaigns. Nivelle's plan this time meant the French would take the heaviest losses in the attack.

In Russia, the *Stavka*, the Russian General Staff, discussed new initiatives in the sector already badly shaken by General Brusilov. Because of the 1916 heavy setbacks, the morale of the Russian officers and troops was low. In February of 1917, the Allied Powers organised a meeting at St Petersburg. The Allies had to hear there the Russian Army would not be ready for new attacks on their fronts before the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1917. The Allies understood the reserves and fighting spirit of the Russian Army were lower than a year ago. Hardly could they foresee that within but one month, in March of 1917, Tzar Nicholas II would have to abdicate! A revolution turned over all expectations and war prospects for Russia.

The hopes for more Russian support would thus remain unfulfilled. France and Great Britain then looked at the Italian front. Before the war, the Italian Army led by Luigi Cadorna had been about 2.2 million soldiers. But Italian enthusiasm had been blown away in the wind of war and heavy losses of men. Now, and at a meeting in Rome, Cadorna too declined new offensives before May 1917.

In March of 1917, in France, Aristide Briand was replaced as Prime Minister by Alexandre Ribot. Paul Poincaré became the new War Minister for France. He remained very sceptical about General Robert Nivelle's new plan for attacks. He would be proved right. Nivelle's star already began to wane!

The most important event of end 1916 still seemed the death on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November of that year of Emperor Franz-Joseph I of Austria. The Habsburg emperor died in his castle of Schönbrunn near Vienna. He died of pneumonia of his right lung, after having caught a cold during his walks in the palace garden with the King of Bavaria. He was 86 years old, having been born in the troubled year of 1830. Franz Joseph I had reigned for 68 years. The bells of Vienna sounded for his funeral. Did they also sound for the millions of dead soldiers fallen on the battlefields of Europe because of his decision to start a war on Serbia?

Franz Joseph's successor became Karl I of Habsburg, his grand-nephew. Franz-Joseph I seems to have liked his successor, a devout Catholic, who had been married to Princess Zita of Bourbon-Parma in 1911. Karl I was the son of the Archduke Otto of Austria and of the Princess Maria Josepha of Saxony. Karl was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1887, in the Castle of Persenbeug, in Lower Austria. He was 29 years old. Karl was a rather agreeable and intelligent man. In the spring of 1916, he had received the command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Army Corps of Austria-Hungary, and he had been promoted to Field Marshal in that spring of 1916 during an offensive against the armies of Italy. He knew what war was. He would be the last Habsburg Emperor of Austria and the last King of Hungary. But that lay in the then still unknown future.

## The World War in 1917

### The Russian revolution

The most remarkable event of the year 1917 was the Russian Revolution, which made an end to the Tzarist Regime.

According to our western calendar, the revolution took place in March, but the date in the Russian Calendar was February of 1917. The Russian Calendar was then still the Julian one. Our calendar was and is the Gregorian Calendar. When the Bolsheviks, the revolutionary Communists of Russia grabbed power, they replaced the Julian calendar by the Gregorian one. They nevertheless let their version of the Gregorian calendar run 13 days behind our Western European version.

The Russian revolution happened in two phases. The first phase started on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, Bolshevik calendar, for us on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. A wave of demonstrations and strikes hit St Petersburg, or Petrograd, as the city was called then. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, the grabbing of power by the Bolsheviks, happened in October, Russian revolutionary calendar, actually by western calculation in November. Therefore, it is now usually known as the October Revolution, though our actual date for it was in November. To stop the confusion, henceforth, the dates presented here will remain according to the Western European calendar.

Julian Vincius followed the events as well as he could. Like Max Vincius, he read several newspapers, usually in the evenings, lying on his bed. He still received the German newspapers, and also read the French ones. These still got through the German lines by mysterious ways, to the house of Monsieur Baraine.

Julian recognised the importance of the Russian Revolution. He foresaw earlier than most the Bolsheviks would stop the war in the east. That would allow tens of German East Front divisions and maybe even a few Austro-Hungarian divisions, to be redirected to the Western Front. The change would gain once more the numerical superiority of the Central Powers on the trench fronts of France, and realise the original plans of the German General Staff. Julian clearly recognised new tactics of attack, as well for the artillery as for the infantry. These had actually been developed on the eastern front. The newer methods of attack might surprise the French and British armies on the French front, and allow breakthroughs in the west for the German Army, maybe even bring victory. But then, who could predict how the rest of the World War would fare?

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March of 1917, enormous strikes and accompanying demonstrations happened in St Petersburg, Russia. This day was the International Women's day. Thousands of women walked together *en masse* in Russia's capital, protesting against food shortages and rising prices. Flour and coal shortages had forced bakeries to close. The large coal- and grain-producing regions for Russia lay in the Ukraine, far from St Petersburg and Moscow. The Russian Army had ordered the railways and the tracks movements almost exclusively for the war effort. Also, the troops received priority for grain deliveries, whereas both the harvests of grain and its transports seemed paralysed. As the men fought on the front, less consumer goods in general were produced. Therefore, the purchasing power of the households fell. Grain could be sold, but there was not enough money in the society to purchase it! Paper money was increasingly becoming worthless by inflation. The Ministry of

Agriculture proved not up to its task to supply the larger urban concentrations. Huge stocks of grain remained reserved for the army, stockpiled in huge storehouses, or was fed to the farm animals and eaten by the peasants. The rural villages did not get hungry. The cities did! Famine threatened.

St Petersburg then had a population of over 2.4 million. It was severely over-crowded. Women worked more than 40 hours a week and had to wait afterwards in long queues to get to food. No wonder, infant mortality doubled during the war, adding to the general distress. In January and February of 1917, almost 700,000 Russian strikers stopped working. And the cause for the strikes were mostly political protests.

The uprising of St Petersburg originated in the Vyborg Side of the city, a suburb of working-class people, of metal- and armament workers in the industries along the River Neva. It was a spontaneous movement, not really organised or forced by the Socialist or Communist associations. These last, of course, exploited the crisis situation. Most of the Bolshevik leaders were not even in the city! They were still hiding in exile, abroad or in Siberia.

After the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, a more dangerous development ensued. The St Petersburg garrison mutinied! The soldiers collaborated with the strikers in seizing control of the power centres of the city. The Volynski regiment mutinied. The NCOs, the Non-Commissioned Officers, led their men in defying the officers. They refused to fire on strikers, took control of the post offices, government palaces, telephone exchanges, and they emptied the military storehouses of the army. The arms were rapidly dispersed throughout the city. The Vyborg Side workers and the military joined, and soon came to control large parts of the city. They cut off the loyal government forces from weapons and ammunition.

At that moment, Tzar Nicholas II was at his headquarter in Moghilev. He telegraphed to the St Petersburg military to stop the disorders immediately. The then St Petersburg military commander was General Khobalov. He outlawed street gatherings. Shooting between loyal and revolutionary groups made over one hundred casualties. Two days later, Khobalov had no loyal troops left! The crowd and the garrison amounted to about 180,000 armed men in the city, with perhaps 150,000 additional in the suburbs. Khobalov had merely about 3,500 police officers left in his service. The disobedience of the garrison seemed to have been triggered by the order to fire on men, women and children advancing in the masses of demonstrators. The garrison of St Petersburg was constituted of war veterans, who had returned to the armed services after having been wounded at the front, weary of the battles lost and the harsh life in the trenches or in the cold of the plains. Young recruits too served in the garrison. These could easily be influenced, and they followed the advice of their elders. They all formed a disillusioned lot, who had their fill of the hardships of the war and of the threatening famine in the city. St Petersburg was equally a city of disillusioned propertied, of educated and alienated people. These believed only drastic changes could help enhancing the grandeur of Russia.

After 4 days of the uprising, workers and soldiers joining, two new power centres emerged. One was already a New Provisional Government, organised by *Duma* representatives, by parliamentarians. The other was formed by the St Petersburg *Soviet*, the Workers' Council, mainly led by the Social Revolutionaries.

The St Petersburg *Soviet* grew to include 3,000 to 4,000 members.

In the Provisional Government gathered the Cadets, the revolutionaries of old, and the more moderate Socialists.

The Socialist Revolutionaries, the SRs, the Communist Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks had formed the *Soviet*. These set up a Provisional Executive Committee, the *Ispolkom*, mostly consisting of or being led by Mensheviks. They had formed a military commission to take on the command of the St Petersburg garrison, assuring still law and order in the capital.

The Provisional Government and the Provisional Committee formed a dual authority, under the *Duma* President Mikhael Rodzianko. The Provisional Government, at the mercy of the *Soviet* in the Tauride palace of St Petersburg, where the *Duma* had met, had by then been encircled by the insurgents. It now ordered liberal measures. All political prisoners were to be set free. Freedom of assembly, of speech and association, were granted. All the soldiers who had participated in the revolution could keep their weapons, and would not anymore be sent to the front.

The Prince Georgy Yevgenyevich Lvov led the Provisional Government. He was born in Dresden, in Germany, and descended from the sovereign Rurik dynasty princes of Yaroslavl. He was no Romanov. He became chairman of the Russian Union of *Zemstvos* in 1914. In 1915, he became a member of the *Zemgor*, a joint committee of the Union of *Zemstvos* and the Union of Towns, which helped supply the military and tended to the wounded from the war with the Central Powers. He was a member of the Russian Constitutional Democratic Party.

Tzar Nicholas II hoped to suppress the revolt in St Petersburg by his regiments of loyal front troops. He sent General Ivanov to advance against the city. Inside his General Staff, however, in the *Stavka*, his generals discussed the situation in quite another direction!

The *Stavka* considered the monarchy not worth saving! Some of the generals were in favour of a constitutional monarchy for Russia, others wanted a government responsible only to the *Duma*, and yet others wanted a republic to be installed. Among these last men were the influential generals and commanders of entire front sectors. The Generals Brusilov and Ruskii, and General Alekseyev too, belonged to this camp.

When the tzar sought to join his family at the Tsarskoe Selo Palace, he was forced to re-route to the headquarter of Pskov of General Ruskii.

There, the generals of the Staff urged the tzar to accept a government responsible to the *Duma* alone. The tzar accepted this. In the meantime, however, General Rodzianko reported from St Petersburg the revolutionaries would only accept the abdication of the tzar. The *Stavka* generals then urged this course upon the tzar, who accepted once more.

Tzar Nicholas II accepted to abdicate in favour of his brother, Grand Duke Michael. Later still, the Provisional Government warned Michael that persisting in continuing the monarchy might lead to civil war, in which his life could not be guaranteed. Michael too, preferred to step down. The two abdications were published on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1917.

The sovereignty over Russia lay henceforth on the hands of the Provisional Government. Russia was a republic!

At the beginning of March 1917 already, it became clear there could be no system of rule over Russia by two different organs.

The *Ispolkom* of the *Soviets*, independently decreed all the armed forces were subordinate to the *Soviet*, which could countermand the instructions ordered by the Provisional Government. All military units at company level had to elect committees for the control of weapons and military equipment. The *Soviet* decreed this, without even consulting the Provisional Government, which could not but agree. One knew quickly in Russia which organisation truly wielded power in the country!

Since the *Soviet* wanted peace rapidly, the Russian soldiers began to desert in large numbers at the front. More than 150,000 men left immediately. They returned home.

This made large sections of the borders of Russia depleted of men. The Germans could have advanced like a hot knife in butter! In mid-March also, the death penalty was abolished in the army. The powers of summary executions were transferred to elected courts constituted of soldiers. Soldiers were from now on allowed to freely engage in political activities. Authority of all kinds, of from officers in the army to foremen in factories, seemed to have been ended in the dustbins.

The Russian *Soviets* published a decree in which they claimed to be willing to end the war with the Central Powers. The committees and the people became ever more hostile to the ongoing war. It was always politically a bad idea to openly declare one's intentions before negotiations. The workers' councils lent justification to deserters, and to the diminishing of morale in the Russian Army. But this happened in face of a tough enemy that could still embark on new offensives!

In May of 1917, the Prince Lvov broadened his government by including more leftist personalities, members of the Socialist Revolutionaries and of the moderate Communists, the Mensheviks. Thus entered Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky as War Minister into the Cabinet of Ministers.

Kerensky was a Russian lawyer and revolutionary. He was born in Ulyanovsk on the Volga and Kerensky's father was the teacher of Vladimir Ulyanov, the later Lenin. Members of the Kerensky and Ulyanov families were friends. He had won a reputation for being a defence lawyer in a number of political trials of revolutionaries. In 1912, Kerensky was elected to the *Fourth Duma* as a member of the moderate, non-Marxist labour party founded by Alexis Aladin, the *Trudoviks*, associated with the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. He also joined a Freemason society uniting the anti-monarchy associations that fought for the democratic renewal of Russia. He was a brilliant orator and skilled parliamentary leader. His star rose in the *Duma*. His speeches were impressive. He now became a member of the *Duma's* Provisional Government, and got elected to vice-chairman of the newly formed St Petersburg Soviet.

At the same time as Kerensky entered the Provisional Government, General Alekseyev was replaced by General Brusilov. The new Government, urged by the Allies, decided on a new Russian offensive against the Central Powers. This has later been called the *Kerensky Offensive*. The Russians told they were attacking for peace.

The Bolsheviks were then the only group opposing the war uncompromisingly. The workers' opinions opposed strongly against further fighting on the front, so major mutinies once more broke out in Russia in June.

The new and last Russian offensive was set to start on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1917. It was directed against the Austro-Hungarian troops in the south-west of Russia. It started with heavy cannonades, after which the Russians launched 84 divisions against the 53 divisions of Austria-Hungary on the front. Almost immediately, the Czech units in the Austrian Army surrendered, as was by then a normal and expected occurrence in the army. The Russians advanced by 30 kilometres. But then, their troops in the rear, more attracted by pacifist Bolshevik propaganda, refused to follow up on the success. Subsequent attacks faltered in lack of energy and will to overcome the enemy. Desertions of soldiers happened each day. Less than a week later, the Austrian troops reorganised, and launched a counter-offensive. This caused a considerable surprise in the Russian Headquarter. The Austrian Army then advanced by 160 kilometres, and completely freed original Habsburg territory from Russian battalions. Russia lost even the gains made by General Brusilov during his spectacular offensive of 1916. Further counter-attacks by the Russian Army failed miserably. The *Kerensky Offensive* entered in total failure.

As the balance on the Eastern Front shifted rapidly to the advantage of the Central Powers, Ludendorff ordered more attacks of the German forces in the north-west of Russia. The German Army attacked Riga, set up a siege to the city, and marched on, threatening St Petersburg. Ludendorff was losing patience! He needed the divisions of the Eastern Front, to attack on the Western Front. His aim with the offensives against Russia was to throw St Petersburg in a panic, and cause more chaos and dissensions in the revolutionary Russian parties over the city's fate.

The events in Russia also stirred up the workers' organisations in other countries, among which even Germany. In August of 1917, German sailors mutinied on board of 5 battleships and 1 cruiser at Wilhelmshafen. The revolt was a reaction on the harsh discipline and on the bullying of the officers on the ships. The revolt was quickly repressed. A few mutineers were executed, and others convicted of treason.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1917, at the restructuring of the Provisional Government in Russia, when Prince Lvov hardened the Cabinet of Ministers by including Menshevik figures and Social Revolutionaries, the then Foreign Minister Pavel Nikolayevich Miliukov resigned. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks cried out more and more the slogan they sensed the people wanted most to hear: an end to the war! Their formula was for no annexations and no indemnities, and a peace settlement based on self-determination of the peoples. The 'May Crisis' that ensued in the Cabinet of Ministers, led to these principles for negotiations with Germany in a programme called of 'revolutionary defence'.

For instance, Poland, which had till then been part of the Russian Empire, should become fully independent, through in military alliance with Russia. The times of imperialist Russia seemed over.

From March to June 1917, Russian diplomats sought contact with the Central Powers via Stockholm, Sweden. Mathias Erzberger for von Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg spoke with Kolyushko, the Russian official. Erzberger, the right-hand man of Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, was a journalist and writer, member of the Centre Catholic Party in Germany.

Ludendorff heard of the matter. He intervened harshly. Germany had to seek expansion along the Baltic Sea! That was what his troops had died for, that was where the Russians had been defeated. How could he explain to his soldiers these lands, taken by the loss of so much German blood, could be handed over to Russia now, without the least shot being fired?

In the meantime, in Russia, Mikhail Ivanovich Tereshchenko became the new Foreign Minister of Russia, replacing Miliukov. He was a major Ukrainian landowner, the proprietor of several sugar factories, and a financier. He was also the owner of a private publishing house, called *Sirin*, in St Petersburg. He had been appointed to Minister of Finance in the Provisional Government under Kerensky.

The main opposers to the war remained the Bolsheviks. Lenin had returned from exile, so that in 1917 he was the principal figure to force an intransigent anti-War stance. The Russian workers had not the least interest in an Allied victory. The conflict should stop, lives of the proletariat were to be saved.

The real, basic conflict, Lenin told, should be the international civil war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat!

By then, Russia was sinking into a profound economic crisis. The monetary downturn and the inflation increased by the day in the country, and accelerated. Soldiers deserted by the hundreds, railway connections got disrupted, the food supplies to the great cities, mainly to St Petersburg and Moscow dwindled to a trickle. Protest strikes against the critically lowering living standards broke out about everywhere. The Provisional Government had failed to bring an early armistice and the end of the war. Far too many Russians had died for the Tzarist regime. The war should end! The *Kerensky Offensive* too had failed. The offensive had weakened the authority of the Provisional Government. St Petersburg moved once more to a very revolutionary mood. And the mood realised into another armed revolution.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, a crowd of soldiers and workers' militias, the so-called Red Guards, surrounded the *Soviet* representatives and the Provisional Government in the Tauride Palace. The crowds dispersed as troops loyal to the Provisional Government arrived. Lenin had to flee to Finland, fearing reprisals of the Government. Leading Bolsheviks were arrested everywhere, their organisations broken up and prohibited. After these turbulent July days, Prince Lvov had to turn over power to the strong man of the moment, Kerensky. Kerensky instantly restricted public gatherings. He replaced the leftist sympathiser General Brusilov by Lavr Kornilov.

Kornilov, now a man on the forefront of Russian politics, had hoped to use the new revolution to install an authoritarian regime of his own. In August, the Russian General Staff sent troops under General Krymov to overthrow both the Provisional Government and the *Soviet*. This insurgence collapsed. The *débâcle* lost Kerensky much credit with the army, but he managed to denounce Kornilov and to re-instate General Alekseyev in his place.

In the autumn, Russian peasants seized lands and began new strikes. From July to October, St Petersburg lost more and more the control over the administrations in the provinces. Finland and the Ukraine declared their independence, without the central authorities being able to do anything about it. The chaos should end! A new authoritarian regime had to re-instore order and law!

Until October 1917, the group of men that won most by the confused situation, were the Bolsheviks. Their membership grew to 350,000. In the elections in the two capitals, they won from 33% to 51% of the votes. In September of 1917, they gained control of the St Petersburg *Soviet*. The people increasingly wanted to hear Lenin's messages of immediate peace and socialist revolution.

In this autumn of 1917, the main opposition front to the Provisional Government were Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Lenin was everything but a pacifist. He did not hesitate to use violence in furthering his cause. He remained convinced in the truths of his own line of ideology. Only a seizure of total power by the working class could realise his ideas, and achieve peace at the international level.

In the beginning of October, the Bolsheviks won the majority in the St Petersburg *Soviet*. From then on, they completely controlled the city. Lev Trotsky Bronstein became the president or chairman of the St Petersburg *Soviet*. Lenin planned a coup in Russia for the beginning of November. Trotsky was also a leading figure in the Military Revolutionary Committee of St Petersburg, the MRC. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1917, Lenin's occasion to grab power came to him, presented on a plate.

The head of the Russian Government, Kerensky, announced plans to transfer the St Petersburg garrison to the front. Such a measure could only mean insurrection! The soldiers of the garrison did not want at all to lose their life so late in the war they knew would end very soon. They desired ardently to have this war be stopped! The troops gave their support and allegiance to Trotsky's Communist MRC. The next day, Kerensky ordered the closure of two Bolshevik newspapers. The internal struggle was on! Trotsky was in charge! The MRC occupied the railway stations in the city. They took the central bank, the post and telegraph offices, and the telephone exchange.

Finally, Lenin ordered an attack on the Government Headquarter in the Winter Palace. The palace was practically undefended, and taken easily. Lenin received the endorsement of these actions by the Congress of *Soviets*, and by the Social Revolutionaries. He was the master of St Petersburg.

Lenin founded the 'Council of Peoples' Commissions'. Although the Council totally lacked government experience, as well as experience of war and of Foreign Relations, it began to rule by decrees. The 'People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs' was Leon Trotsky Bronstein, the Ukrainian Jew become Communist. Trotsky published all the secret treaties of tsarist Russia, such as the Turkish partitioning agreements, the Treaty of London with Italy, the Doumergue Agreement, and threw them thereby in the public sphere. He published his 'Decree on Peace', in which he declared Russia had to seek a democratic settlement for the war, without annexations and indemnities.

The Allied Governments of the moment, with democratic or constitutional monarchies as state organisations, refused to recognise the new Russian Communist Government. They also declined to join it in peace negotiations with the Central Powers. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks sought an armistice with the Central Powers. Local truces already covered almost the entire Eastern front.

By mid-December 1917, the general ceasefire between Russia and the Central Powers was agreed upon. The Russian Army disintegrated. The troops returned home *en masse*. A first official armistice was concluded for one month. The agreement was for no side to make strategic troop movements, but the German OHL was already sending troops from the Eastern Front to the west!

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1917, in the middle of the winter, separate peace negotiations started between Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary. The place was Brest-Litowsk, a headquarter of the German Army. The representatives of the Central Powers received their indications from OHL, in Germany.

The chief representative of Lenin was Adolf Abramovich Joffe. Joffe was born in Simferopol in the Crimea, from a wealthy Jewish-Karaite family. He was close to the Menshevik faction within the Russian Social Democratic Party of which he had become a member. However, after moving to Vienna in May 1906, he became close to Leon Trotsky's position and helped Trotsky edit the journal *Pravda* from 1908 to 1912 while studying medicine and psychoanalysis with Alfred Adler. He was arrested in 1912 and remained there until the February 1917 revolution. He later headed the Bolshevik fraction in the *Duma*. Joffe served as the Chairman of the St Petersburg Military Revolutionary Committee or MRC. Immediately after the revolution, he supported Lenin and Trotsky against Zinoviev, Kamenev, Alexei Rykov and other Bolshevik Central Committee members who would have shared power with other socialist parties.

The negotiations for the official signing of first an armistice and later a Peace Treaty, took place in the citadel of Brest-Litowsk, where the Germans could receive the various delegations in relative luxury and quietness. The Russian plenipotentiary members of the all-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of peasants, workers and soldiers met the German military representatives first to agree on an armistice.

The representatives of the Russians were Adolf Abraham Joffe, president of the delegation, and Leo Boris Kamenev. Other members of the delegation were Grigori Jakob Sokolnikov-Brilliant, Sergei Maslowski-Mitilowski and Anastasia Vizenko, the only woman in the rooms. Translator for the Russians was Assessor Shokolow. Joffe had literally picked up from the streets men who should represent the people, Olitsch Fjodor Wladimir, a sailor, Nikolai Kusma Belgakov, a soldier, Roman Ilarion Staschkov, a peasant, and Pavel Andrej Obuchow, a worker. Secretary of the delegation was Leo Karachan, an Armenian.

The German delegation held the Chief of the General Staff of the Upper Command East, Major General Max Hoffmann, the president of the delegation. Other Germans were Major of the General Staff Brinckmann, Naval Captain Hey, who would be the Germans' translator, Naval Captain Horn, *Rittmeister* von Rosenberg, Lieutenant-Colonel Fokke and First Lieutenant von Bülow, the secretary.

In the delegation for Austria-Hungary came Lieutenant Colonel of the Staff Pokorny, Major of the General Staff *Freiherr* von Mirbach, the secretary of the delegation Count Szaky von Kereczek and Adorian.

The Bulgarian delegation consisted of the Colonel of the General Staff and Adjudant of the king Sanschow, with the Councillor of State Anastasov.

The Turkish delegation was led by the Cavalry General and Adjutant of the Sultan Zeki-Pasha. Member also was Councillor of State Eden Bey.

The negotiations went reasonably well and an official document on the armistice was signed by Joffe and the German Prince Leopold von Bayern.

The following peace talks also took place in Brest-Litowsk, though the Russians asked for a while to transfer the meeting to Stockholm. The Germans refused this. The peace talks were held by the same men, though a few added: for the Germans came Chancellor Kühlmann and the *Geheimrat* Nadolny. For Austria-Hungary came the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Czernin, with delegates von Mery and von Wiesmer, the Councillor Count Colloredo, with Lieutenant Field Marshal Csicseric. For the Bulgarians came the Minister of Justice Popow and the delegates Kassew and Stopanowich. For Turkey arrived the Grand-Vizir Tallaat Pasha with Nessimir Bey, Ibrahim Hakka Pasha, and the Secretary Reshak-Hitmed Bey. As the Ukraine had declared its independence, the Germans accepted the Ukrainian delegation originally led by Chulobowitch. The Russians later added their own men for the Ukraine, the President of the Executive Medwedjew and the People's Commissar for military matters Schachrai. The Germans added the Minister of the State of Bayern Count Podewils-Dürnitz. The negotiations started on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1917.

During the negotiations, the situation in Vienna became practically catastrophically acute. The city had no more food. The city-dwellers needed 30,000 wagons of food or the Austrian-Hungarian railways would stop riding. The Army could not be provisioned anymore. Strikes grew in Vienna. Germany categorically declared it could not help. Food could come from the Ukraine, the grain barn of Europe, but Trotsky did his best to stop deliveries. At that moment, however, the Ukrainians no longer negotiated with Russia. The Ukrainians dictated! Austria got its grain.

The Russian delegates often telegraphed and thus stayed in communication with the Bolshevik headquarters at the Smolnij Institute in St Petersburg, now Leningrad. Leon Trotsky wanted to end the war. He demobilised the Russian Army, which could yet form a danger for the Bolshevik regime, as many officers and soldiers remained loyal to the czar. He did not want to sign any peace treaty, believing the Germans would not advance farther than where their armies stood currently. He knew well Russia has its back to the wall, but how to negotiate when one had nothing to bring into the bargain? Trotsky did not want to surrender all.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, the Ukraine, by the Attaman General Krassnow, asked for the protection of Germany against the Russians. Germany promised to deliver weapons. Finland, recently declared independent, equally asked for Germany's help.

Joffe came to Brest-Litowsk with 6 basic principles: evacuations of each other's territories, no annexations, no indemnities, no unequal trade. Finland could keep its independence, and Poland could become independent. Independence could be restored to the nations that had been deprived of it since 1914, so that they would be able to decide on their own future by referendums. The discussions went primarily about these matters. Joffe and the Bolsheviks were simply carving up the former empire!

In the Ukraine, the Parliament or *Rada*, took power, even though the Bolsheviks set up a rival government in Kharkov. The Ukrainian Army could fend off the Red Russian Army. The Bolsheviks cried out to anyone who wanted to hear the ideology they stood for, for the right of self-determination of the people. But the Ukraine was part of Russia, they claimed!

Of course, when Finland and the Ukraine declared their independence from the Bolshevik Government, the Russian Communist opinion changed slightly.

Trotsky wanted nothing of losing these countries. They were Russian, and should remain so. From Kiev, representatives of the *Rada*, the Ukrainian parliament, were sent to Brest-Litowsk to discuss with the Russian delegation. Leader of the mission was one Alexander von Seviuk, barely twenty-one years old. With him came the Professor Hrushecewsky and the delegation member Lubinsky. They moved by train to Brest-Litowsk, got stopped by Bolsheviks, but could continue their journey. They had the plenipotentiary powers to sign the armistice, to ratify it in the name of the *Rada*, and to continue the discussions on the Peace Treaty for the Ukrainian *Rada*.

After a while, Trotsky, pushed into a corner he could not find arguments to get out, left Brest-Litowsk. No agreement was reached.

Trotsky and Lenin had thought the Germans would not move. They did!

The German military gave an ultimatum: either an agreement was reached by the 18<sup>th</sup> of February at 12h00, or the war would continue. As no answer was received, the German Army advanced at 12h15 of the end day of their ultimatum. The German advance was spectacular. The German Army found no resistance, as most of the Russian troops had left the defences. The Germans troops took in record time Dünaburg. In Estland, they took Leal, Permigel and Lensal. They captured Menden, Wolmar and Hapsal. In Livland, they ran over Ronneburg, Wolmar and Spandau. They took Minsk and Rowno.

The German Army took more than 10,000 Russian prisoners, soldiers, and later 6,800 officers, then 57,000 soldiers. They captured 2,400 guns, 5,000 machine cannons, 500 trucks and more armoured cars, 128,000 rifles, 800 railroad locomotives and 8,000 railroad wagons.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, the Russians, pushed pitilessly to the wall, quickly declared ready for peace. They recognised the independence of Finland and of the Ukraine. They would let go of Poland, Kurland, Lithuania, Kars and Batum.

Although Joffe had signed the ceasefire agreement with the Central Powers on December 2, 1917, he supported Trotsky in the latter's refusal to sign a permanent Peace Treaty in February 1918.

Despite Trotsky and Joffe having refused to sign the treaty, the Bolshevik Central Committee decided on February 23, 1918 to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litowsk papers. Joffe remained a member of the Soviet delegation only under protest and in a purely consultative capacity. Grigori Yakovlovich Sokolnikov, leader of the signatory team, signed on behalf of Russia.

The Russian delegation arrived once more in Brest-Litowsk on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1918, to officially sign the Peace Treaty. The bluff of Lenin and of Trotsky had been challenged and proven no stronger than wind. The German Army stopped its progress immediately. Later, as king of Finland, the Fins chose Prince Friedrich Karl von Hessen. Later still, Joffe was sent to Berlin to serve as the Soviet-Russian ambassador.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1917, Germany and Austria-Hungary decided in their common Christmas Declaration for a general peace with the Allies, without annexations and indemnities, if the Allies would do the same. The Allies did not respond to this declaration in time.

Emperor Wilhelm II agreed on the way forward with his Chancellor Kühlmann. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of February of 1918, the Central Powers signed a treaty with the Ukraine. The Ukraine promised to deliver grain to the Central Powers of about 1 million tons by August of 1918. It also promised to honour further demands of grain by Germany and Austria.

At Brest-Litowsk, Leon Trotsky led the Russian delegations. He negotiated the frontier of Russia, fixed as a line drawn from Brest-Litowsk to Riga. Russia would be deprived of Poland, Lithuania and Western Latvia. Trotsky refused this agreement, which had been arrived at from out of St Petersburg by Joffe and Lenin. He walked out of Brest-Litowsk. His own solution was to conclude to no war and no peace. A strange solution, which probably made political sense, but Russia had already demobilised its army, and remained in an awkward position.

The war between Russia and the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary thus ended.

## Germany and the USA

In November of 1916, Woodrow Wilson won the American elections. The themes of his campaign had been the trade and the war loans, the blockade of Great Britain and of Europe, the German U-boat raids, and the necessity for the United States of America to mediate in the war. Wilson had in mind to pursue the image of an ideal, democratic peace, based on the respect of the borders, the self-determination, the consent of the governed, and of freedom of trade over the seas. Essentially, he remained suspicious of the politics and the imperialism of all the European belligerent countries, whether of the Central Powers or of the Allies. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January of 1917, he delivered a memorable speech on the subject of ‘Peace without Victory’. In those fine phrases, he presented his idealistic views. He proposed also a ‘League to enforce peace’ of all nations, a worldwide League of Nations, and an international, progressive agenda to end the war.

A little later, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, Germany introduced its unrestricted submarine warfare, mainly on Great Britain, and therefore on the war trade between the USA and the Allies. Germany wanted to prevent Great Britain and the Allies from importing weapons of all sorts. A little earlier, Germany had also sent the so-called Zimmermann telegram.

Arthur Zimmermann was then the new German Foreign Minister. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, he had sent a telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico. The telegram had been sent in code via diverse ways, and even over the USA lines. It had been encrypted, but various departments who saw the telegram pass, had quickly deciphered it, and read the contents. The telegram proposed Germany to side with Mexico, which remained in a relation of conflict with the USA. If the USA would enter the war in Europe, the German ambassador in Mexico was authorised to offer to Mexico an alliance against the USA. Germany offered financial aid, and would help Mexico to reconquer the territory it had lost to the USA in the Mexican-American War of 1846 to 1848. The German ambassador was also to convince the Mexican President Venustiano Carranza to invite Japan to change sides.

Woodrow Wilson received the decrypted Zimmermann telegram on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1917. The president was shocked and angered. Large extracts of the telegram were published in the press and caused immediate outcry in the US. As a result of the telegram and of the U-boat threat, President Wilson’s Cabinet agreed on war with Germany on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. Wilson asked the US Congress to convene on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. He presented his message of war to the Congress on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, and could declare war on Germany on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April.

Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany alone, not on the other countries of the Central Powers. As main cause, he cited the U-boat unrestricted warfare. Wilson’s message to Germany was the USA would deliver henceforth all the products needed or wished by the Allies, extend loans, and build up its own navy against Germany. The USA would send 500,000 conscript soldiers to Europe.

## German actions in the spring of 1917

Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff were fully in charge of the German troops, as well as of the German initiatives in 1917. They forced up the war production of weapons and ammunition in their country, insisted on more manpower in the army, and improved the co-ordination with their allies in the Central Powers' coalition. On the Western Front, they mostly stayed on the defensive, like a predator resting after a hunt and gathering strength to leap forward once more. The German armies stood and remained at the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line, which they considered invincible. On the Eastern Front, they also remained rather passive, wondering how the new regime in Russia would react.

In the air, they did launch a new form of warfare, sending Gotha bombers with a thousand-pound payload over London and over the harbours of south-east England. The bombers made about 400 raids over England. The Gotha bombers and the Zeppelins caused the death of almost 1,500 civilians over the Channel. The attackers tighed up more than 300 British defending aircraft. The British fighters had success. Of the German bombers, 24 were destroyed and 37 lost in mechanical failures or in accidents. The German bombing campaign was called off in May of 1918. The airplanes caused considerable panic and destruction in London.

Another weapon in the German offensive against Great Britain was formed by the submarines, by the *Unterseebooten* or U-boats. The German Navy were at first very successful at sinking British merchant ships. The U-boats were von Hindenburg and Ludendorff's answers to the blockage by the British of the German battleship fleet. The British reacted by having the merchant ships, especially the British and the American ships that brought in supplies, to navigate together in convoys, in organised groups escorted by British warships. On average, such convoys consisted of up to 20 merchant ships. Convoying proved extremely efficient in fending off German submarines. In 1917, of over 5,000 merchant ships sailing in protected convoys, only 63 were lost at sea. Ultimately, also in 1918, Germany could not afford building yet more submarines, and the attacks would stop.

In 1917, a part of the SPD representatives in the *Reichstag*, refused to vote further war credits. They all opposed the war. They formed the *Unabhängige Sozial Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the USPD. They left and weakened the existing SPD block. The USPD would join the *Internationale Gruppe*, which was already since 1915 active against the war politics of Imperial Germany, against the majority in the *Reichstag*. This group was led by the political leftist activists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. It was a sign the protests against the war grew in Germany. Karl Liebknecht was the leader of the Communist, so-called *Spartakusbund*, which would later play a role in the new political constellation of Germany.

## 1917 on the Western Front

Allied offensives of the year 1917 began on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1917.

The first attack was part of a British preliminary offensive at Arras. The BEF delivered an opening bombardment, twice as intense as at the Somme. During the Somme Battle, it had taken 30 shells to kill one German soldier! Large quantities of gas killed most of the transport horses of the enemy, and silenced their batteries. The German cannons and howitzers that remained, could not anymore be moved. The British attack proceeded with 18 divisions against the 7 defending German divisions.

On the left wing, the Canadian troops heroically stormed the Vimy Ridge. The infantry advanced about 5 kilometres. This attack, was of as large a scale as the one launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1916, a year before. The 2<sup>nd</sup> day, a cavalry attack took place in a snow storm, and failed. The British casualties in the first 3 days were fewer than half those on the Somme. They made 13,000 German prisoners, and captured 200 German field cannons and howitzers. Sir Douglas Haig prolonged the battle beyond the one week originally planned.

On the British right wing, Haig ordered his Australian soldiers to attack. These did advance into the German positions too, occupied some terrain, but lost many men in the effort. Too many men.

The operation made in total about 150,000 British losses for 100,000 German casualties.

The débâcle of the British Arras Offensive also weakened the British Prime Minister Lloyd George. The British generals reverted to their preferred and for them more urgent aim of Flanders.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, the French Army launched assaults on the formidable *Chemin des Dames* Ridge. The French Army prepared their infantry attacks also with an enormous preliminary bombardment. Over a length of 30 kilometres, the French batteries shot about 11 million shells! But the fire was not accurate, and not concentrated enough on the first front lines. When the French infantry attacked, the German defence was almost intact! The Germans had known what to expect. They held the front line very thinly. When the French infantry ran towards the German front lines, they found themselves surrounded by fire from out of concrete machine gun posts. The tanks used in the attacks brought little hope and protection. The French Schneider tanks got stopped by the German field cannons.

The same day, about 10,000 Senegalese soldiers attacked in the most crucial sector, and that in a snow blizzard! They were not used to fighting in such weather conditions. More than half of their men were killed or wounded in the assault. After two weeks of fighting thus, General Nivelle did capture most of the ridge, but at tremendous cost of lives. The French lost 130,000 men, killed or wounded, and the rest of the men saw at what arrogance so many of their colleagues and friends had been mowed down.

The Nivelle Offensive was rapidly called the *Nivelle Disaster*! After the Nivelle failure, the French Army could not afford anymore such massive casualties as had been taken, even had the soldiers been willing to undertake them, which they did not!

The new War Minister, Paul Painlevé, came to his post in the Alexandre Ribot Cabinet of March 1917. He acted decisively. He replaced General Nivelle by General Philippe Pétain. Pétain hastily stopped the offensives. He was too late to prevent the first mutinies in the French Army.

The April attacks and their enormous losses of men, made the Allies understand they were having an increasing manpower crisis. How could they continue the war with such attrition losses? They had suffered far too many casualties in too short a time!

Maybe by hearing of the Russian example, also the French troops were becoming less and less willing to press offensives in 1917.

Such offensives cost dearly in human lives. The French troops were weary of the war. It lasted too long. It cost too many lives.

Who would have disagreed? The French soldiers had the example of Russian battalions surrendering without much resistance to the German troops, as well as of the Czech troops raising arms and rifles when confronted with Russian attacks.

In 1917, in almost every European Army, groups of men began refusing attacks. Other grievances added. Complaints over not enough rest and leave, of bullying by officers, complaints about inadequate food, poisoned the atmosphere in the trenches. Mutinies happened. Resentment and grumbling augmented by the day. The soldiers desperately wanted the war to end. They saw no evidence this would happen soon. Why then, so many dead each day in the trenches? Why so much tension? All the Allied offensives so far had not gained any definite decision.

Discontent grew in the spring of 1917 in the French Army and led to mutinies, undermining seriously the fighting spirit of the French Army. Violence, unrest and strikes also reached civilian life in France. An attempt was even made for a march on Paris. More than 120 outbreaks of mutinies sapped the French soldiers' morale. In these circumstances, a change of command imposed itself.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1917, General Henri Philippe Benoni Omer Pétain, usually called Philippe Pétain, was called to replace General Nivelle as leader of the French Army. Pétain, later Marshal and receiving the nickname of the 'Lion of Verdun', was born in Cauchy-à-la-Tour in northern France. His father was a farmer. Pétain remained a bachelor, though he was a known womaniser and married late his mistress of old. He got promoted slowly, until he led the 2<sup>nd</sup> French Army at Verdun in 1916. He was a soldiers' soldier. Pétain served briefly as Army Chief of Staff, as from the end of April 1917. He then became Commander-in-Chief of the entire French army, replacing Nivelle, whose *Chemin des Dames* offensive had failed in April 1917, thereby provoking widespread mutinies in the French Army. These involved, to various degrees, nearly half of the French infantry divisions stationed on the Western Front.

Pétain slowly restored morale by talking to the men, promising no more suicidal attacks, providing rest for exhausted units, and applying moderate discipline. Pétain also used discipline, had over 550 mutineers sentenced to the highest punishment, but transforming almost all the penalties. As the pacifism mounted in the French Army, he ordered lectures to the commanding officers on the disastrous consequences of immediate peace, which for him was only another word for surrender. He ordered more leave in each period of service of 4

months. Despite the complaints, despite some refusals to attack, the French soldiers generally remained respectful to officers. They never challenged the legitimacy of the Third Republic. The soldiers loathed offensives by then, and seemed only willing to fight defensively for their home country. They demanded settlements for the war, quoting the Russian slogans of no annexations and no indemnities.

With time and with the efforts of Pétain to restore discipline, the morale in the French Army slowly ameliorated. Pétain could not offer the Allies great offensives in the first half of 1917, and even not later. The project of next attacks in April and May in the Champagne caused large unrest still. The unrest diminished in June, but revived in August over rumours of a new, massive offensive around Verdun. To some extent it paralysed the actions of the French Army during the entire year of 1917. Nevertheless, in the second half of 1917, Pétain could launch a series of limited surprise attacks on the Germans. These started by immense, maximum artillery preparations to cover the assaults.

At that time, Paul Painlevé was the War Minister of France, and General Foch the Chief of the General Staff, the CGS.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1917, Pétain launched his first French attack, the *Houthulst Forest Operations* near the left flank of the British Flanders offensive. Pétain used much artillery protection for the infantry, as well as aircraft support. The French troops did well, and reached their agreed-upon objectives.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> August, Pétain ordered a general French attack at Verdun. Here, the French pushed the front back a few kilometres, and 10,000 German soldiers were taken captive.

For long months, the front of Verdun had remained practically silent. Of course, occasional infiltrations of French soldiers in German trenches or section of wood, and vice-versa, happened. But no important attacks of any kind, and practically no harassments with terrible cannon fire.

The fortress of Douaumont had been re-taken by the French. The German troops had still in hand sufficient high points, observation posts, at the Côte du Talou and on the left bank of the Meuse, as well as on the Côte 304 and at Mort-Homme. The German Army had even built tunnels to connect these positions.

The German regiments soon observed the preparations for the new, imminent attack. They reinforced their batteries to more than 400 cannons and howitzers, and gathered 9 divisions from Avocourt in the west to the Woëvre Plateau in the east. They kept also 5 divisions in reserve behind the lines to launch counter-attacks in the event the French successfully broke through their defences.

Four French Army Corps, the 13<sup>th</sup> led by Linden, the 16<sup>th</sup> of Corvisart, the 13<sup>th</sup> of Fontclare and the 32<sup>nd</sup> of Passoga, in total 8 divisions and 2 in reserve, would take part in the attack.

The artillery preparations pounded west and east of the Meuse, to the north of Verdun, for 7 days! Then, in the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, the 8 French divisions went to the assault for the *Côte de l'Oie*, *Mort Homme*, and the *Côte du Talou*. These were rapidly captured on

the German troops. Only the *Côte 304* at the western end remained in German hands. The *Côte 304* also fell on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August.

The French won about 40 cannons, 100 trench mortars, and over 240 machine guns. At the end, Verdun had been relieved, the enemy lines pushed back to 11 kilometres north of the town, to a line connecting the villages of Avrocourt, Béthincourt, Foyes, Samogneux now taken entirely, Beaumont, Bezonvaux and Damloup in the east.

The Germans had been chased by the 26<sup>th</sup> of August from every terrain they had occupied since the beginning of the first Verdun battles. In the remaining months and during the winter of from 1917 to 1918, the front of Verdun remained calm and silent. Verdun would remain so until a new Franco-American offensive started end September of 1918!

The last offensive of the French Army would come in late October of 1917, near the village of La Malmaison on the famed high ridge of the *Chemin des Dames*, once more, far to the west. After a dense attack led by Renault tanks, about 60 of them, and with very heavy artillery fire, the French took 15,000 German prisoners before stopping.

Julian Vincius was especially astonished at the number of prisoners made at Verdun, now, and later at the *Chemin des Dames*. Never before had he heard of the German Army leaving so fast so many prisoners in French hands! He could only believe the German troops had stopped fighting, preferring surrender to obstinate defence to the last, because they thought their cause lost. He considered these engagements and their result the first signs of discouragement shown by the German soldiers. He started making plans for an eventual evacuation of his hospitals around Longwy, and for his own fleeing from the town. He warned Monsieur Baraine, who agreed with Julian's conclusions, and discussed measures of preparation. Monsieur Baraine wanted to avoid bloody confrontations of combatants inside Longwy.

Why did Pétain not continue the attacks he had ordered at Verdun and at the *Chemin des Dames* in 1917? These attacks merely seemed tests, for him to learn the capabilities of his soldiers and of the US Army in France. After the limited attacks, he waited for larger-scale efforts, for better equipment still, for more tanks, and for the USA forces to arrive in full strength. Pétain did plan for a major strike in the east, which would overrun the Alsace and Lorraine in massive blows. This would serve to strengthen the claims of France in ensuing peace or armistice negotiations.

## Malou Vincius

Julian Vincius and Monsieur Baraine, still the mayor of Longwy, followed the events, the battles on the Western Front of the Allies against the Germans in the newspapers. They compared the news and opinions expressed by the war reporters.

In the month of June of 1917, they had rather another event in their mind, worrying them at least a little more.

The time of the young Charlotte Baraine to give child had come with the first warmth of summer.

Everybody had sensed, and then also seen the war was once more being revived that year. Everybody dreaded new offensives, of which one had to expect the outbursts of violence would yet augment. Nobody had any idea of which side would break the relative calm and launch attacks.

When, finally, the Allies attacked, and not the German Army, the energy of the seemingly blocked German troops surprised many. Julian Vincius found an Allied attack rather unexpected, and even for him, very improbable. The Allied divisions had been strafed the last months! When the offensives started, Julian was more than relieved to notice that in these anxious, difficult times of the conclusion of Charlotte's pregnancy, hard fighting had begun and lasted far from Verdun and Longwy, far even from Lorraine. He had not really expected attacks to happen again on the Western Front, but then, also not far from the Somme, and not at the famous *Chemin des Dames*. Wasn't that ridge impregnable? Why then had the Allies attacked right there? Surely, easier terrain occupied by the German battalions could be found on the front! Julian had, of course, heard sparse news, whispered among the soldiers, of troop movements in those regions. He had heard the more experienced, wounded veterans in his hospitals talk of Arras and Cambrai, closest maybe to Paris. He felt glad the German divisions could remain in defensive positions. Let the ordeal blow over!

Along the front lines around Verdun, skirmishes were fought daily. Still, the previous months Julian had received no particularly higher influx of wounded men from any front, and certainly not from his sector. The personnel in his hospitals were well trained to dealing with the wounded men. His military field hospitals did not lack medicines and caring people. *Oberst* Julian Vincius had been able to bring together fine professionals, to start with the German doctors who had come to Longwy in his service. They left almost never! The Longwy field hospitals were places in which any military doctor would want to serve. They enjoyed a fine reputation. Longwy could now boast of excellent hospitals, open to all, whether military or civilians. Julian had brought together ample stocks of medicines and material thanks to his connections with the famous Berlin *Charité*. Even an X-ray machine was in operation in Longwy! The hospitals were used to the discipline and order, and the cleanliness of the *Hôtel des Récollets*. The atmosphere was not oppressive. For the leading doctors, Julian was an understanding man, who knew well the issues of caring at all levels.

The German Army had brought no midwives to Longwy! The very idea would have brought the German generals to laughter. Nevertheless, as Julian did not refuse civilian patients with all sorts of illnesses, also women, he had thought early on he needed at least one midwife

connected to his hospitals. He had thus found a French midwife, known to Monsieur Baraine and indicated by him, who agreed to come to the Longwy hospitals if needed.

Monsieur Baraine held himself most of the records of official births in Longwy, helped by an elderly French clerk who wrote finely. Baraine had already growled at Julian he had been astonished at how many births had happened the last year in Longwy, the majority of those from French women and German soldiers. Baraine inscribed the babies with German names and French first names!

Weddings happened in secret, too. Monsieur Baraine generally heard of them. He enjoyed friendly relations with the priests in the town. He inscribed also the weddings officially in his registers, and delivered wedding certificates. He inscribed the babies, noted the parents' names, added whether the parents were married or not, and he gladly gave the children the French nationality. Much would have to be sorted out after the war! Baraine took special care of his books. He hid them in his own house, in a small brick building that would be difficult to set fire to. He would do this too with the books in which his first grandchild would be registered.

Of the field hospitals Julian Vincius managed, the best, cleanest, filled with the best doctors and nurses, was the *Hôtel des Récollets*. Most of the babies came to the world in other places, in private houses, or in more discreet *lazarettos* at the outskirts or outside Longwy. The parents generally preferred this. Julian held a few rooms in the *Hôtel* for his 'special clients' as he called the women that appealed to him or to Monsieur Baraine. From the beginning of June on, he kept one of these smaller rooms unoccupied, reserved for Charlotte.

In that month of June 1917, Charlotte and Julian slept peacefully together in Julian's bed. Often, Julian arrived late. Charlotte always slept the nights of the innocent, as one who had no issues whatsoever with her conscience. Julian expected her to give birth any day, now. He had told Ernst Vincius what to do in the event the baby would come when he, Julian, wasn't in Longwy. Ernst had to bring Charlotte straightaway to the hospital on the other side of the street! To the room he had shown Ernst. Ernst knew the doctors in the hospital. At least one doctor should be called, and then also the midwife. Everybody in the *Hôtel* knew Ernst. Ernst had followed courses in first aid. He knew what to do with wounded people or with people needing medical care, though pregnancies were rare in the trenches and in the woods of Verdun! There would be no issue granting Ernst access to the hospital. Ernst was to take Charlotte to her room. Once Charlotte in the hospital, possibly with a doctor on guard with her, Ernst was to send a soldier to get the midwife, but not leaving her side. She would have a familiar figure near her. Monsieur Baraine might be home, but he too was now often out of the house.

As it happened, Charlotte got her first pains of labour in the middle of a night Julian lay beside her. When she stepped out of the bed, trying to ease the pains, her waters broke. That was fast!

Julian did not panic. He eased Charlotte a little, made her change clothes quickly, while he drew on his uniform. He acknowledged the need to hurry. The birth of Charlotte's child would be easy and quick. He had to get her as soon as he could to the other side of the street, to the *Hôtel des Récollets*. He shouted so loudly Ernst awoke. Very soon he stood, dressed

shabbily, but nevertheless dressed, as ever a revolver at his side, next to Julian. Julian and Ernst supported Charlotte, passed immediately through the garden, and they almost ran to the hospital. They brought her to the room prepared for her. Julian asked Ernst to get the midwife in by their car. The midwife lived a few streets lower in Longwy, towards the railways exchange. Julian also asked Ernst to warn Charlotte's father.

The doctor on guard stood already beside Julian. The two of them worked on her. Less than an hour later, also the midwife arrived. The baby showed its head.

The midwife took over, pushing the two men aside. She asked for pails of warm water and for towels, lots of towels. The two doctors became the assistants of the French woman. A quarter of an hour later, the child popped out! It was a girl, as Charlotte and Julian had already guessed.

The girl was in good health, her limbs perfect. Charlotte did not seem to have suffered much. The midwife continued to work on Charlotte, to have the last rests of the protection of the baby come out of her. Then, she stayed, washed Charlotte, changed the sheets so that Charlotte could remain comfortably in the same bed. And still, the midwife worked on Charlotte's belly.

In the meantime, the two doctors had examined the baby, hearing the heartbeat, hushing the cries of the girl. They placed her in white bandages, and showed the little girl triumphantly to Charlotte. Charlotte was exhausted, but weeping for joy. Julian could place the baby on her. It sought Charlotte's breast immediately, and sucked. Monsieur Baraine equally stood in the room by then. He had arranged for a nurse for Charlotte and her child in his own house, but that would be for tomorrow. Baraine embraced his daughter several times. Then he already had the enveloped baby in his arms.

The story Monsieur Baraine and Julian had devised, was that Charlotte had done naughty things with a cousin of hers, who lived in Metz. No, the baby was not half German! The father was a soldier in the French Army now, fighting on the front on the extreme west side of the lines, near Flanders! Such stories were quite common in Longwy. The story was accepted readily, and a little later nothing more than a minor scandal erupted in Longwy. Some might have expected one of the two Germans living in the adjacent pavilion of the Baraine home to be the father of the child. Nobody really expected an over thirty years old dignified German *Oberst* to have slept with a seventeen-year old French girl, and having stayed at her side!

In the hospital, Charlotte slept. Julian and Ernst remained in the *Hôtel* till daylight. Then, nurses and doctors arrived. They took further care of Charlotte. Julian, Ernst and Monsieur Baraine returned home.

Monsieur Baraine served brandy in his hall. They all needed a stiff drink! Baraine asked under which name he should inscribe the baby in the registers of Longwy. He fetched the book immediately. The name chosen was Malou Émilie Julienne Vincius. Malou was the first name Charlotte wanted for a girl. Émilie and Julienne were the names of the two grandmothers. Who would sign as witnesses to the birth? Who would be the godfather and godmother? The three of them discussed over the names.

Monsieur Baraine insisted on being the grandfather of the child, and also her godfather. Ernst could hardly serve as the child's godmother! Finally, they decided upon the midwife as the

godmother for the child. Monsieur Baraine knew her well. He would arrange matters, and have her sign. Julian began to think Monsieur Baraine knew the midwife a little too well for his relations with the woman to be so innocent. Baraine said nothing, but smiled. Knowingly, Julian smiled back.

Mother and child thrived. There were no complications after the birth, not to the child and not to the mother. After 2 days already, Julian Vincius moved Charlotte out of the hospital, very early in the morning, to her father's house. He would regularly check on her himself. Monsieur Baraine arranged for good food for his daughter, quite a feat these days. For about two months, Charlotte remained in the mayor's house. Few people thereafter even knew she had given birth to a fine daughter. The midwife indeed signed as witness to the birth, and she gladly accepted to serve as godmother to the child. She stood close to Monsieur Baraine during the small ceremony of the signing, in Monsieur Baraine's hall.

## On the Italian Front

In 1917, the fighting morale of the Italian troops seemed to have suffered less than that of the French Army. Nevertheless, they had lost many soldiers and won few if no victories. The Italians started no new assaults on the Austrian Imperial enemy from November 1916 to May 1917. General Luigi Cadorna ordered an offensive again only on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. In a week's battle, he threw 38 divisions against but 14 Austrian divisions! Yet, his army failed against tenacious Austrian defences. The cost was high: about 128,000 Italian casualties to 75,000 Austrian-Hungarian casualties.

In July of 1917, two regiments of the Catanzaro, Calabria soldiers, rebelled, when Italian carabinieri had infiltrated them and discovered a large mutiny plot. The Italian generals executed 28 soldiers. The repression ended the projected mutinies.

Then, the Italians went once more in the attack on the Isonzo, on the 11<sup>th</sup> major battle in that region. The Italian Army advanced about 8 kilometres, conquered parts of the Bainsizza Plateau, but lost once more about 100,000 soldiers against 50,000 casualties for the Habsburg Army.

Cadorna claimed in November of 1917 over 100,000 Italian deserters were fleeing from the region. War fatigue had equally wormed itself into the Italian Army.

From August to September 1917 raged thus the 11<sup>th</sup> Battle of the Isonzo River. In total, 51 Italian divisions attacked 19 defending Central Power divisions. The Central Powers at first held on to defence. In September, the German OHL moved 7 divisions in from their Western and Eastern Fronts. The Austro-Hungarian Army Group Boroević, commanded by Svetozar Boroević, was prepared for the offensive. Austria too moved 5 additional divisions. These troops formed a new 14<sup>th</sup> Army with 10 Austrian divisions and the 7 German ones, placed under the leadership of General Otto von Below. Von Below was born in Danzig and a true Prussian nobleman, a born soldier. His CGS was Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen, a Bavarian Major-General. Von Below and Krafft von Dellmensingen were truly two professional warriors.

In October on 1917, the Central Powers started their counter-offensive, later called the *Battle of Caporetto* or the 12<sup>th</sup> Battle of the Isonzo. The attacks obtained an overwhelming success, due to new tactics developed by the German General Oskar von Hutier, who had taken Riga. Hutier had won the highest order *Pour le Mérite* for his capture of Riga. Hutier had developed stormtrooper attacks and infiltration tactics. These were applied in the *Battle of Caporetto*. The army of the Central Powers, finally amounting to 33 divisions, reached a devastating success against their enemies of 41 Italian divisions. They advanced in a very short time up to 8 kilometres forward.

The offensive began with an accurate, finely targeted cannonade lasting only 6 hours. Then the Germans and the Austrians executed a quick, devastating attack in two valleys of 25 kilometres apart, the valleys of the Plezzo and of the Tolmino. The German infantry wore rifles, but also the new Maxim 08/15 light machine guns. The Austrian Alpine troops carried mortars and light mountain guns. Three days later already, the soldiers of the Central Powers

emerged out of the mountains and advanced on the very flat land of the Veneto plain.

Caporetto was over, and a complete success.

German and Austria together suffered 70,000 casualties. But in 4 weeks of fighting, they made 294,000 Italian soldiers their prisoners. They captured 3,136 guns and the stores of huge quantities of ammunitions.

The speed at which this unheard-of breakthrough had been accomplished, left masses of Italian soldiers cut off from their main army, and leaderless, without information of as to whether the fighting continued or not. The Italian Commander, General Cadorna, had not even a contingency plan for a withdrawal of his Italian troops. A withdrawal he and his staff had thought impossible to happen.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1917, rain began to downpour over the armies. The troops grew weary of the bad weather. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, Ludendorff refused the Austrian request for yet more reinforcements, because of the terrible, ongoing pressure on his lines in the west from the British troops attacking at Passchendaele in Flanders.

On the same 28<sup>th</sup> of October, France and Great Britain decided to send Allied troops to Italy. These arrived on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, as 5 British and 6 French ones, with aircraft squadrons. These might have outweighed and outmatched the oncoming German and Austrian forces. The pressure of the Central Powers' advances gradually diminished under the Allied fire, but the Battle of Caporetto had finished. The Allies had come too late and too few.

In September of 1917, Sir Douglas Haig, the British commander on the Western Front, agreed to a demand of Pétain to transfer 100 of his heaviest cannons to Italy. Cadorna, however, stopped the 11<sup>th</sup> Battle of the Isonzo before ever having used the guns.

Cadorna decided to make a last stand on the Piave River. Falling back further south, would have exposed Venice! The Piave Line followed the river through the heights of the Monte Grappa and the Assago Plateau, about 100 kilometres long. The Italians were still heavily outnumbered. They sent in new divisions, and they got support from the Allied divisions. The battles went badly for the Italians. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, the Italian king dismissed General Cadorna to replace him by General Armando Diaz. Diaz recovered what remained of the battered Italian army. He organised the resistance on the Monte Grappa massif and along the Piave River. He successfully stopped the Austro-Hungarian offensive in the First Battle of Monte Grappa.

The month of September thus saw fierce, obstinate fighting on the Piave. Austrians and Germans could make no further advance without more, new, experienced troops. With British insistence, the Italians started counter-attacks. In December of 1917, the Austrian General Staff, the AOK, stopped the offensive of Caporetto. They agreed with OHL to now start no further Italian initiatives without OHL's consent. Ludendorff moved the German divisions back from the Italian front to the western theatre of operations.

In November of 1917, the Allied commanders met in the Rapallo Conference, included Italy. They established a Supreme War Council or SWC to decide upon and to co-ordinate all new offensive initiatives.

In December of 1917, the USA too declared war on Italy. In March of 1918, the Vatican sent a secret peace-seeker delegate to Austria-Hungary. In view of their recent, spectacular victories against Italy, the Habsburgs refused to listen.

## The British Offensives of 1917

During the winter of 1916 to 1917, Sir Eric Geddes had reorganised the BEF's railway system in France. This dramatically improved the flow of supplies to the British troops.

In April and May 1917, the British Army began a series of limited attacks near Flanders on German targets. The BEF first attacked Arras. They assaulted with dozens of tanks and tried out the efficiency of their new fighter aircraft, the S.E.5, the Sopwith Camels and the Sopwith Pups. These could assure air superiority over the attacking German planes.

In June, the BEF advanced and delivered a major blow at the town of Messines. From July to November, the British dealt a devastating attack at Ieper. In November still, the British attacked once more towards Arras. This was the large attack for the re-conquest of Flanders by the BEF.

General Haig had decided on the attack into Flanders, because on the Flanders coasts lay the German bases for the Gotha bombers flying their raids on London. Also, about one third of the German U-boat fleet operated out of Oostende and Zeebrugge. The Flanders ports were used by the German destroyers to harass the British ships transporting troops, moving over the Channel to France.

The British War Council agreed with Haig's plans. Lloyd George doubted any attack on the Germans of the Western Front could force any decision, but he too lacked alternatives. And Haig remained aggressive as ever, desiring the offensive over defence.

Haig had been born in Edinburgh. He was a Scotsman, whose father had grown rich from distilling whisky. Haig was not called 'Butcher Haig' for nothing! The French leaders Foch and Pétain also doubted the projects of Haig could succeed. At that time, Pétain was still handling the morale of his troops, also concealing the threatening mutinies in his own units. The BEF would be largely alone to commit to a major offensive against the German positions. The War Policy Committee nevertheless agreed on the plans of Douglas Haig, though without great enthusiasm.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, the BEF thus started the *Battle of Messines*. It was the second major assault by the British soldiers after their attacks in the environs of Arras. During the battle, the British brought to explosion 21 underground mines. A great number of crates of dynamite were buried to 60 feet below the German lines under the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge south of Ieper. Of these, 19 mines actually really exploded, forming huge craters in the landscape of Flanders. The explosions could have been heard as far as London.

A preparatory cannonade accompanied them. It lasted for 17 days! Then, the attacks of the infantry began.

The front two German lines fell to the British soldiers during the offensive. General Haig ordered to run down the far side of the ridge. There, the German artillery waited! Haig's orders prolonged the battle by a week, and cost 25,000 casualties to the British Army, about as much to the German defenders.

After the attack had been stopped, the Germans used 6 weeks of mostly fine, dry weather, to rebuild their defences.

Sir Herbert Gough of the 54<sup>th</sup> British Army received the remainder of the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, the British launched their 3<sup>rd</sup> *Battle for Ieper*. Haig sent 9 British divisions into the offensive. Over 100,000 British soldiers ran to the attack and lost 27,000 casualties on the very first day! It was a brutal massacre. The British did win some terrain, about 40 square kilometres, but they could not break through the German fortifications. Also, the Germans stopped the British tanks. They had placed concrete pillboxes to stop them. German artillery covered the land from on the Gheluvelt Plateau and the Ridge of Passchendaele. The Germans had several advantages over the British in their defence. Ludendorff had appointed Lossberg, his most experienced defence specialist, as Chief of Staff of the 4<sup>th</sup> German Army, commanded by General Friedrich Sixt von Armin. Lossberg, born in Hesse-Nassau, was the foremost strategic expert on defensive warfare. Lossberg had fortified the defence in preparation of Allied attacks.

Lossberg had demanded no less than 5 successive front lines! His first line amounted to not more than outposts, occupying shell holes, the lines supported by machine guns and field cannons.

These simple defences had been thrown up to defend the troops against the British cannonades. They stood in this clay coastal plain with high water tables, called the *Polders* in Flemish.

Behind the lines waited the German counter-attack divisions, the so-called *Eingreifdivisionen*, with their new, light machine guns and specially organised squads of stormtroopers using infiltration techniques to penetrate deep within the enemy forces. The Germans also shot shells filled with their latest developed mustard gas, a gas less lethal than chlorine, but causing very painful blistering on the skin and temporarily blinding the men. The gas not only caused many British soldiers to stop attacking. The gas shells also caused the troops to have to care for and evacuate a large number of victims. It took the Allies more than a year to develop similar gas.

It rained heavily in August! The intense British cannonade destroyed the intricate, complex drainage system of the waters in the *Polders*. The numerous small brooks got clogged up and the water flooded the clay plains, causing pools of mud, turning the land into morasses. In this terrain, tanks could not progress, got stuck, and sank halfway into the water-logged ground. Evacuating the wounded took a huge effort of many able men, who should have been fighting, but now had to care for the wounded and bring them off the battlefield. Carrying one man on a stretcher took two! In the rain, rifles and cannons jammed.

Sir Herbert Gough did capture the Pilchem Ridge, though not the Gheluvelt Plateau. And in the general chaos and hell, the Germans successfully counter-attacked! Flanders became a hell indeed. Sir Gough persevered. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of August, he started another offensive! He took Langemarck and was thrown back or halted due to German counter-attacks.

At the end of August, Sir Douglas Haig handed over the attack on the Gheluvelt Plateau back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army and to its former commander Sir Herbert Plumer. Plumer took his time, two weeks to prepare, once more using heavy cannonades before his infantry attacked. The ground dried in September. Then, the battles succeeded on each other: on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September was fought the Battle called of the Road to Menen. The 26<sup>th</sup> of September followed the battle of the Polygon Wood, the 4<sup>th</sup> of October the Battle of Broodseinde. Sir Herbert Gough reached relatively unambitious targets. He made 5,000 prisoners, as the

fighting spirit of the German troops diminished. General Plumer conquered less terrain and suffered heavier casualties. He had become impatient to show results. He let shorter intervals pass between successive assaults, took less and less time to place his cannons in other places. On the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, in very heavy rain, two attacks of Plumer's battalions on the Passchendaele Ridge turned into as many failures. Sir Herbert Gough wanted to stop these rather senseless, very expensive attacks in lives, but Haig pushed on. Finally, in the periods of the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of October and then again from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1917, the Canadians took Passchendaele. At the cost of 12,000 casualties! The Canadian troops stood under the command of Sir Arthur Currie.

By the end of 1917, the battlefields of Flanders resembled a desolate Lunar nature, a land of one water-filled shell hole next to the other, of devastated forests and utterly destroyed, ruined villages, of which only low walls remained standing.

In December, the British commander Sir Douglas Haig began to prepare for a period of defensive battle in 1918. Haig had to admit the Ieper salient would ultimately prove untenable. The aims of the offensive, the town of Roeselare, and the Flemish coast, had not even been reached! Another of Haig's intentions had been to wear out the German defenders. But, finally, he inflicted far smaller losses on the German defenders than his main intelligence officer Charteris had estimated necessary to decidedly defeat the enemy. The German losses amounted to about 200,000 men, a terrible, horrendous loss, but the British Army had lost about as many soldiers!

After the Messines battles and attacks and after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle for Ieper, the BEF had lost about 275,000 soldiers, maybe the heaviest toll of the years 1917 and 1918. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ieper ended as a very wasteful failure.

While the battles in Flanders lasted, the British Forces initiated another attack, this time on the town of Cambrai. These actions lasted from the 20<sup>th</sup> of November to the 7<sup>th</sup> December of 1917. Again, mines exploded with tremendous shocks and intense cannon bombardments prepared the battle. Creeping barrages of field cannon fire preceded the attacking infantry. Tanks rode together, with the infantry running beside. The tanks flattened the barbed wires and they dropped fascines, bundles of sticks into and over the enemy trenches to allow the foot-soldiers to cross them.

The offensive was launched over a length of more than 10 kilometres. Five infantry divisions ran forward between the 476 tanks of the newer British Mark IV Model. These tanks were much better armoured, faster and more reliable than the Mark Is used at the Battle of the Somme. For the cannonade, over 1,000 cannons were used. The tanks and men advanced behind the creeping barrage of cannon fire. An extensive air strike followed on the bombardment. All the machines of hell had been applied. The British used more and more their newest means of technology to wear out the enemy before they attacked. This seemed to grant success. The British troops slammed a breach in the German lines, a breach of 8 kilometres long, obtained after only a few hours of attack.

But then... Once more, the tanks advanced too slowly. They seemed particularly vulnerable still to the German artillery fire. Machine guns appeared from nowhere, and troops though to have been obliterated, counter-attacked! The British lost in total 179 of their supposedly invincible tanks. Ludendorff managed to send in 7 new divisions in less than 24 hours.

After 2 days of tenacious fighting, the German defenders stopped the British advance. Cambrai ended as the so-called failure of the British to break through the German lines. And for actually no ground gained, the British casualties amounted to 44,000 men, though the German Army supposedly lost 51,000 casualties.

To stun the British entirely, the German officers started on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1917 a devastating counter-attack, with no less than 20 divisions! As the British officers thought by then the fights had been finished, the German counter-attacks came to them as a complete surprise. The German troops pushed the British to their original lines, and then withdrew! They had proven sufficiently the stalemate on the Western Front remained complete. The British Expeditionary Force had been chastened, suffered terrible losses, for nothing. German morale seemed as high as ever. The German Army had demonstrated General Haig had better not attacked, better remained with the troops where they had stood.

In November of 1917, the British Egyptian Expeditionary Force, the EEF, commanded by Sir Edmund Allenby, had more success in their offensive in Palestine. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle for Gaza, Allenby pushed the Turkish forces back. By the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, the British troops entered Jerusalem. The British casualties amounted to 18,000 men. The Turkish losses of this campaign were 25,000 soldiers. Allenby had attacked with 7 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions. With these, he had a two to one numerical superiority in the area. He also had at his disposal heavy cannons, howitzers and aircraft.

After the beginning of the spring of 1917, as well Russia as France could no longer mount major offensives. The Russian Revolution and the anti-war attitude of the Bolsheviks restricted such operations almost totally. The French Army also was racked by reticence, low morale and the recognition of the stalemate of the armies, a knowledge the British seemed to defy still.

General Pétain waited for the build-up of the American forces on the front. He slowly prepared his army for new offensives in 1918.

In Italy, the forces under Cadorna persevered on the Isonzo River, but new Austro-Hungarian forces could be liberated at the Russian front to be thrown in his way.

Only the British BEF felt strong and confident, in combative order still, to seek a decisive breakthrough against the German defenders. Ultimately, in 1917, they too failed. The British Army could not at all defeat unaided the German soldiers on the Western Front. Great Britain could no longer find the funds necessary to finance its imports for the war production without American assistance. That assistance came!

For the Central Powers, the Russian revolution too had strained the political landscape. The public opinion was more than before divided between extreme right and centre-left. In the same way, politics in France, Great Britain and Italy polarised between the right, centre-right and the left opposition. The year 1917 saw increasing investments in new war weapons, in tanks, in U-boats, in armament, aircraft, poison-gas, flame-throwers, grenades, shells, heavier cannons. New tactics of attack and defence were invented and applied by the German troops.

The General Staffs of the armies of Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy, still believed a decisive victory possible. Their soldiers did not!

The one country sought the means of attaining the goal of a spectacular victory in new technologies, the other in new tactics of using the existing weapons. Even if a decisive victory seemed far off, they all continued to seek battles as a means to come into favourable positions of negotiations. And of negotiations, many began to think seriously.

And the people? The men of the people, they died!

## Colonel Otto von Chrapitz in Longwy

In mid-November of 1917, at the beginning of a hard winter, Julian Vincius still worked in the Longwy German field hospitals. He was still responsible for the management of all the German hospitals in the region, the hospitals of the battles for Verdun.

By then, his figure was well known to the officers and soldiers of the German Army stationed on the heights and in the woods around the Meuse stream and around Verdun. He could often be seen in the front lines of the German defences. He inspected the first-line hospitals. He was more popular than he would have thought. The soldiers respected him. Julian Vincius was not a tall man. He was shorter than most of the soldiers. Like Napoleon Bonaparte visiting his troops, he walked slightly stooped, his hands crossed on his back. Julian usually wore a shawl around his neck. As he liked warmth elsewhere, he wore a rather heavy army coat.

The soldiers in the trenches and in the fortified positions saw *Oberst* Julian Vincius standing on top of the trenches, musing about, seemingly lost in thoughts. More than once, a German soldier cried at him to get cover, for French sharpshooters might take aim on him. Julian's eyes took in all the details of the scenes around and beneath him. When an officer asked him whether he had noticed this or that, Julian answered with an absent-minded yes, and could somewhat later describe what the officer meant. Julian had a fine memory, a good visual memory, more astute and subtle than most men. He could explain where positions could and should be fortified, and why. He said this so softly as not to hurt the officer, and did not insist. One could not hide many defaults from him. In the *Stollen*, the fortified underground corridors and rooms of the trenches, the places in which officers and men slept, ate and prepared their attack plans, Julian was a devil for hygiene. He explained vividly the effects of typhus. He described the horrors of sicknesses so vividly, no soldier would have drunk from not boiled water ever since. He was found counting the medicine stocks in the medical care sites of the first lines, and counting the rolls of bandages. He wanted to talk with the orderlies. The male nurses here were soldiers, too. He talked with the male nurses. He asked them always whether they needed something, whether they had enough medicines and men, whether they had stretchers to transport wounded men on. He wondered how easily wounded men could be brought to the lines behind the front, how quickly, and whether the zones through the lines were protected well enough, all conditions of war taken into account. He asked about the effects of poison gas in the trenches, and how efficient the gas masks were. When anything lacked, men, medicines, stretchers, bandages, masks, Julian would have what lacked be brought in the next day.

Julian Vincius could also often be seen in the field hospitals behind the lines, close to the battlegrounds. He met the doctors. He asked them too what they needed, scolded them for not asking earlier whatever they lacked. Of course, one thing he could not get in, though he often insisted to, was to get better food to the defences. He could not grant more days of leave, also a recurrent question, but he did what was in his powers to give.

Julian was not negligent. He cared for the soldiers. He truly tried to keep his hospitals, from the smallest and the closest to the front line to the larger ones, better equipped, further out behind, in the best order and well provided for with medicines and materials and equipment.

In the afternoon, he would return to his headquarter in Longwy, and help the doctors there with the most delicate chirurgial operations.

The last months of 1917 remained rather quiet on the front of Verdun, as quiet as can be in a war.

Two large armies lay at most places only a few tens of metres from each other. Incidents happened each day.

Winter came with early frost and snow. Officers talked to Julian about what they lacked most urgently to pass the winter. Julian had found out how to get to the trenches heavy blankets, coats, woollen shawls, and thick gloves. The men also asked for better *Stollen*, deeper trenches, more bunkers in the woods. The German soldiers around Verdun almost constantly worked at their trenches, deepening them, fortifying them with wooden planks and concrete when concrete was available. They worked all through the winter months. When Julian talked openly and freely with the men, the most frequent questions were now always the same.

When would the war end? When would come the next attack of the German Army, when the next attack by the enemy? On many of such questions, also Julian Vincius had no adequate and definite answer. He saw the questions come in the eyes of the men. Why did we get involved in this war? Was this not an Austrian War? What was the sense of so many cruelties? To where would the war lead Germany? Could Germany win? Did we really need this war? On such, more fundamental questions too, Julian had no answer.

Julian would have thought the common soldiers now to stay in the trenches in a very depressed mode, the morale and willingness to fight having dropped low. But most of the men held their faith in the Fatherland high! They were still eager and alert to defend Germany, from whatever region their regiments originated from. Their energy had not been broken, their willpower to defend and fight on remained strong. Even their willingness to attack remained integer. They wanted to win! They wanted to push the Allies back, as their comrades in the east had practically defeated the armies of the czar of Russia. How long would the war last? One year still, two years, three years? They didn't really care now. But they wanted to win. They deserved to win! Not one soldier, here, seemed to put to the question the competence and the decisions of the higher-ranked officers and politicians of Germany. Nobody criticised how the war had been begun and had been led by the Emperor Wilhelm II. The civilian population could assemble in demonstrations. Those were not directed against the authoritarian regime of Wilhelm and his court. They were demands, merely.

Usually, when darkness began to fall, Julian would leave the trenches or the fortifications or his field hospitals, return to his car, the military Audi, and drive to what he should now call home, to the Baraine House, to Charlotte and to the child Malou and to Ernst.

The child was doing well, no baby anymore, grown into a lovely girl. She danced on Julian's knee and sought distraction all the time. She could not stay still. Malou would be a flaming redhead, for she showed the stunning red hair of northerners. At first, Julian had told she would be of Venetian blond. Her hair darkened, however, and remained of a clear, red hue. Julian Vincius wondered whether he had known Vikings in his family. He could remember no such ancestors, and neither could Charlotte.

Julian often stayed at home now, in the well-heated Baraine house. The three men smiled and drank brandy in large, crystal glasses.

Monsieur Baraine complained, as he had done consistently for the last months, because the German authorities had stolen - in his own words – most of his stock of wine. Baraine had been able to save his older and better wines in a dark corner of his cellars, but the wines on which he counted to get his revenue from were all gone, loaded on trucks of the German Army. Baraine had received no proof, no paper of his contribution to the German army and to the German economy. Would his requisitioned wine have been brought to the cities of Germany, or have been drunk in the neighbourhood, in the trenches or in the parties of the officers in Longwy? Julian Vincius could only tell he had not seen much beer being drunk in the trenches, and yes, more wine and none of the heavier, finer beers.

During these evenings, Julian wondered about his family in Thorn and in Berlin. Practically nobody, also not his parents, wrote him letters. Well, the letters might have been lost on the roads. He wrote letters himself, and send them on. He never received an answer. In the end, he regarded Charlotte as his only family. Ernst did write letters too, and received letters in return. Not he, Julian.

There was still Monsieur Baraine, always polite, affable, helpful, the older gentleman. It seemed Monsieur Baraine had consoled himself with his German son-in-law-to-be. No dispute lay between them and between Baraine and Ernst. The three men tried to live peacefully together. They found themselves at ease in Longwy in the evening, still eating decent food, and appreciating each other's company. They spoke French, usually. Ernst understood French quite well, now, and he could place his words in grammatically impeccable French. When they sat, talking, drinking just a little, Julian had no better idea for perfect happiness, despite the war.

Julian's happiness got a little shaken, he reckoned, one day at the end of November 1916, when he noticed on the list of the new patients of the day in the *Hôtel des Récollets*, the well-known name of Otto von Chrapitz. Otto had returned to Longwy!

Otto von Chrapitz lay in a room of the main Longwy hospital, wounded at the abdomen. The list stated not much more, apart from the man's age and a few measures, such as height and weight. Julian Vincius wondered what to do. His last conversation with Otto had been one of anger, of bitterness, and of mutual accusations. Julian had restrained himself from shouting harder and harder and nastier than Otto. Such words as had been said, Julian could not forget and hardly forgive.

He began by asking the doctor who treated Otto about the man's wounds. The doctor told him the wound was serious, though not deadly. A bullet had passed sideways through the officer's abdomen, though without damaging vital organs. Von Chrapitz had suffered from some internal bleeding, which had been stopped soon, and the affair had been less grave than the nursing soldiers had feared.

The doctor who treated Otto wanted to keep the man one or two weeks more in hospital. Then, the *Oberst* Chrapitz would be able to begin a well-earned recovery, another period of two weeks or so, at home. The man was quite a character, the doctor added. A hero. The Iron Cross hung under his neck; the *Ordre du Mérite* was pinned on his breast. He had been

wounded at least five times before. Scars ran over his body. He had known barbed wire and suffered from more grazing shots. The man had been promoted to a higher rank, possibly because few truly veteran stormtrooper officers remained alive. One could not send a colonel into the field. This man still did and fought in the first rows! Otto would continue gathering medals for heroism and aggressivity in face of the enemy. He might be promoted yet after the war, if ever the war ended. Julian nodded. He decided to go and say hello, come what might.

Otto von Chrapitz sat in his bed, leaning against a huge, white cushion, courtesy of the nurses. He didn't sleep, and he was smoking a yellow-paper cigarette, Turkish probably. He looked as mean as ever, particularly calm at first sight. He looked a lot more at peace than the last time they met.

While Julian entered the room, he made two quick observations. First, he didn't allow smoking inside the hospital. He would have to make an exception for Otto. Julian suspected smoking tobacco was not quite good for the health of his patients.

Secondly, Julian noticed Otto looked a lot older and more terrible, yet also calmer than before. The eyes still shone penetratingly. They now seemed once more to scan Julian from top to toe.

Julian was the first to speak. Otto just continued staring at him.

'So, *Oberst* Otto von Chrapitz, we meet again! With a prestigious medal more!'

Julian read the notices in the book that lay on the table. He followed the remarks of the doctors, the temperature charts, the medications prescribed by the doctors, notes on ameliorations of the patient's health status. The doctors, almost without an exception, hated writing down the result of their work. The notes were seldom necessary at this stage, too, and the same doctors had been caring for Otto in the Longwy hospitals several times already. They would not really have to pass on notes from one doctor to the other. The notes were often, if not always, superfluous and very brief, except for the temperature curves. And how much aid did the notes add to the means of treating a patient such as this?

'Shot in the abdomen, this time,' Julian read as if he had received for the first time any information on Otto's state. 'No major organs touched, flesh wounds, muscles touched and torn, disinfectants used, inflammatory tendencies halted. Not a major wound. Not in this war, at least. We'll get you out of here in a week or so. How did you get to Longwy this time? What happened? I would have thought you fought far west of Longwy, not in our sector.'

Otto nonchalantly stopped smoking, carefully punched the fire of the cigarette out in an improvised ashtray of aluminium paper. He did that meticulously. Only then did Otto look back at Julian, the man he supposedly hated. He waited, looked straight at Julian, who did not waver. He answered.

'Well, there is a war going on, Julian,' Otto finally spat out, without ever looking back to Julian. 'I roam from here to there. I was far from here with my troops. Arras, Vimy, Bullecourt, Cambrai, if you have heard of those places. La Fère, too, Reims! When you have a few medals, they have the courtesy to ask you to which hospital you would like to be transported to. If transport is possible! I asked for Longwy to test them. It made them look up, but I told I knew perfectly well what I was doing. They finally did get me here!'

'You did that, because you liked me so much, and because I am such a fine doctor,' Julian ironised.

Otto grinned, ‘you haven’t lost your humour! No! Pax! I was a little too sharp the last time we separated. I wanted to apologise for that. I was in a particularly irritated mood at that time!’

‘I noticed. No apologies necessary. I was rather sharp myself.’

‘No, you weren’t sharp. Patient, I would say. I kept thinking. I had to figure it out. We have unfinished business between us. What happened with Dorothea and you in Freiburg? Something hung between the three of us, you, me and Dorothea, and I couldn’t put my finger on it. You were Dorothea’s lover, so far I could guess and knew. You have probably been her lover from before I met her. No, I doubt that. Not lovers. But in love. Something special happened. What was it that hung between us, except that we both were in love with the same woman? Why did we keep being linked, and seemed to hate each other?’

Julian remained astonished by the man. How had Otto felt something indeed had hung between them? He sighed. He walked a few paces in the room, went to a wall and leaned against it.

If he told Otto, how would what he had to say affect the man, the soldier? Julian was afraid of Otto’s reactions, not in the hospital, but later. Would the officer and stormtrooper be drawn deeper in depression? Was it time for truth or for more lies? Suddenly, Julian had enough of lies. This was a moment for truth, whatever the consequences. If this Otto could be a warrior, he could also hear a few words! What were words? Words could not hurt and cut inside, as shrapnels could! He would not be responsible at all for any consequences. Only Otto himself would be responsible for what he would do with the truth.

‘We have all responsibilities to cope with,’ Julian began, his mouth twitching. ‘Remorse helps to nothing. The truth is simple. Dorothea expected a child by you. She told she had been raped. I had to believe her. She had an abortion. She went to some sorceress. Because of the abortion, she could have no more children. I didn’t have the slightest notion of who the father might have been, until I heard your story. I guessed.

She didn’t really care anymore from that moment on with whom she slept. Some people try to self-destroy. Or they don’t care anymore about norms and rules, about respect and self-respect. She threw herself to all men. How could I have stayed with her? She searched for me, but when she had found me in Freiburg, she did everything she could to make me disgust of her. She succeeded. I couldn’t get through to her. No forgiveness for Dorothea! She didn’t want me to spend my life with a woman who ..., well, she was only half a woman anymore. We all bear guilt. You slept and maybe forced a woman of too close family. Dorothea worshipped you too much. She was young. She probably loved me, refused me in the end, but wouldn’t start an affair with another, closer member of her family. I was the purist, when true love should not have cared about anything.

Or was it fate that intervened? Maybe my life lay elsewhere. Fate! We should let the matter rest, now. We should seek peace of mind. You can love again. I can love again. What Dorothea could do, I have no idea. The women always suffer most. But they are stronger than we. We shall not be able to forget.

The best we can do is not to have what has happened shape our lives further on. Time heals. And regrets. I suppose and hope Dorothea will come to the same conclusion. She married. She has a place in the world. She can find some solace with whoever she likes.

You had better get on with your life too, not have it be shaped by the past. You can still make something of a decent life with Elisabeth, your wife. Any human being is worth living for. You can still have children. I am with another woman. I too have practically married. I have a child. She is a Frenchwoman, but I'll take her to Berlin, sooner or later. We cannot and should not remain wallowing in guilt. Each living creature should respect itself, its own nature. '

Julian stopped and bowed his head.

Otto then said the phrase Julian astonished most. It was but a short question.

'And what about God?'

'Can a God thrive on hatred, on revenge, on resentment, on vengeance? I don't think so. Maybe the Jewish God, not the Christian one,' Julian gave back. 'No! The world would have ended a long time ago. If God really sees what has happened to his creation here, at Verdun, he must be weeping for eternity. The creation would maybe not have ended, but certainly humankind! The God of the Jews doesn't seem to care much beyond the Jewish people. Remember the Covenant. But the God of the Christians has given his life to redeem humanity. As there is but one God in the Trinity, there lays the pain of God, and the self-redemption. If he can, we can do so too. At least, that God is compassionate. Is that not the major characteristic of the God of Islam? The phrase is repeated and repeated over and over again in the Koran. In the Christian religion, as founded in the New Testament, there is something called confession and forgiveness by God. You confessed. Your sins are forgiven to you. How else can life be lived?'

'Maybe it can't. We have a conscience. The conscience remains. It continues to nag!'

'Indeed. We have. But the concept of forgiveness on being aware of guilt, and repentance, are more powerful than remorse. It cleanses the conscience. Remorse is dissolved. Redemption should not stop the feeling of guilt, but transcend it.'

'You would make a fine priest.'

Julian laughed.

'Maybe I would. But who am I to forgive? Our religion says only God can forgive. Well, he has. And one can forgive oneself, by understanding. What are you going to do?'

'I swore faithfulness to God and Country and to the emperor. There is nothing else I have to hold on to. The oaths are matters of honour to any man. So, I'll go on fighting for the country I was born in, symbolised by the emperor, and I'll beg God to forgive me.'

'Which he has already done. I am sure of so much. The God of the Jews is a very silent God. We'll only know whether this truly is what we should have done after our death. And even then, I wonder.'

They kept a long silence.

Julian sighed, and asked, 'you are so close to the war. How is it going to end?'

'The end cannot be far off,' Otto answered, surprising Julian. 'We are beginning to lack in everything. The General Staff doesn't seem to have noticed, or refuses to see. We are short of about everything. Still, we can defend our positions for a long time yet.'

My guess is Ludendorff will want to attack again. That may shorten our resilience, and maybe that is exactly what he is after. If he orders the offensive, applying a few new attack tactics, we can yet surprise the Allies, but not defeat them.

A last, big, terrible offensive must happen soon, before the Americans and the British can bring in a few millions of men more, and better machine guns, more tanks and airplanes, more devastating poison gas, and before all, more men. I'm afraid the resources of Germany in materials, in production capabilities, in new technologies of weapons, and foremost in men, are exhausted.

One large, additional offensive on this Western Front shall kill off all the men like me, all the experienced, daring, veteran fighters. And then, we, German, will never be able to win anymore. Shall then the Allies be able to win? I don't think so! There exists no people on earth that can fight like we! We are more intelligent, more tenacious, more inventive than any other people on earth. But not being able to win, may make our people lose confidence in the military, and blame its leaders. I hear talk of that already. Then, we shall lose!

In another offensive, we shall lose all the better soldiers, and then the better leaders shall be defeated from within. I am playing the prophet now, Julian, but mark my words. One year more, not longer, and the Allies will run over us, because our soldiers will stop fighting. We shall have destroyed ourselves. No other army can destroy us. We only can do that to ourselves! What then, will stop the hordes of our enemies to win over Germany? The Russians couldn't do so. The Allies that remain, the French, the British, the American together, they can, but only after we destroyed ourselves. Maybe the Russians were just a little smarter than we, after all, by stopping to fight. We are more obstinate, but in the end, exactly the same may well happen with us. I am not sure I would not welcome such an end. This is not human anymore! It is a disgrace to humankind!

'One year still,' Julian nodded.

'Yes. The crucial matter is, how to get on living. If we have to feel redeemed, we have to go on living! I don't yet know how I will survive this war, though I sure want to do so. I have a feeling I will survive. You too, don't think at the right moment. Act, and get out before it is too late.'

'One year,' Julian still wondered. 'It should all be over in 1918, then?'

'In 1918, for sure,' Otto agreed. 'I'll see you in Thorn, in 1919, the year after, in the Chrapitz domain, or no, in Thorn itself. Let's say Easter Day, at noon, in front of the Trinity Church of Thorn. We'll see where we go from there.'

'Agreed,' Julian concluded. 'With our wives and children.'

Again, a silence fell between them. Julian had to go, but he lingered yet.

Finally, he said, 'I'll see you in Thorn. You'll be doing fine in a few days. We'll keep you here for two weeks at most. Then we'll have to release you from the hospital. Don't do stupid things in the war.'

'I must say the same to you. Take care! The most innocent, the most honest, and hence the one who thinks the entire world is like you, is called Julian Vincius. You may get crushed. If necessary, for once, be ruthless. Your heart isn't capable of so much, but your mind is. Remember my words!'

Julian nodded, and went.

In the next weeks, Julian could only see Otto for a few moments. Then, one day Julian hadn't expected, Otto's bed and room were empty. Julian went to see the doctor in charge.

‘Yes,’ the doctor said. ‘*Hauptmann* Otto von Chrapitz left yesterday afternoon. He refused to stay any longer. He said he would be fine. He was an impatient man, but I saw no reason to argue with him. He was healed as best as he could. I told him to take care. He said to tell Julian Vincius to think of Easter 1919. I don’t really know what he meant. The message is thus given.’

‘I know what he meant,’ Julian smiled, and nodded.

## Politics and Peace Talks

### Austria-Hungary

The government that thought the most of ending the war because hopeless and more than ever useless, was probably that of Austria-Hungary. And yet, Austria had started it all! Emperor Karl had appointed Arz von Straussenburg as new Chief of the General Staff, as head of the army. He had demoted Conrad von Hötzendorf to head the Habsburg forces in Tyrol. He released prisoners. As he still nurtured idealistic views about the war and the management of his empire, he ceased the censorship in his lands.

In May of 1917, Karl reconvened the Austrian *Reichsrat*. He ended the 1915 and 1916 repression of anti-empire forces within his countries. The nationalist parties soon demanded the independence of all the peoples who did not speak German, of the Czechs, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Slavs.

As many workers had been called to arms, the industry of Austria had arrived at a virtual standstill. Agriculture did not deliver the necessary, vital products, and the roads and railways had been poorly maintained. The production of cannon shells and rifle bullets was dramatically low. Strikes had harassed Austria and Hungary, as they had Germany.

With Conrad von Hötzendorf out, another figure was given growing authority. That man was Count Ottokar Czernin.

Ottokar Theobald Otto Maria Count Czernin von und zu Chudenitz became the new Foreign Office Minister in December of 1916, after the ascent of Emperor Karl. He was a conservative and a believer in the monarchy. He was born in an ancient noble Czech family. Czernin was seriously thinking of ending the war, if needed alone. On 12 April, he drafted a memorandum that drew a sad description of Austria-Hungary's war situation. Emperor Karl sent this to Mathias Erzberger, the notable, conservative member of the German *Reichstag*. The emperor told the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy could not survive another winter of fighting. This resulted in a well-meaning but ineffective peace resolution of 19 July 1917. In a speech in Budapest on 2 October 1917, Count Czernin spoke in favour of international justice, disarmament, arbitration and freedom of the seas as a basis for peace and as a legal basis for a new Europe.

A major peace negotiator for Austria, still in secret at that time, was Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma. He was well-known at the court of Vienna, as the brother of Emperor Karl's wife Zita. Sixtus wanted to give back to Serbia its status of independence. He spoke with several heads of the neighbouring countries. Immediately, he bumped against the demands of Italy! Emperor Karl wanted peace, but the Prime Minister of Italy, Sidney Costantino Baron Sonnino wanted too much! Emperor Karl definitely refused to hand over to Sonnino what Italy had totally failed to conquer by the arms! Sixtus gave up in despair and abandoned his round of talks.

In April of 1917, Count Czernin had already warned the German Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg that Austria was exhausted and on the verge of collapse. In Germany, many agreed peace had better be sought now.

## Germany

Not so Erich Ludendorff! Ludendorff, not of noble but of middle-class background, aggressive in war, dedicated to offensives, willing to continue fighting, a driven man, often yet also insecure and unsure in how the war had to be waged, saw ultimate victory still as essential for Germany. Victory seemed to him all-important to stabilise the political and public order in Germany. Ludendorff could be flexible in strategic matters, but he remained obstinate to his goals once he had made up decisions in his mind. He had to be so. Being not of noble stock, Ludendorff was an outsider in the German officer corps. Most of the important officers in the General Staff took pride in the noble ‘von’ in their name. Ludendorff was different. He had therefore to be harder, tougher, smarter than he sometimes ought to be, to confirm his authority in the staff. He was the assistant of von Hindenburg, and drew a large part of his fame from being close to that man, though he was a fine strategist and the brains behind the German military moves. Ludendorff refused to ask for official peace talks before all was lost. He wanted not for Germany to give promises of democratisation, which France and especially the USA with its idealistic president insisted upon! This, Ludendorff reckoned, would be regarded as a fundamental weakness in the autocratic regime of the German Emperor by the Allies. So far, Germany had won the war! Stood not German troops on French soil, not the contrary?

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April of 1917, the most powerful men of Germany decided on the secret Kreuznach Programme of Germany’s demands for peace negotiations.

Germany would annex Lithuania and Kurland along the Baltic Sea. It wanted large parts of Poland. In the west, Germany had to hold on to the Alsace and Lorraine. It also demanded to annex the regions of Longwy and Briey, with its mines and heavy iron industry. Luxemburg had to be incorporated additionally into the empire. Germany also wanted the city of Liège in Belgium and the coast of Flanders, for a period of 100 years. It wanted to run the Belgian railways. As for its colonial claims, Germany desired the founding of a Central African colonial empire, and a chain of overseas naval bases from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. This plan had been devised by OHL, the *Obere Heeresleitung*, and by Emperor Wilhelm II.

Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg accepted the plan.

## France

In France, most of the leading politicians still remained loyal to the idea of peace through victory and to their solidarity in the Allied Entente. That seemed the only way also to get hold of Alsace and Lorraine. But the country passed a period of existential turmoil.

General Pétain’s measures were slowly rehabilitating the army. Small, limited victories restored the confidence in the ability of the army to hold back the German aggression and eventually of overcoming the enemy. But the prices of food soared in 1917 and caused unrest at the home front. Labour unrest reached a climax in May and June of 1917. Paris and its surrounding regions went back on strike, the women first! Large numbers of workers demonstrated during the May Day feasts. The strikers called for peace, as much as in Russia, though much less violently. The result was political instability, the least Pétain and his officers now needed!

In December of 1916, the Briand Government was reshuffled. But Briand had to resign in March of 1917. From March to September followed the government of Alexandre Ribot, then from September to November 1917 the Paul Painlevé Government. Painlevé kept Ribot on as Foreign Minister.

Single voices proclaimed France's main demands for armistice and peace: upholding the French claim on Alsace and Lorraine, the Saar coalfields, and a Rhineland buffer state additionally between France and Belgium on the one side, Germany on the other. These demands, of course, stood perpendicular to the German wish list.

In November of 1917, also the Painlevé Government fell. President Poincaré took on Joseph Caillaux as Prime Minister. The Government once more had a large left-wing minority in Parliament to watch. All parties were still committed to fight on to victory.

### **Great Britain**

In Great Britain, in that year of 1917, Prime Minister Lloyd George still enjoyed a large parliamentary base. There were no mutinies of any importance in the BEF. Nevertheless, also in Great Britain, the government was challenged by the leftist protests.

In March and May, more than 200,000 workers went on strike. The strikers were against plans of the government to pass the work in the state factories to private contractors. Also, in Great Britain, a trade card was in use. It was a scheme that allowed the trade unions to designate men who would be exempted from conscription. The Government thought of ending the scheme.

The trade unions negotiated, and the two measures were withdrawn. There were other causes for the strikes, such as rising food prices in the country, profiteering from the war, and the conscription. Lloyd George took on as Minister of Munitions the ubiquitous Winston Churchill! Churchill feared social unrest and acted to ease the protests.

May 1917 saw the British Selective Service Act. Local boards would register all men able to participate as soldiers in the war. The names of about 2,758,000 men were placed on the lists. The British Army would have no lack of soldiers! As Great Britain had no system of conscription previously, what it lacked were the training camps, more officers and more weapons. The weapons would have to be provided by France. Luckily, France had a large war industry by then.

In May of 1917, on the Western Front, 158 kilometres of the defence trenches and lines were held by the BEF with 65 divisions. The French Army covered 580 kilometres with 109 divisions. Haig and Pétain lengthened the BEF front by 40 kilometres. The British High Command refused all further lengthening for the BEF front in January of 1918.

The Supreme War Council, the SWC, had discussed holding a general reserve. Robertson was against the plan, and he got promptly demoted, to be replaced by Sir Henry Wilson. Haig, however, also refused to assign British troops to any general reserve. He suspected these would fall under French leadership.

In 1917, until November, the BEF had suffered about 790,000 casualties! To diminish this attrition, no wonder the British leaders sought to invest in a more technology-intensive war, such as by the use of tanks and aircraft. Winston Churchill was in favour of this evolution. Douglas Haig was against, mainly because of the mechanical unreliability of tanks. The British General Headquarter also remained sceptical, and even tried to reduce the projected tank shipments to France in 1918. The General Headquarter, the GHQ, was then reorganised, with Krgell as chief of staff and Brigadier-General Cox, instead of Charteris, as head of intelligence. Sir Douglas Haig was accurately informed about the movements of German divisions from the Eastern Front to the west.

## Italy

Riots started also in Italy, mainly in the month of August, of course first in industrial Turin. In this town of the wealthy North, anti-war feelings ran strongly. After 5 days of disorders, the army was called in, opened fire on demonstrators, and repressed the riots at the cost of 35 demonstrators losing their life.

In Italy too, the government was in crisis. The new Prime Minister was now Vittorio Orlando, the former Minister of the Interior. The military planned a massive offensive for the autumn of 1917.

## Germany later

In Germany, Matthias Erzberger formulated a speech directed against the management by von Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Erzberger was born in Württemberg, the son of a tailor and postman. He was a journalist and writer, and a man prominent in the Catholic Centre Party. He was regarded as an opportunist, a man who had no convictions, only appetites. He worked in the darkness, in the shadows and in the confidence of other great men.

For instance, in July of 1917, at a meeting in Frankfurt, Erzberger revealed the content of the pessimistic, secret report from Austria-Hungary's Foreign Minister, Count Czernin, destined to the Austrian Emperor Karl. It was never proven that Erzberger had done this, but many politicians of the right regarded him from then on as a traitor to his country. Erzberger told that the U-boat campaign was falling short of its targets.

A little later, Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff wanted the Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg to be dismissed. Erzberger helped to bring about the fall of the chancellor. Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff threatened to resign if von Bethmann-Hollweg stayed on. As the successor to von Bethmann-Hollweg, the emperor appointed a Prussian official as chancellor, one Georg Michaelis, the former food-controller of Berlin. Michaelis lacked the abilities for governing Germany. He was also more independent in his opinions, though, than von Hindenburg and Ludendorff would have wished.

From that moment on, the power of the chancellor diminished, whereas the power of OHL, also in political affairs of the state, increased. Von Bethmann-Hollweg resigned on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July of 1917.

Six days later, a Peace Resolution was adopted in the *Reichstag*. It called for international reconciliations and ending the war. In the resolution, the representatives refused new acquisitions of territories and political, economic and financial claims on Germany. The new

Foreign Minister was then Richard von Kühlmann. Kühlmann was an experienced diplomat. He had served in London before the war.

In 1917, the *Kriegsamt* had been created, a new state administration to oversee the economic policies of Germany in the war. This administration was to control and supervise the Deputy Commanding General of the Military General Staff. The head of the *Kriegsamt* was Wilhelm Groener. Groener had experience with discussions and negotiations with the trade unions during industrial disputes.

By September of 1917, Michaelis was doing badly in the management of the *Reichstag* discussions on mutinies in the fleet. The emperor dismissed him and appointed Count von Hertling as chancellor. Von Hertling was over 70 years old, and the successor preferred by von Bethmann-Hollweg.

In September also, was founded a new political party, the Fatherland Party. Its leaders were von Tirpitz and Wolfgang Kapp. By July 1918, this party would amass 1.25 million members. It was a radical, right-wing association. It was also authoritarian and openly anti-Semitic. With it, anti-Semitism entered German politics in strength. It felt committed to an end of the war by military victory.

### **Other Peace-feelers**

In August of 1917, Pope Benedict XV set in move a new round of discrete negotiations on the possibility of peace talks. He proposed returning to the European borders, without annexations and the paying of war indemnities. His envoys obtained no enthusiasm for the ending of the war.

Equally, new French-Austrian peace feelers did not succeed. They took place mainly in Switzerland. They were called the Armand-Reverta conversations. Armand, the French representative, offered Poland to Austria, including even Silesia and Bavaria, in return for a separate peace. Such proposals would be utterly unacceptable to Germany.

In his turn, in Great Britain, Lloyd George was willing to allow Germany to expand into eastern Europe at the expense of Bolshevik Russia, in return for concessions in the west.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September of 1917, President Poincaré of France and Prime Minister Lloyd George met at Boulogne. They agreed holding no separate peace negotiations, and Lloyd George publicly declared Great Britain would fight on until France had recovered the Alsace-Lorraine regions. The Alsace-Lorraine thus remained the fundamental issue between France and Germany, as stood Germany's claims on parts of Belgium between Great Britain and Germany. As smaller points of difference, France still insisted on its buffer zone in the Rhineland between her and Germany. Great Britain wanted the German colonies in Africa.

### **The USA in the War**

The USA had declared war on Germany because of the U-boat campaign. It was now crucial for the war effort in 1917, to be able to safely ship men and goods from the USA to Europe. Convoying permitted this.

President Wilson wanted Germany defeated. He also refused to sign the Pact of London that would have made of the USA an Allied nation to Great Britain, France and Italy. As a compromise, the USA became an Associated Power to the Allies of Europe.

The Americans remained still very evasive over the claims of France. Woodrow Wilson and his government made diplomatic overtures to secure their position.

In April of 1917, the Latin American countries broke off their relations with Germany, or declared war on the European country. As a result, all German ships that had taken refuge in the harbours of those lands, were now put on chains and became available to the Allies.

In August of 1917, China entered the war on the side of the Allies.

In November then, Wilson signed the Lansing-Ishii Agreement with Japan, averting an American-Japanese war in the Pacific Ocean. Nevertheless, the USA stopped exporting steel to Japan. Woodrow Wilson and his advisors, among which the Treasury Secretary McAdoo, who was Wilson's son-in-law, kept always in mind the USA's national interests.

In the meantime, the American Expeditionary Force, the AEF, made its way to France. By November of 1917, still only 73,000 American soldiers had reached France. They were equipped with outdated rifles, defective field cannons, and only a few aircraft. But American men at least and finally poured in.

After the failed *Chemin des Dames* offensive, the French commanding General Pétain had argued a large American Army was necessary and essential to his strategy. The Allies sent the AEF to Lorraine.

The AEF's American commander was General John Joseph 'Black Jack' Pershing. Pershing agreed to the Lorraine for his basis. He was allowed control over an independent rail network running south of Paris to the Atlantic Ocean, and he liked a basis close to Germany for attacks into the German-held Saar Region. Pershing refused to be incorporated into the British Army, of course. The British soldiers acted on the other, far side of the front. He would only serve the interests and aims of the President of the United States! Still, most of his weapons were supplied by the Allied war industry. In the winter of from 1917 to 1918, the USA ran into a major arms production crisis, as also the Allied countries of Europe had to be organised for, now years ago. In 1917, the USA's financial and human means did not produce a large trained army, nor a complete war industry. Creating this needed time, and would only come into their own fully far in 1918.

By the end of 1917, the American troops were still fewer than expected. The French, British and USA troops were poorly coordinated. From November 1917 to March 1918, the number of American troops did rise from 78,000 to 220,000, but of these, no more than 100,000 were combat-ready. They formed six divisions, of which in March 1918 only one was ready for action. President Clémenceau complained in December of 1917 the USA troops were unfit for any battle. That was also the opinion of the Supreme War Council, the SWC, in France. Sir Henry Wilson, the prime British representative in the Council, also agreed.

## New War Tactics

The Central Powers, by then almost only Germany and Austria-Hungary, had reached all by all quite impressive results in 1917! They had expelled the Russians from Galicia in July, captured Riga in September. In October, the Austrian Army could still inflict on the Italian Army one of their worst defeats of the war in the Battle of Caporetto. Nevertheless, Austria came near to exhaustion after 3 years of intense fighting, slaughtering and massacres. The Russian almost complete breakdown, though the Russian Army still capable of freak attacks, allowed the German OHL to move troops to the Western front and think of a massive, last offensive to bid for final victory. Although exhausted, Austria had been cleared of enemy armies on its territories! Austria could negotiate on positive terms. The court of Vienna still held to its alliance with Germany.

Count Czernin could proclaim with a certain optimism that now, the Empire of Austria-Hungary was fighting to support Germany in the war and to defend Alsace-Lorraine for its partner. We will hold on as firmly to Strasbourg as to Trieste, Czernin shouted. Would he really?

In the autumn of 1917, the German Army in Flanders seemed on the brink of breakdown. It had held on, with the soldiers increasingly resentful of their officers, mainly because the British troops broke first and had stopped their offensives before the German troops collapsed. The German soldiers became more and more weary of the war. Of the troops moved from the east to the charnels of the west, up to 10% of the men deserted en route. In Germany itself, the numbers of workers exempted from war duty, still a privilege of the Trade Unions and the enterprises, rose from 1.2 million men in September 1916 to 1.9 million men in September of 1917. The industrial production of Germany fell sharply. Prices went up end 1917. The Allied blockade on the seas made itself be felt. Suppliers of oil, agricultural fertilizers, all sorts of raw materials, diminished. Germany could still build up large munition stocks in 1917, and all kinds of weapons were available in large quantities, because the largest arsenals in the east could be emptied. But Germany was almost running on its last breath.

Ludendorff placed his hopes on the new tactics of attack, which had been mostly learned on the Eastern Front.

New modes of assault had been developed by a Lieutenant-Colonel called Georg Bruchmüller.

Ludendorff carefully brought all the new methods together to a system of offensive he wanted to use in the next massive attacks on the Western Front, to be unleashed in 1918. The new tactics consisted of:

1. Predicted cannon and howitzer bombardments, without prior registration or warnings for creating surprise by total secrecy. The German heavy cannons would shoot according to map co-ordinates. For that, aerial reconnaissance and aerial photographs were necessary, and now possible to have.
2. Applying the Pulkowski Method in cannonades. Pulkowski was a captain in the army. He had laboriously tested the characteristics of each cannon and howitzer on firing ranges in different weather and wind conditions. He checked how the firing range of each particular gun varied with the speed of wind, the kind of rain, the weight of the

shells. Such rigorous preparations provided individual charts per gun, and hence more accurate targeting.

3. Fire control was centralised, to disable more completely the enemy positions in a calculated manner. This also allowed shorter cannpnades and more accurate and effective ones.
4. The aim of a bombardment was not to obliterate, to destroy the enemy. That had proved illusory anyway. The aim was only to neutralise the enemy exactly before, even during an attack, so that the enemy was unable to rush in reserves through the barrages of fire. The first line enemy troops would also have to seek cover, until the German specialised assault troops were already on them.
5. In use, but now systematically applied, creeping barrages of cannon fire and block barrages could protect the flanks of the attacks.
6. Gas shells applied in large numbers would mainly occupy and force to silence the opposing gun batteries and the enemy command posts.
7. Quick attacks causing slaughter deep into the enemy lines, where nobody expected them so soon.
8. Stormtroop tactics. Attacks by thin and open skirmish lines, instead of massive block assaults, wee to be applied. Assaults would have to be executed by specially trained groups carrying rifles. Some heavier weapons should be used in greater quantities, such as trench mortars, flamethrowers, offensive grenades, light as well as heavy machine guns. The groups bringing those last weapons were to advance as far and as quickly as possible, to cause confusion and panic in the enemy lines.

Ludendorff organised tests of these tactics in September of 1917.

One of the tests happened on the Eastern Front, executed by the General Oskar von Hutier, with his 8<sup>th</sup> German Army of 13 divisions. The result was devastating when applied on the Western Front. Von Hutier and Bruchmüller were promptly sent to the Western Front!

A second test of their new ideas was the German counter-attack near Cambrai, staged on the British troops by General von der Marwitz, ordered on his 2<sup>nd</sup> German Army. Von der Marwitz forced his battalions right through the British lines in hours instead of days, supported by reconnaissance and bombing aircraft.

Early in 1918, Ludendorff embarked on a major effort of training and special camps to disseminate these tactics throughout the German Army on the Western Front. 1918 would finally see once more a major offensive by the German troops in France.

## **The last Offensives and the Ending of the War. 1918**

### **The Peace Treaty of Brest Litowsk for the Eastern Front, 1918**

In Vienna, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January of 1918, the blockade of Austria's food supplies became so stringent, the Austrian Government had to announce a severe cut in bread and flour rations. Of course, strikes began almost immediately, with at first a general strike in the Daimler Works of the Wiener Neustadt. The strike spread, until about 750,000 workers took part in them. The demonstrators demanded better food rations, an end to the harsh discipline in the factories, and peace on the Eastern Front. The Government granted concessions to the trade unions. After ten days, the strikes ended. Everybody was tired of the war.

In the spring of 1918, more than 400,000 Austrian prisoners returned from Russian captivity. They were reintegrated into the Habsburg Army, not without disgust and accompanied by a new wave of mutinies.

Strikes also rose in Germany. From 200,000 to 500,000 workers around Berlin and elsewhere went on strike. The military suppressed the strikes. The strikes ended, without anything of importance having been achieved in way of ameliorating the condition of the workers. The German working class then seemed to resign in their fate until the autumn.

Austria continued discrete peace talks. These took place between the Count Mensdorff and the delegate of Lloyd George's War Cabinet, Sir Smuts.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1918, Lloyd George delivered a speech in Caxton Hall, London, on the war aims of the British Government. His speech had Cabinet approval. He had discussed the contents with the Liberal and the Labour leaders before he made the speech.

He told the Ottoman Empire should be confined to the lands of the ethnically majority Turkish People. The Turks should be deprived of Mesopotamia and of Palestine. The German colonies in Africa should be ended, on a basis acceptable to the population. Lloyd George supported the territorial claims of France on the Alsace-Lorraine, and of those of Italy on regions now dominated by Austria-Hungary. Lloyd George would not break up the dual empire Austria-Hungary, however. Russia could be seeking its own fate. Great Britain seemed willing to leave Russia to German influence! Belgium should remain what it was, as independent as before the war.

The Caxton Hall speech left room for negotiations with Vienna and Berlin, and it left Germany largely intact, except for the loss of its African colonies.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January of 1918, the American President Woodrow Wilson published his 14 points for the end of the war. He proposed open diplomacy, freedom of trade and navigation on the seas, as well at war as on peace, no economic barriers in the world, reduction of armaments, and the creation of a League of Nations. He remained committed to the territorial aims also of the Allied Powers. Belgium had to be evacuated from Central Powers troops. Poland should become once more independent, and also receive access to the Baltic Sea. Italy's frontiers should be drawn on clearly recognised lines of nationality. Wilson left some ambiguity on the claims for the Alsace and Lorraine Regions of France. He wanted impartial re-adjustments of the claims of the Allies for the German colonies, and autonomy, though not necessarily independence, for the subject peoples of Austria and Turkey in the Balkan. It was

remarkable how the 14 points left the territories of the Central Powers largely intact. They were not obliged to disarm, and also not subject to financial penalties.

In Berlin, Chancellor von Hertling grudgingly accepted the 14 American points in general, as a basis of discussions. Austria, with Count Czernin, agreed a little warmer. In Russia, the Bolsheviks placed the speech and the points of Wilson on the walls of St Petersburg.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, Woodrow Wilson condemned the cold reaction of von Hertling. He praised Count Czernin. He announced his 4 basic principles for the peace: self-determination of the nations, territorial settlements in the interests of the populations, with national aspirations to be satisfied, and a stop of the international armed conflict.

Meanwhile, in international politics, the Allies refused to be drawn into the Russo-Central powers negotiations at Brest-Litowsk. Vienna would not break with Germany. The Russian revolution seemed not to spread into the countries of the Central Powers.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February of 1918, at Bad Homburg, the German Crown Council reacted on the proposals of Lloyd George and of Woodrow Wilson. Peace could not be imposed on Germany. The new German domination over territories occupied was justifiable, as they had been conquered by force of arms in a conflict Germany had been drawn into. The Bolsheviks were to be compelled to sign a peace treaty, and on harsher terms than Trotsky had already rejected!

In a meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee, lasting from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1918, Lenin was in favour of the Trotsky middle course of no war and no peace with the Germans. Lenin wagered the Germans would not react in any way on such a diplomatic position. Later, however, the Russians, pushed against the wall, because militarily they were in a very disadvantageous situation, accepted the German terms.

The Peace of Brest-Litowsk was signed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March of 1918. The two countries, Germany and Russia, reinstated their 1904 commercial treaty. Russia promised not to take part in any post-war Allied boycott of Germany. Each side would reimburse the other for maintaining prisoners of war, a direct rejection of the no-indemnity claims of Russia. In total, the Russian representatives signed away about one-third of Russia's pre-war population, much of its heavy industry and of its coal production, as well as of its best agricultural land! Russia lost the Caucasus districts of Kars, Kardahan and Batum to Turkey. It recognised the authority of the Ukrainian Parliament, the *Rada*. Its soldiers would leave the Ukraine and Finland. Russia would hand over the sovereignty of the territories lying west of the Brest-Litowsk to Riga line to Germany. It left the Central Powers to decide over the fate of Poland, Lithuania, Kurland, Estonia and Livonia, until proper national institutions had been established in these countries.

The Bolshevik Regime had sought by taking over power in Russia to obtain the immediate and general peace, a people's demands. But by signing the armistice, it had broken up its army, thus depriving the state of all bargaining leverage! Russia had been forced to conclude a separate peace Treaty with Germany, which cost it dearly.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks had no intention of abiding to the Brest-Litowsk agreements for longer than they had to! And nor had the German OHL! Brest-Litowsk failed to bring long-lasting peace in the east. The German expansion to the east was only just beginning!

The German Bad Homburg Crown Council agreed to occupy Estonia and Livonia. They did declare the independence of these states, though under German protection. The German hegemony in the Baltic Region thus threatened St Petersburg.

In Finland, the German OHL approved interventions in the civil war. The Whites, the rightist militias, fought the Bolshevik-backed Reds. Finland was an important source of nickel, OHL claimed. Germany sent 70,000 soldiers to Finland, to help the Whites. Later, after the war, a Friendship Treaty was signed between Finland and Germany.

In the Ukraine, Germany had overrun the Black Sea harbours. When the Ukrainian Parliament, the *Rada*, defied the Germans, the German leadership replaced the *Rada* by the pro-German authoritarian regime of General Pavel Skoropadsky. The German troops entered the Crimea, which had declared its independence.

In May of 1918, Georgia and Germany signed peace agreements. German managers obtained the right to use and occupy the Georgian ports and its railways, and to exploit the country's rich manganese mines.

A separate Germany-Rumania Peace Treaty was also signed. The Rumanian Government was then established at Iasi, in the north. Since 1916, General Bratianu was the Prime Minister of Rumania. He had re-occupied Bessarabia after the Bolshevik revolution. It was Bratianu who had signed the armistice in December of 1917, with the Central Powers. Now, in February of 1918, he resigned as Prime Minister.

A coalition of all the Rumanian parties under General Aberesen began negotiations with the Central Powers for a definite statute of the country. Rumania had not to cede territories. It was also allowed to keep Bessarabia. The May 1918 Treaty of Bucharest, however, was economically harsh on Rumania. The Central Powers imposed for themselves the right to compulsively purchase the Rumanian harvests, at fixed tariffs. They controlled Rumania's Central Bank and the country's currency reserves. The Central Powers held the control over the pumping up of oil by Central Powers companies, and also of marketing the oil. These demands had been dictated by the German OHL, which needed the Rumanian oil to continue the war in the west.

The Bulgarians would receive the northern part of the Dobrudja Region, as they had always claimed. Turkey strongly opposed this deal. After negotiations, the northern Dobrudja was handed over neither to Bulgaria nor to Turkey, but to a condominium of four powers.

## The German Offensives on the Western front in 1918

If Germany made peace without any acquisitions of territories, then Germany had lost the war! Erich Ludendorff said this to Count Czernin of Austria, while the Brest-Litovsk negotiations were ongoing. In his turn, von Hindenburg told Emperor Wilhelm II any kind of peace should offer Germany formidable frontiers so that its enemies would hesitate to start another war for years to come. But the war on the Western Front was not to be won!

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1917 to the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1918, the Eastern Front divisions of Germany fell from 85 to 47, while those on the Western Front rose from 147 to 191. German divisions arrived also from Italy, 8 in total, and were moved west, as well as smaller units that had until now remained stationed in Macedonia. Even a small Austro-Hungarian unit arrived in France.

In March of 1918, the German Western Army consisted of more than 3,438,000 men and 136,600 officers. The Army had almost 711,000 horses. The Eastern Front Army consisted of only about 1,005,000 men and 40,100 officers. This number fell to about 600,000 men by July 1918.

On the front of the Oise River in France, 30 of the 81 German divisions had been moved from other war theatres, as had 8 of the 33 divisions in Flanders. On the Western Front, 191 German divisions stood against 178 Allied ones. For the first time since 1914, the Germans had again numerical superiority over the Allies.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March of 1918, three German Armies attacked on this front. From north to south, these were the 17<sup>th</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> Armies. The German Army was back on the offensive!

1. The 17<sup>th</sup> German Army was under the command of General von Below, the victor of the Battle of Caporetto. His artillery was commanded by Behrendt, as during the Caporetto Offensive.
2. The 18<sup>th</sup> Army was commanded by General von Hutier, the victor of Riga. His artillery stood under the command of Bruchmüller, famous for the new tactics in artillery barrages.
3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Army was commanded by von Marwitz, who had also been the leader of the German troops at Cambrai.

The German OHL had learned the lessons in tactics applied at Caporetto, Riga and Cambrai. It had composed a manual called '*The attack in Position Warfare*', dated from January 1918 and distributed throughout the armies to all officers, down to the battalion leaders. The troops had received intense training sessions in the new tactics, in groups of 56 divisions in rotation. The men had been trained in long-distance marching, in fighting while on the move, in the storming of enemy trenches under live fire, and in the use of artillery fire in conjunction with infantry attacks: the creeping barrages.

The basic attack unit now was the *Gruppe*, or group, of 9 men with rifles and light machine guns, acting under an NCO, a non-commissioned officer. These would be followed closely by specialised teams armed with flamethrowers and heavier weapons. The soldiers all applied assault squad methods, the methods they had been specially trained in. The main assaults would be executed by Attack Divisions, of *Eingreifdivisionen*, of about one quarter of the

infantry, all men of between 25 and 35 years old, able, prioritised with good food and new equipment in excellent order. They had received precise instructions of exactly where to attack, how, and how to advance. Finally, the *Positional Divisions* would follow. These too were first rate units, of only slightly less quality.

The German armies had received fine, new equipment, among which the light machine guns MG 08/15, the heavy machine guns MG 08, light mortars in the forward troops. In each division, a specialised mortar company, carried medium weight weapons. The German Armies had at their disposal about 2,000 aircraft, all metal single-wing airplanes.

But the Germans had no tanks, except for the very slow and yet manoeuvrable A7V. A weak point of the divisions too was that they had only 23,000 lorries equipped with steel tyres that chewed up the roads and had it difficult to advance in muddy terrain, whereas the Allies disposed of about 100,000 lorries with rubber tyres.

Von Hindenburg had insisted on the offensive plans devised already in April of 1917, on not one sole attack, but on a series of hammer blows at various points of the front.

The offensive would be the last card of von Hindenburg and Ludendorff. It definitely had to be a success. They both knew this very well. If this offensive failed, Germany would lose the war! The last details had been discussed times over, and agreed upon at a conference in the Belgian city of Mons. The ultimate commanders of the Armies were Crown Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria and Crown Prince Wilhelm of Prussia. Their respective Chiefs of Staff were Kuhl and Schulenburg. In OHL, the Chief of Operations was Georg Wetzell.

The first attack would be directed against the British troops near the French town of St Quentin. The BEF was smaller, weaker and less skilful than the French troops, Ludendorff had explained. He thought his troops were not strong enough to beat the French divisions first. OHL agreed on the St Quentin attack, and gave it the name of *Operation Michael*. Von Hindenburg gave the final order to attack on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, for the assault to start on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. Emperor Wilhelm II and the Chancellor Count von Hertling had also approved the offensive.

The first assault took therefore place on the British-held positions of from Cambrai to St-Quentin-la-Fère. This was all dry and flat land.

Already in December of 1917, Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of the BEF, expected a new German offensive. He ordered the BEF, now in a defensive war mode entirely, to construct a better system of defence, in depth. Haig correctly predicted in February 1918 a first German attack would come in late March of 1918, between the Oise River and the town of Lens, as well as a second attack in Flanders, near Ieper, in April. Yet, the BEF was not yet used to the defensive war!

The British defence system consisted of 3 zones. The *Forward Zone* was a system of trenches. This was followed by a *Battle Zone* of about 2.5 kilometres deep. Behind this lay a *Rear Zone* of from 6 to 10 kilometres deep. The *Forward Zone* was to be held to the last man. About 85% of the British battalions found themselves to within less than 3 kilometres of the *Forward Zone*. There, they were more exposed to German cannonades than they should have been! Moreover, contrary to the orders from the General Headquarter, Gough's 5<sup>th</sup> Army had placed half its machine guns in the *Forward Zone*!

Haig's 8 reserve divisions found themselves mostly in the north, whereas the southern stretches of the British front were more thinly held. And that was where the Germans directed their assault! Haig and his generals felt confident before the German offensive, complacent even. Haig approved a special leave for 88,000 men on the eve before the Germans actually attacked.

From the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1918 on, about one million German soldiers converged at the area of their assault. British aircraft began to notice the warning signs of an imminent attack. The General Headquarter expected then an assault within 2 days, but none came so soon.

The first cannonades for the German *Michael Offensive* started on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March at 4h40. It lasted for 7 hours. The Germans used 6,473 cannons, of which 2,435 were heavy cannons, and 2,532 were trench mortars. It was a very intense, short and very accurate barrage of fire! In the first 5 hours, more than 1.16 million shells were dropped on the British lines. The fire first concentrated on the British artillery and on the British Command Posts, only later on the first front trenches. When the German infantry attacked, a creeping barrage preceded them. The assault was given by 76 of Ludendorff's 191 divisions on the Western Front, with about 32 in the first wave and 30 following. The British 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Armies were supposed to halt the shock with 26 infantry divisions and 3 cavalry divisions. The British had 2,804 howitzers and cannons.

Very rapidly, the Germans broke through the British lines! The German troops advanced instantly to 10 kilometres deep, and then to 60 kilometres in one day! That was as much as the allies had gained in 140 days in the Battle of the Somme!

The German stormtroopers overran everywhere the British *Forward Zone*. In the south, they advanced far beyond the *Battle Zone*! They enjoyed the advantage of a dense fog that hung over the battlefield lines, which practically hid the attackers running to the British defenders who had been waiting for them with about 6,000 machine guns in the *Forward* and *Battle Zones*.

Many British units simply disintegrated, while in the fog the British artillery remained in the dark as to the actual German advance. Nevertheless, the German troops advanced to short of Ludendorff's goal of breaking through totally on the first day of the offensive, when the Germans had the advantage of the surprise with their new offensive tactics.

General Gough soon had to order a general British retreat to behind the Somme and the Crozat Canal. The British 3<sup>rd</sup> Army succeeded some in delaying the progress of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> German Armies, but wide gaps without defence opened in the British lines. By the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, the Germans even broke through a 60 kilometres-wide hole in the open country.

When the German attack began, General Philippe Pétain offered 3 French divisions to assist the British. He offered 3 more the day after, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> he promised 14 more divisions! The German stormtroopers took 3 days, more than actually projected, to break through the British defences, which gave Haig and Pétain the time to move reinforcements to the battlefield. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, Haig asked for 20 more French divisions to near Amiens. These, Pétain refused, fearing more offensives on the French-held lines.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, the Allied leaders met at the town of Doullens. Haig and Henry Wilson agreed with the French war leaders to charge the French General Foch with the coordination of the Allied Armies on the Western Front. Haig could feel relieved with this decision, but the British War Cabinet was furious: a French Commander-in-Chief they found impossible,

shocking! Moreover, Foch had not even a staff of his own. On that same 26<sup>th</sup> of March, 7 more French divisions arrived on the battlefield.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, the Allied Armies held another conference at Beauvais. The situation was serious. General Foch received the strategic direction of the military operations and with that, the authority to order counter-offensives. Haig and Pétain were responsible for the tactical conduct of the armies.

The Germans were by then already losing impetus. Their advance seemed to be slowing. Along several stretches, the soldiers reverted to the traditional ways and means of the offensive. Those lacked the punch to break open the enemy lines. Nevertheless, the Germans won their greatest success in the southern section of the British defences, rather than between Cambrai and St Quentin. Ludendorff rushed in 6 more divisions to enhance von Hutier's 18<sup>th</sup> Army.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, Ludendorff had given orders to advance in 3 axes to separate the French and the British troops. He wanted to drive the British to the sea, along the banks of the Somme. Two days later, he ordered to reinforce von Hutier's army even more. He launched the attack called *Mars* on the British lines near Arras. This offensive started on the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month. After a few hours of intense fighting, this assault faltered. The area was too strongly defended by the Allies.

By that date, Ludendorff had given up all hope on a general breakthrough of his offensive! He called off the large offensive of *Michael*. He was beginning to feel very nervous and uncertain about what he had undertaken. He authorised a new attempt to break through the Allied defenders in Flanders. He tried to sever the north-south trunk railway that ran behind the British trenches, forcing the 18<sup>th</sup> German Army to Amiens. Then, he tried to capture the high ground of Villers-Bretonneux. And failed in both!

In the end, the German Offensive *Michael* had created a new, large salient or bulge into the Allied lines. Ludendorff had reached no significant objective. The enemy troops had stepped back, but they had not been broken. The salient had brought nothing of significance to the course of the war, only a new small part of French territory, of no strategic importance. The salient even weakened the German Army for an Allied counter-attack. As they fell back, the Allies improved their defences. And as soon, as the German troops had abandoned their infiltration tactics for the traditional closed-order attacks, they also took far heavier casualties from the defence.

The days that followed in March, the fog lifted, allowing clear aims for the British machine gunners. Allied aircraft could strafe the advancing German battalions in the open fields. Ludendorff also felt defeated, because his supply could not follow his attacking units fast enough. The Germans had pushed more than 40 kilometres beyond their railheads.

The leading troops, which could have continued to advance, with only rations for two days in their packs, were becoming exhausted. Lack of sleep took its toll. Ludendorff had no cavalry anymore. His logistic weakness grew to become critical for the pursuit of the attack. The 17<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> German Armies were encountering more stiff and stubborn resistance. Von Hutier's army had advanced far, into a sack of which he was almost a prisoner!

The damage caused by this disappointing result to the German Army's morale was terrible. The German dead and wounded amounted to a little less than 240,000 men! In the offensive,

the Allied forces lost 212,000 killed and wounded men. More than 90,000 of their soldiers had been taken prisoners, and the Allies lost 1,300 cannons and howitzers. Ludendorff held the positions reached, mainly to continue threatening Amiens.

The British General Douglas Haig had committed 48 of his 56 divisions of the BEF. The French had added 40 divisions. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April already, General Haig had only 1 division left in reserve! But *Operation Michael* had been stopped before it could reach Paris!

On the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of April, Ludendorff launched his second main offensive, called *Georgette*. This happened on the River Lys, called the Leie in Flemish. The attack was given on a front of more than 30 kilometres long, with 12 assault divisions out of a total force of 27 divisions involved. The Germans used 2,208 cannons and 492 aircraft.

*Georgette* was actually smaller than originally planned, and delivered with troops of lower quality. The *Georgette* assault was delivered first against a Portuguese division on a front of 10 kilometres. The British commander there was called Horne.

The Portuguese broke.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, the Germans broke through the front over about 50 kilometres, longer than planned, forcing the British to abandon hard-won gains in the Ieper salient. The British fell back almost to the gates of Ieper. By the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, a week later, the British troops received reinforcements. Their line of defence, racked by panic, got re-established. Foch resisted sending more French reserve troops north. Haig had no reserves left.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, General Foch understood the importance of yet this attack. He sent 12 French divisions to assist Haig. Even after these troops arrived, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the *Kemmelberg*, a dominating position for battles around Ieper, fell to the Germans. But on that same 25<sup>th</sup>, the French troops played a crucial role in repelling further German assaults by throwing vast quantities of shells and machine gun rounds on the advancing enemy.

Once more, Ludendorff called off this attack, stopping *Georgette* without having reached crucial, war-changing targets. The German Army had only 8 kilometres to walk to have reached the railway junction of Hazebrouck. They failed to take Cassel, seated on its high hill, from where their long-range cannons would have been able to bomb up to Boulogne and Calais. OHL then began another, second attack on Villers-Bretonneux, close to Amiens, which was more limited in scope.

The cost of *Georgette* was 109,000 German casualties and 146,000 Allied casualties. By the end of April, Ludendorff's master offensives on the Western Front had caused incredible damage. Ultimately, they had failed to throw the Allied Armies in total disarray. The German troops stood all still against a wall everywhere, a wall of determined Allied defenders of the French soil, bitter for the many comrades-in-arms killed and eager to take revenge.

Ludendorff had to order a pause in the hostilities.

Ludendorff inserted a pause of less than a month. From the 27<sup>th</sup> of May to the 4<sup>th</sup> of June of 1918, the German Army attacked in the Champagne. By then, the morale in the German battalions began to feel fought out. The best soldiers and the best officers had been lost in *Operation Michael*. Two fresh divisions arrived on the Western Front. Only two! The German infantry received yet more light machine guns, rifle grenades, anti-tank rifles, and heavier machine guns to protect their supply lines against diving aircraft.

The new battle launched on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1918 was called *Blücher-Yorck*. Actually, it was a *Chemin des Dames* battle over the ridge north of the Aisne River, between Reims and

Soissons. The ridge was now seemingly but weakly defended by the French Army. Retaking the ridge could once more threaten Paris!

The German troops started with an intensive cannon barrage, made by 5,263 cannons, opening fire against the 1,422 Allied guns in the region. In 4 hours, the German artillery fired more than 2 million shells! Then, the German infantry attacked with 15 divisions, and 25 more divisions following. Once more, the German troops struck in fog. They battered against 16 Allied divisions of British and French soldiers.

The leader of the French 6<sup>th</sup> Army, General Duchêne, stubbornly insisted on holding his *Forward Zone*, north of the Aisne River. After a heroic battle, the Germans broke through, leaving the Allied main *Battle Zone* almost undefended. The German troops took the ridges of the *Chemin des Dames* intact, and rushed through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Allied defence lines into the open country. They advanced by about 20 kilometres, reaching their target positions already in the afternoon!

Ludendorff didn't believe his luck. Would this be the breakthrough to Paris he had hoped for? He allowed the troops to continue! By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, the German troops had moved forward by more than 60 kilometres! The German assault troops had been well equipped with mortars, machine guns and field artillery. They fought against exhausted British troops. These held only with rifles and light machine guns.

From the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, Philippe Pétain rushed in up to 20 new French divisions, under his own initiative and control. Foch, however, refused to release the French divisions he held in reserve in Flanders, once more fearing German attacks in that region too. President Clémenceau feared to press him. Foch was a formidable figure in France by then, especially when the man was in anger! By the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1918, the Germans stood back at the Marne! And on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, Paris lay only at a distance of about 110 kilometres by road, or 60 direct kilometres from the Germans. Moreover, the German troops had taken 50,000 Allied prisoners. They had broken up the railway Paris-Nancy, vital for the provisioning of the eastern part of the front in France. The German Army had also suffered far smaller losses than in earlier offensives. Their text-book new tactics had worked to perfection in this offensive. The situation looked so gloomy for the Allied Forces the British Cabinet even discussed evacuating the BEF from French soil!

The French worries did not end. From March to August, the Germans shot 238 shells on the city of Paris from about 90 kilometres far, killing about 256 people. The shots came from the enormous cannons called the 'Paris Gun'.

Pétain's strategy was to hold the heights around Reims and Soissons to serve as breakwaters for the on-rushing German divisions. He had placed a ring defence with much artillery support from the Villers-Cotterets Forest to the Marne River and Reims.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, Pétain threw 25 French and 2 USA divisions in counter-attack against the German troops. The French soldiers performed a famous action, the *Battle at Belleau Wood*. They stopped the impact of the German Army! Ludendorff pushed von Hutier on, and so von Hutier drove into a 60 kilometres deep sack, seeing his troops vulnerable on both flanks.

By the end of June, Germany's temporary margin of superiority diminished. Not in the least because by then, 15 USA divisions had arrived in France, faster than Ludendorff had thought possible.

In the month of June, half a million German soldiers contracted the first of two waves of the Spanish flu, influenza. The undernourished, exhausted German soldiers suffered more from the sickness than their opposers.

OHL and Ludendorff had stopped *Blücher-Yorck*, also called the Third Battle of the Aisne by the Allies, by the end of June. They had not stopped fighting!

From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, the German Army had already started the next hammer blow, the German next offensive called *Gneisenau*, which led to the *Battle of the Matz*.

The German soldiers advanced in the valley of the River Matz. They had to move fast, in full daylight, without fog to protect or hide their advance. They could not benefit from surprise.

Foch recalled French divisions from out of the British sector. He obtained 5 additional American divisions, which were in training with the BEF.

Douglas Haig still feared for German attacks in Flanders. He refused to send any British divisions to the fighting.

The French 2<sup>nd</sup> Army waited for the German onslaught. They had prepared their defences. To the general surprise, the French artillery began a counter-cannonade about a quarter of an hour before even the Germans began their attack! Then, the fog hung again in the environs. The German artillery started a Bruchmüller accurate, efficient barrage. They attacked with 9 divisions, but they were under-strength for the task assigned to them. The capabilities of the German Army in the assault seemed to be faltering.

The French defenders had placed 7 divisions in the first lines, 5 divisions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lines, and they held 7 more divisions at hand as reserves, behind.

The German tactics once more did secure a rapid advance of about 10 kilometres, but then the French stopped the enemy decisively! On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, General Charles Mangin, one of the heroes of Verdun, counter-attacked from 3 sides.

Ludendorff was very surprised by the energy of the French counter-attacks. He stopped his own assault. The French casualties amounted to about 40,000 men. The Germans lost 25,000 soldiers. Still, the Matz had been a battle of limited scope.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, General Foch and General Pétain halted their counter-offensive in order to conserve men. But the *Battle of the Matz* had been very significant. The French had stopped a seemingly irresistible German offensive by using superior intelligence over the German moves. They had brought in reinforcements in time, under the lead of an Allied superior general, and fought from appropriate defensive positions.

This success heightened the morale of the French troops, exactly what they needed to confront the Germans without fear in further combats.

In the March Offensive of Ludendorff, also called the *Kaiserschlacht*, the Imperial Battle, the German troops captured about ten times more territory of France than the Allies had been able to recuperate in 1917. Yet, Germany suffered casualties of about one million men in that series of offensives. The numbers of combatants were then not turning into their favour.

Every month now, about 200,000 American soldiers embarked in France! By the 20<sup>th</sup> of July of 1918, there were already over a million American soldiers in the country. Ludendorff was not just fighting the traditional Allies anymore. He was also fighting against time. He knew that all too well. By his offensives, he had created issues too. The new German salient that had been created by his offensives, threatened Allied communications with Paris, but the German generals were unable to expand it. Hence, they were vulnerable to counter-attacks.

The loss of the salient risked to push the German soldiers' morale into the ground. So many dead men for close to nothing?

By mid-June of 1918, the end of the military and political successes of the Central Powers sounded clearly.

## From the Diary of Otto von Chrapitz. Operation Blücher-Yorck. May-June 1918

**26 May 1918**

We are waiting for a new offensive of our forces. We are about twenty men, German soldiers, solid and brave, sitting in the trenches south of Laon on the Western Front. We are ready for new combat. We received ample ammunition for our rifles, new rifles to replace the ones that had almost broken down, new sacks to wear on our backs, better gear, and a really large lot of offensive grenades. After *Operation Michael* west of us, and *Operation Georgette* on the Leie, farther north-west, we had not expected to be thrown in another assault so soon. Our *Obere Heeresleitung* used us in one storm attack after the other, regardless of losses. The attacks have pushed back the enemy, causing great many casualties on their armies. I suppose our military leaders want to exhaust the Allies, mainly the British. From what I have seen in our own divisions, we, Germans, suffer about as much devastation. So, who will break first? We know what it means to attack! Usually, the casualties in a war like this are always heavier on the attackers than on the defenders. So, who is exhausting who? We are stormtroopers of the German Army. We are used to do our duty, even if that meant running straight into death. Death, actually, is nothing. You get a bullet and you die instantly. All is over. No suffering. Getting wounded or worse, maimed, or being disfigured, are what we fear. Who wants to live on with only half a face, without a leg or an arm, without both legs, with lungs burned by gas? Yet, we are the elite. Aren't we?

Half of my men are new, though all are trained in the new ways of advancing through enemy lines. We fight until we break through, or we die. The half of the men the newcomers replaced had been dear friends, companions, died in the lines. They lost their life in the regions of Bapaume and Albert, some also south of Ieper. In *Operations Michael* and *Georgette*, we advanced a little, all right, inflicted damage and losses of men beyond belief. What are the gains of a few tens of kilometres at best, in a land that needs over a thousand kilometres to occupy it until we would get to the Mediterranean or to the Atlantic? What are our smart officers at the OHL thinking of? Anyway, getting to Paris would be nice, for a change, and Paris lays, what, over a hundred kilometres only from our present position south of Laon? I could visit Laon Cathedral yesterday. Fine town, fine church, streets a little drab, but who would have expected better in this war? I would have liked taking more time to visit. Some of my soldiers pray. What for? Proof has been given sufficiently by now, in my eyes anyway, God does not intervene in this war. He has abandoned us.

So, now we wait. My new ordonnanz, *Gefreiter Kleinschlägel*, sits next to me in the *Stollen*, the bunker of the trench. I can tell he is nervous. Who wouldn't be? When you survive an attack, you thank God. When you got through two such attacks, you start thinking of miracles and of a special relationship with your personal God. After three attacks, you only think war is a routine. Maybe luck is once more with us. Where does luck comes from? From the Fates, or simply from probability theory?

The attack of tomorrow has received the name *Blücher-Yorck*. It is an intellectual's name! Not a name for us, who actually have to perform the hoped-for breakthrough. Where our staff gets those names from, I have not the slightest idea. I know of Blücher, of course, the Prussian general who rescued Wellington from the French at Waterloo. This time, the armies stand differently against one another. And Yorck was another Prussian general, fighting in

the east against the French armies of Napoleon. Victories in the west and in the east, a fine combination and hope. Hope keeps us fighting on, though nobody in my unit thinks of hope anymore. Of what could we hope? What could we hope for?

The main aim of the operation is to get passed the famous *Chemin des Dames*, the high ridge running from the Fort of Malmaison, halfway Laon and Soissons, to the Plateau of Craonne. That ridge is a man-killer! As well our own army as the French Army have captured it in turn. Why the hell did we give it over of our hands? There is a saying that who gains the *Chemin des Dames* can reach Paris in two days! We'll see. Any attack is close to suicide these days. An attack up a ridge, even from the sides, is madness! But we, me and my men, we were lucky once more. We have to march to the east end of the *Dames*, to Craonne. We must pass the Allied front lines there, two lines and a killing ground in between, and then move south to the Aisne River. We must simply take the terrain north of the Aisne and stop at the river. If good luck is with us, we have to move further south over the Aisne River at Beaurieux and Maizy to Révillon, then over Merval to the larger city of Fismes on the Vesle River. Normally, our troops should stop on the River Vesle. Counter-attacks should come from south of the Vesle. We have to hold the northern banks of that river.

How many kilometres should we then have won? Twenty or twenty-five? For how many casualties? Over one hundred thousand, surely! But what are 100,000 men? I guess about half a million men could attack, against probably half a million more, who may try to stop us on the enemy's side! Yes, about 20 divisions will attack. Half a million on either side, maybe more! About 10% to 15% of all attackers and defenders will die or remain lying in the field. Or more? Never in history have there been larger battlefields than here, in the Champagne. We, the common soldiers, do not have much information of all that, of course.

Anyway, we march as of 04h00 in the night from Laon. At the same moment will start the German bombardments of the front. We will have a *Feuerwalze*, a rolling fire or barrage of cannon fire in front of us to make our job easier. Normally, the initial cannonade should kill every British and French soldier in the first trenches by the time we get there. We should find only dead men in front of us, and dead men don't shoot. Experience taught us the rolling, creeping barrage kills only 20% or so of the waiting enemy, and 20% more of the men may be too stunned to react much. That leaves about 60% of all Allied soldiers shooting like hell at us while we come running on. My trick, a trick I learned the hard way, is to spot at which places of the trenches the creeping fire has done the most damage. Then I can order my men to run fast, to get as soon as possible on the defending soldiers. We roll up the surviving men in the trenches with grenades and with our light machine guns, destroy the enemy *Stollen*, their command centres and bunkers dug into the earth, maybe the ones first that have been reinforced with concrete and bricks, to form real strongholds.

For that work, I can use another group of 20 men, under the lead of a sergeant, a man called Haedermann. I know Haedermann well. Not the first time I ran in an attack with him. Good man. Haedermann's guys follow us closely. They will do the job of destruction for us, by applying the fire from their flamethrowers and more powerful explosives than we have with us. These men also will bring heavier machine guns, useful for holding the trenches during counter-attacks. Farther behind, we have another 20 men, coming with three field cannons and mortars. These should catch up with us, and also arrive in time to handle French or British counter-attacks. They are led by a young lieutenant called Kurt Kössler, a very young

lieutenant. Well, he only has to follow us, and promised to do so, happen what may. He showed me a courier he will send to me for orders. Neat young man! His courier is an equally young *Gefreiter*, a corporal, called Wiesmüller. What may happen when this Wiesmüller falls in the first metres, I have no idea. I didn't bother to ask Kössler. It might merely embarrass him!

In fact, with this, I still merely do the work of an experienced lieutenant! I have been promoted two times already, but the higher officers must have forgotten about that so far. I don't really care. Only God knows when I will lead several assault groups together. Before us will probably stand only a British division. I know the names, at least I think so. In front of us will stand the troops of Brigadier-General Hubert Rees, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Hamilton-Gordon, himself under the upper command of the French General Denis Auguste Duchêne. At the explanation session for officers, I was told the British troops had been sent here to rest after the *Michael Battles*. They rested first on the *Chemin des Dames*. What a place to choose for resting! Well, if truly they rest, they will be keen to shoot on everything they can see that is not British. I'd rather prefer running into tired men. The British Corps will be in for a nasty surprise. Come to brown in the early sun, they will get a rain of shells on their heads! British troops under the command of a French general? That could not be right! All the better for us, if some confusion happens. Since when do British generals speak French and Frenchies English?

I met the lieutenants commanding on my two sides. To the west will fight a similar storm troopers' unit under Lieutenant Wilhelm Käper. Prussian, tough. Käper is somewhat younger than me, and not a First Lieutenant, but he is a reliable, excellent soldier. Iron Cross at his neck. He knows me and I know him. He is sometimes, let us say, too enthusiast to advance. His only flaw is impatience. East of me lies Lieutenant Hans Holder. Hannoverian, smart. He is younger, seems intelligent, the scholar type, and I don't know him well. Iron Cross too, so he must be good. Mean, ugly face. He eats iron. Looked at me with apprehension and suspicion. It may be a difficult job to persuade him to do what I want, if needed. Maybe he will have good arguments to play out against me, to prevail. No issue, if the arguments are fine. Otherwise, I'll just have to shout him down. He too is no First Lieutenant. I am his colonel! There must be a *Hauptmann* Köller somewhere to the west, and an *Oberst* Wildermann to the east. Don't know these men, won't need them, except when they arrive with a message of the higher command to stop, when done for.

## 27 May 1918

We ran into the attack when it was still dark. We stood by then already quite far south of Laon, first unit, second unit, third unit, each about half a kilometre one behind the other. Yesterday, I met Sergeant Haedermann, the head of the flamethrower and machine-gun section. He seems all right, an old professional. He knows me. Looked at him with a bit of surprise, suspicious, but he smiled innocently enough. A man of Marienwerder, Prussian like me. Tough man, too. He promised to keep up with my unit, whatever happens. I believed him. He said he wanted to be closer forwards. I liked that. He is right.

The rolling fire started early. All hell broke loose in front of us. Over 4,000 artillery pieces shot their shells on the enemy lines we could already see from where we waited. The first

cannonade lasted four hours, along the entire line from Soissons to Rheims. The *Chemin des Dames* erupted in fire and smoke. We were all glad not to have to endure such a fire in the trenches. Our artillery seems to be sharper than ever. They dropped their shells neatly on the enemy trenches and on the French reinforcements. I suppose also on the gun positions and the command-and-communication centres of the enemy. The cannonade was followed by a short gas drop. This lasted about half an hour. The poison gas hung over the Allied lines, and slowly dispersed. Hard to see where the gas ended and the mist started. White-grey mist hung over the fields before us. Good. The British will not see us coming! Farther to the back, more gas was dropped. There lay the British headquarters, their second lines, and their artillery. Their artillery pieces were not quiet, but had no good idea of where to shoot. Dispersed explosions! The enemy shot at us too, with rifles, wild fire, only a few steps more to the front. So much for the all-killing fire and gas attack promised! We waited for the ominous 08h30, when it was our turn to advance! We did not shoot back.

We hadn't even our gas masks on by that time. They still dangled on our backs. I gave the sign to move forward. We did so in utter silence. I saw a few shots came from a stretch to the left, in front of us. I directed my men to there with my hand. We advanced, rapidly, not running. We almost immediately lost two of our best men. I saw both be shot and fall. They didn't just drop out of fear or cowardice. We walked on, ignoring the fire. An excellent thing was that a stretch of barbed wire had been blown up and replaced by enormous funnels deep in the earth. We then ran over those, along the sides, and saw clearly the trenches begin, under us. Before we reached them, I had ordered a grenade attack. Three of my men and I, threw each two grenades in the trenches. Once more, one of my men got hit. I saw the blood spurt out of his chest. No time to wait for him! We jumped in the trenches. Two of my men, who had jumped next to me, began to advance to my right, to the west. Yes, we had to clean up a fair part of the line, before my other men could come and get over the British line.

A few remarks. Firstly, the British trenches here were not very deep, and relatively wide and comfortable, well-built, steep borders, and dry. There were several bunkers on our stretch. Secondly, we found more soldiers in the trenches than we expected, and more devastation caused by the initial bombardment than we had dared to hope for. Why had the British amassed so many men in the first line? Exactly because of the damage caused by the long, initial cannon fire, we Germans placed less and less people in the first line. We kept more men behind to be able to launch effective counter-attacks. More British soldiers in the first line meant more dead men during the starting bombardment. Totally useless deaths! A shameful waste! Or would there be proportionally also more men in the counter-attack reserves? In that case, we, Germans, might be dug into the earth soon! Or had the British and French concentrated most of their men in the front line? That, then, was a mistake that already had cost them dearly. Our artillery had become very sharp, very accurate, in dropping shells right onto the trench zone.

We advanced rapidly in the British trenches. Where the trench part we ran in stopped, and formed a corner to start at another angle, our first man looked in. He held his fingers up with one hand, or shook his hand to indicate many enemy soldiers. Here, he showed four fingers. We threw in at least two grenades, waited for the explosions, then stepped into the new trench section, and shot all. Our first man got slightly wounded in that manoeuvre, then also the second one. They suffered no deep wounds though, just grazing wounds. Another of our men got a shot in the shoulder, at a place where a bullet could get straight through. No bone

miraculously hit. We used bayonets to clear the stretch. We killed. Our second unit was in the trenches, too, right behind us.

We cleaned three *Stollen*, three trench bunkers, with our flamethrowers. One of these men was shot in the face. He had no face anymore after being hit. He still moved arms and legs a few times, then lay still and dead. We didn't look into the *Stollen* we flame-threwed. None of us can support the stench of charred human flesh. I hate flamethrowers. Inhuman weapons! Once, I saw a totally burned corpse in a trench. A distressing view. Our grenades did their work. At least five British corpses were buried in the mud of a side of a trench that had collapsed. No need to bury them. It is strange, seeing a dead face stare at you from out of a flank of mud. Who would bury these men? Our soldiers, the British much later, who would bury these men? Who would bury us? To die so, in a trench, was a terrible death! One British man lay on the other side. He still lived, breathed on, but his face was completely destroyed. He was in pain and cried out. He wouldn't survive for long, for we had no nurses with us, no stretcher-bearing soldiers. Three of our men passed him, looking the other way. I killed the man with a revolver shot in the neck. They shoot horses, don't they? He seemed grateful to me. He didn't cry anymore.

We reached the unit of Lieutenant Hans Holder after about 400 meters, avoiding at the last moment shooting down one of our own soldiers. I ordered my men back, to the other end of the trenches. There too, we cleared our part of the front line of enemy soldiers, all British. Then, I ordered to stand, climb up the southern sides of the trench, and move forward again, to find the second line. The fog was lifting, and that was dangerous. We marched on in skirmish formation, expecting counter-attacks any moment. None came, which surprised us much. We found a second line about a kilometre farther. We cleared that section, too. Less men defended the line. Again, all British soldiers. Hit hard by the initial bombardment. We lost four more men, three in an unfortunate counter-attack by the enemy on our advancing column with small cannon. The enemy soldiers we found, we shot. How many of my men had been left behind? I would count later! When we had cleared the second line of trenches, I called my men together and counted. Ten of the men had fallen, about half of what I had. Some we didn't even know had fallen. We could not get back and search for them. We had to continue the attack, though I wondered what there was left to attack. Our second unit joined us. They carried with them one of my wounded men. The stormtrooper had been shot in the leg. He could strumpled forward, and wanted to continue. I shook my head of no. We would lose time waiting and caring for him. I comforted him, told him he had been a very courageous man, but this offensive was over for him. I pointed backwards, told him to walk slowly back and to find a *lazaret* behind. We cut him a decent stick he could lean upon, and sent him back. We could not give him a companion. I needed every man I still had. He was a brave man, Alfred Müller was his name, nineteen years old. I heard he fell in a French attack four months later.

When we had taken the second line, I called my three units together. Henceforth, we would advance as one group. Still stormtroopers as scouts in front, assault team with machine-guns behind, artillery at the end. Where were the British reserves? Why hadn't they attacked us yet? When would the strong counter-attack come? I noticed continued shots to my right and to my left. The other lieutenants had not stopped. They might have encountered sharpshooters lying in ambush. We hadn't been hurt by these yet. I waited a full hour in an organised defensive position. Then, I chased my men on. We got very quickly to Beaurieux, stepped

quite agreeably over a bridge to Maizy. We even went on to Fismes. We came by that town in the afternoon. No civilians in view! The French hid, in cellars, on hills, in the bushes. No one showed behind windows. We shoot at windows! We marched in column, one man after the other. Two skirmishers in front, a hundred meters before us. We advanced on a small, unpaved road. Fine landscape here. Wooded terrain! Some protection, but also excellent land to hide in for an ambush. We marched cautiously. We turned around Fismes. I don't like towns of which I didn't know whether they are ours or not. Every street corner can be a trap, and we might be shot at from out of each window! I turned east, south, then west and south again. No resistance met.

No British soldiers in sight! Had they all abandoned these fields? God! Where were the enemy divisions? My guess was they were rather to the west, maybe still defending the *Chemin des Dames*. If that was true, we marched in their backs. It was getting late. I ordered my men out of the fields, to the border of a small wood. We reached a village. Only a few farms. Native men told us the site was called *La Bonne-Maison*, the Good House. Seemed a good name for a resting place! I dispersed my men. I told them to be quiet and not to harass the farmers and their families. I wouldn't mind an egg in the morning, though, and maybe a chicken, too. I could sleep in a farmhouse, upstairs, in what resembled a true bed. But before that, I had to go for news, now, in the falling night. I had to go back to Fismes, on foot, to hear from other officers what was happening. If I found one, and if that one knew more than I did!

## 28 May 1918

I came back from Fismes at 02h00 in the night, exhausted as ever. I saw the two Lieutenants, Käper and Holder. They both stayed at Fismes, in which they had found no British soldiers. Maybe I should have entered Fismes too. The lieutenants had some news, not much. Orders were to advance. The objective, the Vesle River, had been reached so soon, we should push on. We discussed together, over maps, how we would move south. The aim for my units was to move to the town of Dorman, on the Marne River. Aim for the others: the town of Château-Thierry. They took the larger city. I agreed quite well with a lesser aim. I was not out for more distinctions and medals. What would they provide me with? A larger tomb?

At Fismes, food provisions came in. The men serving the trucks had no intention to drive to the smaller villages, not to *La Bonne-Maison*. I had my ordonnance with me. I could grab two sacks of bread, one of hard, dried sausages. The sausages tasted good. We took the three sacks with us, and returned to *La Bonne-Maison*.

It seemed the British soldiers had indeed been at rest in the front line we attacked and overwhelmed. The French general-in-command had ordered all troops to the front line. Duchêne was still a traditional iron-monger. The British obeyed, though general orders were different. They got crushed in the initial German bombardment. No reserve troops organised! We could sleep well tonight. Our infantry assault had been a complete success. We had pierced the British lines like a knife cutting through butter. It looked like there were currently no French troops of significant power between us and Paris. I did not believe this last. Even if it was true for the moment, the French would move many reserve divisions in and throw them in our way. Maybe late tomorrow afternoon, maybe later. But come they would. The

emperor himself had inspected the progress of our troops. I almost forgot to tell the divisions were led in name by the Crown Prince Wilhelm.

The Lieutenants Käper and Holder would henceforth move together. They probably thought they had less to fear with more men. Yet, more men are more conspicuous in this terrain. They had lost each about one man in three of their soldiers. Good. I told them I would advance alone. Better to hide a small unit than three units together. Nevertheless, the two lieutenants looked expectantly at me. I remained dumb.

I did as if I didn't guess what they wanted. They wanted my unit to join them, and lead. I had no inkling to do so. I am a loner. Always have been. Survived better that way. Also, I felt tired in mind. And nobody gave me the command!

We arrived back at *La Bonne-Maison* very exhausted. The sacks were heavy. At the end, we drew them behind us. The bread and sausages were distributed. They would do good in the morning, maybe with an egg or two. I went to sleep. I placed scouts around the village, on the two main roads.

I woke in the morning around 08h00. Yes, I had taken my time. My men were already eating. Yes, they had kept me an egg. You cannot imagine how good a man can feel with a simple egg! The old lady of the farm put it in the pan. She added a few herbs. Delicious. Why would she have taken pity on me? She was a Frenchwoman! Maybe she didn't know what nationality meant. I wouldn't have eaten the warm food the provisioning trucks would have brought us anyway. I saw a maggot swimming all white in the soup they had prepared. Some of the potatoes were all black. One could get sick from that stuff! Who would eat that? Not I! If necessary, I could steal food now.

We moved on as of 09h00, content and relatively happy. I drew my men south to the next village, called Crugny. From there on, we took a smaller road to Lagery. At Lagery, I ordered to march west. We marched to the Abbey of Notre-Dame d'Igny. Arrived there near noon. Ate well in the abbey.

When we left the abbey in the afternoon, we continued to march cautiously on to Vézilly, still southwards. A little farther, before we arrived at Villers-Agron-Aiguizy, we ran into a group of British infantry. We marched in column. They let us pass a little beyond a wood in which they hid, and then shot on us. Not very courageous of them, but this was war.

They marked their anger especially at our flamethrower platoon, and shot one of the men. Not content with hitting him badly in the chest, they also took aim at the containers on his back. He exploded in a huge flame of red and yellow fire. We heard our companion scream, but it was already far too late for him. He became the victim of huge flames. I shall hear that scream till the end of my days.

We took our vengeance by giving a frantic fire into the wood. The British must have been too impatient. They shot too early. They had not seen our field guns, drawn by horses, and not the men serving them. My men did not wait for me to shout orders. They knew what to do. They dropped all to the side of the road. They re-appeared when they had a good overview, a fine sight on the area from which the British shot. Our field guns were deployed, our one remaining mortar too, and we shelled the British to smithereens. The shells were of small calibre, but large enough to make of the wood a hell of explosions, of falling trees, flying shards of wood, smoke and earth being thrown up. We opened fire with about all machine-guns we had. Our men shot at the wood for about a quarter of an hour. Then, I ordered to stop

the ordeal. When the noise had gone, I heard no shots anymore coming out of the wood. I took then the last of our stormtroopers and dared entering the place where I thought the British had hidden. We shot three more British soldiers.

The British had shot at us, but they were but of a small platoon, maybe of 15 to 20 men. They had surely not expected us to have a little of all kind of weapons, including machine-guns. A couple may have fled. The rest was dead or seriously wounded. We gave no quarter. The wounded, we shot. They would not have made it on their own to any field hospital anyway. We delivered them from a painful death. Then, we reformed. I got even more cautious than before. Where this enemy unit had come from, there might be more soldiers! We sent our scouts in front, two more on each side, waited for some time, and then advanced once more. We reached Anthenay before the evening. We found no British or French troops in that village. We tracked back, for we were not really on the road to Dorman. I had made a mistake in reading the map. We took another road more to the west, and continued marching to Passy-Grigny. I made my men march to beyond that village, which seemed very quiet, maybe a little too quiet to my taste. I found a small wood, almost near Verneuil. We stopped there, hid in the midst of the trees, and slept in the open.

## 29 May 1918

The next morning, we ate the last of our provisions. We had no food left for the next day. My men looked worried. Bullets they could stand, not having no food anymore. They got hungry only by thinking of it.

I heard two men grumble, ‘where are we going to? Always south! Have you noticed? Where does Chrapitz think he can take us to? To the Paris casino? We should have stayed on the other side of the river. We have no orders, anyway. Nobody has come to see where we are. What is the damn name of this river anyway? Where are we?’

‘The Marne,’ another answered, ‘we passed the Marne.’

That brought astonishment and surprise on the faces of all. The Marne was a name that sounded like a huge bell.

Well, I fell to a silence, too. I hadn’t noticed. I opened my map, and yes, on the left side corner, in small blue cursive print, I read the Marne. I had not looked quite well enough to my map. The Marne was a border of great significance. This was how far our assault troops had come in 1914! Had we truly advanced so far? I made my men walk back to Verneuil. I decided to make a halt, there, and somehow seek new orders. We must have come at something like 60 to 70 kilometres from Paris! Suddenly, I had an urge to continue and have a look at the Eiffel Tower! I chuckled. There had to be very many French troops now between us and the outskirts of Paris! Better be patient, and come back to Paris later, accompanied by Elisabeth.

I then astonished myself for thinking of Elisabeth. I had seen her more beautiful than she was, certainly, and naked in my dreams. No, I could not continue on my own, beyond the Marne! I stopped my men, told them to take it easy in Verneuil, put scouts around, and went in search again of the lieutenants on my sides. They marched somewhere to the west. I was too tired to start immediately. I waited a few hours. I placed my men in defence, ordered them to dig in, and went west. I walked with my faithful Kleinschlägel in the late afternoon. We walked rapidly on the road to Dorman, but took west a little beyond Vincelles, then farther west

through the Wood of Ris. Late in the evening, we found a strong detachment, half a German division, or what was left of a full division. An *Oberst*, a colonel, was ordering there. He could tell me to stop on the north side of the Marne, best where we had arrived, at Verneuil, and to wait for orders. I was a little sceptic about that suggestion. Nobody had found us so far! Still, me and my young *Gefreiter* went back to Verneuil. We found it after some hesitations on the directions to go in, and arrived in the middle of the night. We were exhausted. We hid, sought a good place to sleep, and passed the night in a hay barn. We had seen no enemy troops in the environs.

### 30 May 1918

In the morning, my men stood around me. I explained. There was a bridge over the Marne near Verneuil, between Verneuil and Dorman. We had to stop there, and keep the bridge. We ate very frugally. I had already in my mind not to stay any longer than three days here, and then go back north, for we had no food. I placed my men in defensive positions around the northern bridgehead. I placed our machineguns and hid our cannons and mortar to give the bridge and whatever enemy that might try to pass it, everything we had of crossfire. We had no explosives anymore. We would have to fight and hold the bridge.

I inspected my men. Our stormtroopers had been more than decimated. I had merely five of the ten experienced soldiers left. Our 20-men company of flamethrowers and machine gunners had lost 3 men. All were exhausted. We could use one or two days of total rest. I took five more of my men, threw a flamethrower in a dried-out well and had it exploded in there. Then, I put the men, who also had rifles, into the stormtrooper platoon. We still had our three field guns and five heavy machine guns and one mortar. The remaining men were not too many to hold a strategic bridge. I placed them at specific points behind the river banks, well hid, from where we could shoot our bullets in waves over the bridge platform. The Marne was a little narrower here than we had seen elsewhere. That allowed for clearer targets.

I have forgotten to tell we had discovered three French light army trucks on the way south. Two in the wood of our last skirmish. One of these had refused to work, but two of our men had mechanical skills, and fixed the issue. We had now three fine Renault trucks at our disposal. We hid those on the north side of Verneuil. If ever we got attacked by overpowering numbers, we would not be able to hold the bridge for long. So, the plan was to do what we could, and then escape to the trucks. We would drive them north to Passy-Grigny, drive like hell back to Vézilly, and then to Fismes. We readied sturdy planks against the backs of the trucks, to push and draw our last field guns in. If possible. I wanted to escape north at high speed! No horses anymore for us. It would be harder to deploy the field guns. So be it. We did not have food for the animals. We set them free. We found some food for ourselves by a scavenging team around the farms of Passy, enough for two days more. No provisioning would reach us.

The real issue was our artillery guys telling me they had no more than ten shells for each gun left! Without ammunition for our guns, we could not go on, and attack. It would be suicide. And we couldn't give much in defence either! The defence of the bridge would have to be short. We could fend off one attack, then we would have to flee. We decided to take only one

field gun back with us and ten shells, plus the mortar. A mortar is precious! We would keep all the machineguns, also the heavy ones, for which we still had sufficient ammunition for a day or two of combat. We waited.

### 30 May 1918

We dug in, and waited. It was fine weather for us. Nothing special happened. For my part, we could wait for a month, here.

### 31 May 1918

A motorised company of German soldiers, led by a *Hauptmann*, a captain, rode up to the bridge. We had seen them coming, but they hadn't seen us hiding. We showed us only at the very last moment, giving a fright to the captain. He was quite surprised to find German troops already here. He smiled, however, when he noticed how few we were. He thought, of course, I must have been no colonel very much in favour with the higher command. The captain also looked exhausted. This captain was older than me. Yet, he could claim no authority over me, as I was an *Oberst*, but I would gladly have followed his suggestions, as far as he remained reasonable. I explained what we had done and how. I mentioned to him our ammunition was almost depleted. The captain arrived at the head of a detachment of 200 German soldiers, a lot more than we were. He told me our Army had burst through 8 Allied Divisions north of us, and pushed the enemy back to the Vesle River. Our Army had captured already more than 50,000 Allied soldiers, mostly British, and more than 30 cannons. But now, about every platoon of our attacking forces lacked reserves, food especially, suffered from about any supply shortages one could think of. Nobody in our Army had expected us to drive so far to the south. The captain told also the French were gathering for counter-attacks. The aim was now, once more, to defend the Marne. The captain asked us to stay as long as he had not deployed his men correctly. We could help with that. The captain thought we knew the environs, which was not really the case, as we had arrived so short ago. Nevertheless, I showed him where the best defence places were, in my opinion, including the one we already held. He began to set in place a denser defence than ours, and he ordered the bridge to be mined.

### 1 June 1918

The captain suggested us to return north. He was definitely uneasy with me. And I with him. We had accomplished enough. Storm troopers, he said, were needed elsewhere. I knew what that meant: another attack was being fomented. I was not very happy with that. What was the use at this stage? Why would we spend more men? I said little, however, gave no comment, and took my men, marched in silence but in style out of Verneuil. Nobody said much in my ranks. We were all thinking of our French trucks, of course. Had they been discovered? No, we found them where we had hidden them. We pushed the mortar, our machineguns, in the truck, and smashed the rest, including our flamethrowers. The field cannons, with so little ammunition, I left with the captain. He would make better use of them than we! I would sit next to the driver of the first truck. I had the maps! All of my men got a place in the trucks.

We had found some paint at Verneuil, so we roughly drew German insignia over the French symbols on the trucks, on the front and on the sides, and we set off again. We drove slowly. We reached Fismes by the end of the day. We drove on north to Bourg-at-Comin. Then, we rode back to Beaurieux. We stole food there. We slept north of Beaurieux.

## **2 June 1918**

We drove back north to Craonne. We found our main German troops still there. I reported to a colonel, then to a general I had never met or seen before. I explained what we had done in a few words. He seemed satisfied. I told him how many men we still had. He did not seem impressed. He looked up when I also told him how little ammunition we still had. He dismissed me, telling he would have soon a new mission for my stormtroopers elsewhere. I remained for four more days at Craonne, and then received new orders. A new attack, elsewhere. I would have to lead many more men and storm groups there.

## The Turning of the Tide. Allied Attacks on the Western Front. 1918

The German *Obere Heeresleitung*, OHL, the General Staff of the Army, had been able to win terrain on the Western Front due to tactical superiority rather than by greater resources of men and material. The surprise of their tactical superiority was gone now, and the balance of resources swung the other way! The Allied counter-attacks ordered by Foch and Pétain stopped the German onslaught. The next series of attacks were French, British and American: the 8<sup>th</sup> of July near Amiens, and in August and September followed a series of further Allied attacks, among which one directed against the St Mihiel salient near Verdun. These were as many small Allied victories.

The time was not good for the Central Powers: the U-boats attacks were increasingly being beaten back by the Allied convoying of their ships. The Austrian Army got routed in Italy. They were being defeated in September in Macedonia. In that same month in Palestine, the British troops routed the Bulgarians and the Turks. By the end of September, finally, the Central Powers began to crack. First was Bulgaria, to ask for a ceasefire with the Allies.

Before the total ending of the war in the east, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July of 1918, the Crown Council of Germany met once more. Von Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Count von Hertling, Foreign Affairs Minister then, were present. They agreed on a new, secret European War Ending Programme. They agreed for Poland to choose its own king, but for Germany to command its army and control its railways, and annexing a wide frontier zone with Germany. Ludendorff also wanted to keep Belgium under German control. The emperor had in the meantime dismissed his Chancellor Kühlmann, who had been telling everybody who wanted to hear this war could not be won or resolved by military means. The successor of Kühlmann became Paul von Hintze, a naval officer.

General Maurice Foch had by now clearly observed how the Germans fought in attacks. He had learned from the March Offensives. His answer comprised better intelligence to avoid surprise, holding adequate Allied forces in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> lines, keeping strong reserves to hold the flanks of the bulges the Germans were making, and counter-attacking from far behind, as soon as possible. Pétain therefore accumulated 35 divisions in his reserve! From April to July also, the fighter aircraft force of Pétain rose from about 800 airplanes to over 1,070. The French Army received 500 Renault light tanks for its counter-attacks. How could the German Army still withstand such power?

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, Ludendorff started a new series of attacks with his offensive called *Friedenssturm*, his Peace Assaults. The Germans attacked with 52 divisions against 34 French divisions. The French surprised the Germans from the start, by daring to deliver a huge counter-cannonade. In total, the French Army fired no less than 4 million shells on the advancing German troops. This destroyed the 20 tanks, captured from the Allies that the Germans brought forward.

To the west of Reims, the German troops crossed the Marne. But two days later, the local French defender, General Gouraud, stopped the German offensive east of Reims. The troops of Pétain stopped the German attack along the Marne!

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, General Foch ordered a counter-strike, really early in the battle. He sent 18 French divisions, of which 2 were in reality American, to stop the German offensive. The

French troops drew forward behind a creeping barrage, with 300 light Renault tanks, which were now really superior to the Chamond tanks Nivelles had to use earlier in 1916. The Germans were surprised. As Ludendorff had already withdrawn some artillery to Flanders, the German troops were now also outgunned! The battle ended on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August of 1918. It was an Allied defence victory. The French troops took 30,000 German prisoners, caught 6,000 cannons and howitzers, and re-established the railways from Paris to Châlons-sur-Marne. Still, the French casualties amounted to 160,000 soldiers, whereas the German casualties had risen to 100,000 men. The French chased Ludendorff's divisions out of the Champagne salient.

This caused on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July a furious and public row between Ludendorff and von Hindenburg. Ludendorff abandoned the Champagne salient! He was more than ever nervous and agitated, losing his legendary self-control, blaming everybody around him, immersed in details he should not have bothered about. He felt unable to decide on the most important large issues, drank much, and entered a profound depression. Still, he refused the general withdrawal of the German forces. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, he ordered his generals to revert to strategic defence.

Ludendorff could not fully recover from his nervous breakdown. Two months later, his symptoms would return, and have disastrous consequences for Germany.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, Foch, Haig, Pétain and Pershing met at the headquarter of Foch to discuss the situation of the war on the Western Front. Before the men lay a memorandum written by Foch's Chief of Staff, Maxime Weygand.

It stated for the first time the Allies had reached a turning point in the war. They had now the advantage of the numbers. They knew how to fend off further German offensives. General Foch proposed a rapid sequence of limited counter-attacks, a rapid sequence of counter-blows, to win back the railroads of Paris to Avocourt near Verdun, and to Amiens. The army should pinch out the St Mihiel salient in Lorraine. Other attacks had as aims to chase the Germans out of the Channel ports. The Allies should advance towards the Briey iron ore basins and to the Saar coalfields. The series of sharp, surprise attacks, should be aimed at very concrete objectives. They should be suspended before the Germans could bring in reserves, and before the casualty figures started to mount. Pétain held very clearly in mind the morale of the Allied troops. General Haig proposed a new battle for Amiens in the period of from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of August. This was all agreed upon.

The new Battle of Amiens began in the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> of August with a spectacular British massive tank operation, the largest of its kind so far in the war. General Rawlinson committed his entire Tank Corps vehicles, 552 tanks of Mark Vs and also of the newer and lighter Whippet tanks, capable of up to 12 km/hour. He proposed armed cars in the attack. The British enjoyed now the local air superiority of 4 to 1. The British aeroplanes dominated the skies and shot with their powerful machine guns at the German infantry and at the German batteries. Some planes dropped bombs. The British Forces had many more heavy cannons than the enemy, could give more accurate fire, and had all the ammunitions they could possibly need. The German batteries were to be silenced with phosgene gas shells and with high explosive shells. The British could throw ten divisions in the attack, even though this now amounted to only 50,000 men in all. The British battalions would have greater firepower however, using up to 30 Lewis machine guns per battalion instead of only 4. A

battalion could have 8 trench mortars instead of 2, and 16 grenade-throwing rifles. The German troops would be outnumbered in the region by 2 to 1.

The Allied Amiens attack began at 4h20 am. By mid-afternoon, the British had advanced by 12 kilometres, and they had inflicted 9,000 casualties on the German troops, three times more casualties than their own losses. They captured 12,000 prisoners and over 400 German cannons. By the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, the Canadian troops had advanced another 6 kilometres, and by the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, Rawlinson stopped the attack. The new *Battle of Amiens* broke up 6 German divisions, and saved the town of Amiens, with its important railways. The British and French losses amounted to 22,000 men, but the Germans lost 75,000 men, of which 50,000 men had been taken prisoners!

At the German OHL, Ludendorff told his troops had been caught unawares. OHL called Amiens the worst defeat of the German Army since the start of the war. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, Ludendorff told von Hindenburg the only course that was open to him now, was the defence! He had wagered everything, the army and its resources, on the March offensives, and he had lost. Moreover, he had lost his defensive option! He should have more looked at the number of German prisoners made. Earlier on in the war, German soldiers had fought to the last and never surrendered. Now, they were either very war-weary, or they acknowledged the superiority of the enemy. That was a very bad omen. The bell sounded over the German Army.

What followed were a series of limited, piecemeal Allied advances from August 1918 until mid-September of 1918. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, General Julian Byng's 3<sup>rd</sup> British Army opened the *Battle of Albert*, a smaller operation, in which only 150 tanks were used. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, the 4<sup>th</sup> French Army delivered an attack on the Somme, pushing the German troops equally back. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, the 1<sup>st</sup> Army and Canadian troops attacked to outflank the German's 'Winter Line'. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1918, the Canadians managed to destroy one of the strongest German defences, the 'Drocourt-Quéant Switch'. The Germans retreated to the Hindenburg Line. In August still, the French Army launched an attack south of the Somme to the Oise River. General Mangin then attacked towards the Aisne. In the Champagne, the Germans lost their earlier 1918 gains. They retreated there to a line of hills. By late August, General Foch asked the USA troops to concentrate on the Meuse-Argonne sector. They would attack the St Mihiel salient. The operation began with overwhelming resources of armed violence. It seemed clear by then to everybody in the German Army the German troops were being pushed back inexorably. How long still, before they stood again with the Rhine in their back?

On the 12<sup>th</sup> September of 1918, the American soldiers gave the assault at 5 am on the St Mihiel salient, and at the western side of the Meuse at 8 am. General Pershing attacked with 550,000 American soldiers and 110,000 French troops, with 1,500 aircraft and 267 French light tanks. The much smaller German troops offered little resistance. Resistance was futile, useless! The German soldiers escaped, but they lost 17,000 men, mainly taken prisoner. The Americans suffered 7,000 casualties, soon to be forgotten, for the victory was hailed! When the salient was taken, Foch stopped the attack. He could have allowed the Americans to go on, and they would probably have conquered easily large territories north of Verdun. But Foch ordered to end the attack. This could be considered one of his mistakes, but who knew

what might have happened? He still held on to his strategy of limited attacks to spare men and show the German Army the bell of death sounded now very loudly.

Other Allied attacks followed. There was another American-led offensive by the Allies in the Meuse-Argonne sector on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September. The British Army attacked on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the same month towards Cambrai. The day after, the Belgians and the British attacked in Flanders. And on the 29<sup>th</sup>, the British 4<sup>th</sup> Army, with American and French support, advanced towards Buzigny. In that month, the Allied Armies had 217 divisions against 197 German divisions, but fewer than 50 German divisions were still really fit for action.

How did the Allied attacks fare? Not as well as one might have expected! Much smaller German forces brought the Meuse-Argonne Operation to a standstill. By a change of plans, this offensive deviated to Charleville-Mézières rather than to Metz, where it might have obtained more results. The Germans built strong defences in the region, of which their *Kriemhilde Stellung*, part of the Hindenburg Line. Pershing had an advantage of 8 to 1 in the Argonne with his almost 600,000 soldiers, but he had few tanks and aircraft. He could not force his troops past the Montfaucon high ground, which lay in his way. By the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, the Americans stopped their attacks in the Argonne Region, west of Verdun. German reinforcements arrived. The operation had strategically, to say the least, been questionable, and it had been an operational fiasco.

The Allied operations in Flanders also ran into issues. The first day was a triumph, as the Allied troops took 12,000 prisoners and advanced for 12 kilometres, taking most of the ridges of Ieper. But then, the advance stopped in the mud of Flanders. It was suspended for 2 weeks.

The attack towards Cambrai began on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September. It had to pass the *Canal du Nord*. This canal was 30 metres wide and 4.5 metres deep. The Canadian troops found a section that was narrow, but rather dry, dry enough to get some artillery over it on the first night. They were lucky. The German cannons were low on munition! Nevertheless, the Canadians suffered heavy casualties and they got bogged down in fierce fighting around Cambrai. Cambrai nevertheless fell on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October! The most damaging attacks had been delivered by the British 4<sup>th</sup> Army. With heavy British cannonades on the German positions, the Allied troops broke through the Hindenburg Line and even its reserve positions. By the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, the British troops had pierced the last German defences. They could advance, though still slowly, across unfortified terrain.

As of the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, Ludendorff once more broke. He had a nervous breakdown, as he had suffered before. In his mind, he saw only one outcome to defeat: ask for an immediate armistice! The Allied Offensives of July, August and September, which came almost out of the blue after his relative successes in the March Offensives, had broken his nerves and left him in the panic of a man who knew he had been beaten. He realised the Allies had emerged from their 1917 crisis and failures, whereas the Central Powers had played their last cards, and lost. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of the Marne, Ludendorff could still believe he could wear out the Allies by a stubborn holding tactic. But the *Battle of Amiens*, showed him his army had finally failed, both in offensive mode and in the defence. The Allied superiority stemmed from their greater numbers and better equipment to force the attack. The balance had really shifted in their advantage in June and July 1918, whereas the number of German soldiers dwindled from 5.2 to 4.1 million men. The Americans had brought in 2 million men by and in October of 1918; the BEF had augmented to 1.75 million men and the French to 2.5 million,

to an Allied total of 6.5 million men! France had now the biggest air-force in the world, the most cannons and the enormous number of over 3,100 tanks.

The struggle for the command of the air had been particularly ferocious too. Though Germany received 800 Fokker airplanes by 1918, probably the best airplanes of the war, the skies were dominated by the Allies. British aircraft, British bombers, could target in 1918 the rich, industrial Rhineland cities. German bomb raids against London had to be stopped in May of 1918 and against Paris in September.

The effectiveness of the U-boats declined against the convoy tactics of the Allied.

The German troops had no tanks. Allied tanks could now crush German barbed wire zones without expensive cannonades, and the tanks grew in efficiency of taking out machine gun nests.

The German imports of food were only about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of what they had been before the war. The Allies enjoyed much better supplies of food and equipment, less repressive discipline towards their soldiers. They had much higher confidence from their multiple, though limited successes. Their troops sensed the approach of final victory.

## Malou Vincius in Belgium

After the German offensives on the Western Front and their ultimate failure, after the Allied counter-offensives which seemed to bring one success after the other, Julian Vincius got seriously worried.

Julian still drove once every while to the front lines around Verdun. He noticed the change in the German Army. The food distributed was disgusting and came in smaller quantities than he had seen so far. The soldiers seemed younger, rougher, more insolent, and less intelligent. They complained they did not even receive food each day. When they thus talked with some contempt, they looked at Julian with expectation in their eyes, and also with greed. They probably hoped he could ameliorate their situation some. He rarely could!

Julian noticed also less men stood on guard, in the trenches or near the fortified positions. He found less batteries. Julian suspected the best men had been drawn to the slaughterhouses and the offensives in the west, to the regions of Arras and Cambrai, to Valenciennes and to the flat fields near the coasts.

The soldiers here cursed more than they were willing to talk and discuss. They stood all very dirty, probably hadn't washed in ages. Their boots and trousers were covered with mud. Their faces were unshaven, their uniforms torn, signs of lowering discipline. It was difficult to single out the officers from the common soldiers, except when one focused on their epaulettes. They all seemed alert enough, but more passive than before. Their main occupation was to be re-arranging the trenches and bunkers for more protection, though not all men worked. The German Army looked degraded to Julian.

Julian saw no new spools of barbed wire. Less repairs were going on in the trenches. The soldiers recuperated lengths of wire from the second lines. They re-placed these to protect the first line. In general, the front remained quiet. The soldiers waited in utter boredom. They played at cards with loud shouts, allowing the enemy to guess where they sat. They cleaned their rifles and bayonets. They smoked.

Julian concluded that if the French or even the American divisions would attack somewhere in the neighbourhood, the German front lines would not hold out for long.

Julian should not let himself get surprised by a sudden fierce offensive of the Allied troops in the direction of Longwy! He should not get trapped inside Longwy by a sudden, energetic, fierce Allied offensive! Neither should Charlotte fall in the hands of the Longwy very French-patriotic mob. The French resistance became more insistent with their terrorist attacks by the day.

Monsieur Baraine agreed totally. He too thought it best to be out of Longwy for a few months, while the victorious French or other troops entered Longwy. He could be accused of collaboration with the enemy. How would he be treated? Everybody should know by now he considered Julian Vincius, the German officer, almost as a friend. Too often, one had seen both men solving issues together. Baraine also had thought of an escape route. He could flee to Metz, by road or by train, to Metz, where he had family. Should he take Charlotte with him? No, Julian refused, no. Charlotte he considered his wife. It was his responsibility to bring Charlotte out of France in time, out of the frontier zones. He would get Charlotte out of France. He could not suffer being separated from her. He had old ideas about marriage! A man married should not leave his wife alone. He considered himself as nothing else but

Charlotte's husband. A religious or other ceremony was the last confirmation of how he felt. At the last moment, when he too would have to return to Germany, he would take Charlotte to his house in Berlin.

The developments in the war worried Julian too much. He took a few days off. He told his doctors he would visit headquarters and come back after a few days. Julian feared a fast decision, a breakthrough of the Allies, an attack from out of Verdun, and a fast progression of French and American troops. The Allies could advance quickly in one day, 50 or 60 kilometres. In one day, they would overwhelm Longwy. Julian asked Ernst to prepare the private Audi for the next day. Ernst had already foreseen this. He told the car was ready. Julian told Ernst what he wanted to do. Ernst nodded.

Julian Vincius waited for one day more. Then, in the middle of the night, he made Charlotte and her baby get into the car. Ernst already sat at the steering wheel. Julian opened the garden gates for the car to drive out and away in the darkness. He closed the gates behind him, and jumped into the seat next to Ernst.

Ernst had surprised Julian! The trunk of his car now had two compartments, separated by a steel board. On the one side, Ernst had placed their luggage, not more than once piece each, as Julian had limited what they could take. On the other side of the separation stood four cans of gasoline. Julian had shouted their car would be a complete bomb! They would all get killed by one bullet shot from behind. Ernst had answered there was always that danger, but he also told he had not the least intention of letting himself be shot at. Moreover, he also showed a heavy steel plate he could place behind the added compartment, and to the right side.

Ernst told Julian in strong words he had no idea whether they would find gasoline on their way. He didn't want to have the car stop somewhere in the middle of nowhere, for lack of gas. Julian didn't answer to that remark, for he had to agree with Ernst's arguments. Julian should have thought of gas, but he hadn't. Luckily, Ernst had thought for him. But the added gasoline still meant a grave risk. A little later, Julian wanted to know where Ernst had got steel plates and the gasoline. Ernst grinned and gave back Julian didn't want to know where he had got the stuff. Julian too grinned, then.

From Longwy, Julian and Ernst rode north. They took the road from Longwy to Mont-Saint-Martin. From there, they drove to Messancy, still north, and then further due north to the Belgian town of Arlon. They did not get stopped at the Belgian border. The guards merely saluted. Julian waved at the frontier guards. Then they drove to Martelange, Losange, Bastogne and to Houffalise. Farther north lay Fraiture, and then Werbemont. There, they deviated east to the village of Les Forges, and then to Stavelot and Spa. It took them about 5 hours to reach Spa, with the stops for Charlotte to feed her child. They had also been stopped three times on the roads by German patrols. Each time, after a short explanation, they got waved on. After the third time, Ernst was slightly paler in the face. He had driven all the way. When they rode into the town of Spa, the then headquarters of the German Imperial Army, Julian asked why Ernst was sweating so much and why he looked so pale. Ernst answered after a while he had not only gasoline, but also a box of grenades in the second compartment, as well as an MG 08/15 behind their luggage. Ernst had feared each time the soldiers guarding the Ardennes roads would have asked him to show the contents of the trunk. While they drove on, Julian burst out in laughter. Ernst too, laughed, then. Charlotte had dozed in.

She asked what they were laughing at like madmen, and Julian told her. She then laughed out, too, which brought her baby to cry, for he was hungry. Why, for God's sake, had Ernst taken such arms? One never knows on such a trip, he answered. Had we been stopped, and threatened, the 08/15 could have come in handy.

In Spa, they found a quiet place near a cemetery to stop the car. Ernst drove the Audi there to a place between other military cars, shaded by trees, and not far from a church. German soldiers, many officers, walked in the town. It was a clear day. Julian turned to Ernst. He explained that from now on, Ernst should remain in Spa with Charlotte, to watch over her. Charlotte could not stay alone among foreigners. He gave a letter to Charlotte, and another one to Ernst. The letters had been handwritten by Julian in Gothic German script. The letters stated the *Gefreiter* Vincius had been ordered to the town of Spa by *Oberst* Vincius to wait for him and that until the mission of the *Oberst* at the headquarters of the Army in Spa had ended.

Julian left Charlotte and Ernst. He told he would be back in about 3 hours, close to noon. After that time, Ernst was to drive on, directly to Berlin. He left the maps to Ernst. He would be looking for apartments to rent, for Charlotte and Ernst. He went out of the car, and walked away, into the centre of the town. Ernst and Charlotte at first stayed in the car. The baby needed milk, preferably warm milk. Ernst stepped out, walked to and fro. Then, also Charlotte came out. Ernst hated it to leave the car unguarded, but he had not much of a choice. He placed a white paper against the windshield, stating the car belonged to *Oberst* Doctor Vincius, head of the medical services of Verdun.

Ernst then took Charlotte with him. They too went into town. Ernst and Charlotte found a hotel, filled with officers of the German Army, and a small restaurant in the hotel. Ernst pushed Charlotte into the hotel dining hall and found a far corner, where he hoped he could have peace and quiet. Charlotte got warm milk. The baby drank and stayed calm thereafter. Ernst and Charlotte ate in the restaurant. They had German marks. Every half hour or so, Ernst went out of the restaurant. He walked to the car, five minutes away. He watched out for Julian.

Julian arrived two and a half hours later. He was very worried anew. Julian also asked for some food. He ate and explained. He had been looking out for rooms, and found none. All the rooms and apartments, even the smaller, single rooms, were occupied by the hundreds of officers and orderlies and men of the German General Staff. Julian had received the information everywhere that there were very probably no rooms left unoccupied in Spa. There might still be rooms in the nearby town of Malmedy. Julian had even the address of family of the hotel owner he had spoken too, where rooms might be had. Malmedy lay closer to Germany, and as far from the Western Front as Spa. In a few hours of a road he knew relatively well by now, Julian could later dash from Longwy to Malmedy as fast as to Spa. He could as well fetch Charlotte, the child and Ernst at Malmedy as at Spa! Then, they would drive in one stretch to Berlin. Ernst agreed. Frankly, he told, he preferred Malmedy to Spa. There were far too many officers at Spa, eager to get their hands on a car like Julian's Audi! Ernst, of course, also preferred the town of Spa and Malmedy to stay in and live for a while, rather than staying at Longwy. Longwy was too close to the front line in his opinion. Julian had done very well bringing Charlotte to here. Ernst had good confidence in Julian's intentions. Julian changed the word Spa to Malmedy in his letters, hoping maybe to twist fate's arms.

They drove on to Malmedy. The town lay at scarcely half an hour's ride from Spa, eastwards. It looked like a nice, German town of the Eifel Region to Julian, almost only a large village. Julian noticed one could have fine walks here, among the hills and in the woods. If one wanted to hide, this could be any man's choice. It was an old town, old houses, old and small shops. Julian estimated its population at no more than 10,000 people. He knew nothing about the town. There was a church and a monastery, both built in architectures that did not particularly appeal to Julian's aesthetic sense. Charlotte would be fine here, in a peaceful, quiet town that presented nothing of interest to any army. Waves of armies could sweep over this town and pass it rapidly, not stay. Malmedy was a Prussian town, not a Belgian one. Julian could leave Charlotte here, and come and fetch her later, to bring her then to Berlin. She would be much safer here than in Longwy.

Julian went to the address he had received in Spa. He had not much hope. He arrived at the house of an elderly widow, situated almost in the very centre of the town. The widow agreed with pleasure to rent two rooms, a bedroom and a sitting-room, to a young mother. She was happy to have such a companion in her house. The colonel was a doctor, no doubt of a fine family of Berlin! The widow Groeber had a friend, who also had rooms to let. Julian rented two rooms there, so that Ernst could comfortably stay in Malmedy as a companion to Charlotte.

Julian returned to where he had left his car. He found Ernst and Charlotte a little later, and explained what he could do. Ernst agreed. Ernst would stay in Malmedy and chaperone over Charlotte and her child. When Julian explained a little later to Charlotte what he thought best, also Charlotte agreed.

Julian had then another issue. He could not but leave his Audi to Ernst and Charlotte. They might need a car to flee to the interior of Germany if ever the war reached this place. Julian gave many golden coins to Ernst and Charlotte. They could exchange these at one of the banks. He trusted a part of that money to Ernst, a part to Charlotte. He paid the widow and the widow's friend for six months of rent, with promise of more to come. His issue then became how to return to Longwy from Malmedy without a car of his own!

That same day, Julian settled Charlotte and Ernst in rooms in Malmedy. Julian installed Charlotte and Ernst. He gave them as much money as he could spare. They would have enough to stay a long time here! Then he said goodbye. Charlotte wept. Ernst didn't smile.

After the heart-breaking goodbyes, Julian wandered around in the centre of the town. He had told Ernst not to worry about him. He would find a way to return to Longwy! At that moment, he was very sad and felt utterly lonely. His beautiful Charlotte, which now more than ever he considered his most precious link with life itself, his so very young child Malou, and his friend and relative Ernst were far from Longwy, and he had to leave them. What was life worth without them? Why didn't he just run to Berlin? No, he couldn't do that. He would be marked as a deserter! The *Charité* would be forever closed to him, and the greatest shame of all would be attached to his name. He had to leave. Why had he come to this forsaken town?

When he wandered to near the cathedral of Malmedy, he felt like the loneliest man in the world. When would he see his wife, as he now absolutely thought of Charlotte, again?

The only plan he could think of, was to get to the Belgian town of Liège. He might get a train there to Luxembourg, southwards, and from there, one way or other, get in another train, maybe a military one, to Longwy.

Julian looked for a garage near the centre of the town. He found one, and asked whether somebody could bring him by car to Liège. He could speak German here. He could pay. The owner of the garage was willing to drive Julian to Liège, for a good fee. Julian agreed. His money was sinking rapidly, but he still had enough to agree to the price. The man of the garage drove him to the main railway station of Liège, to Guillemins. When Julian arrived, it was well into the afternoon. Julian explained to a German post in the station he needed to get back to Longwy.

‘Not possible in one stretch from Liège,’ the station masters told him. ‘But you can get to Luxembourg all right, yes.’

So, Julian bought a ticket to Luxembourg over Namur. He got relatively quickly to Namur. He got stuck at Namur. When he arrived in that station, there were no trains for Luxembourg anymore on the day. The next train to Luxembourg would depart early the next day! In the darkening afternoon and in the evening, Julian wandered through the streets of the centre of Namur. He walked to the Meuse Stream and saw the Sambre, an affluent of the Meuse, which threw itself into the Meuse at Namur. In town, he found a restaurant not far from the station, and ordered a plate. He emptied at ease a bottle of white wine on his own. It was rather late when he returned to the railway station. He went to sit on a wooden bank of the quay where the first train to Luxembourg would drive in. He fell asleep, with his head against a glass window. He did not really sleep, just dozed in. He awoke every half hour or so. Four times policemen and guards of the railroad station walked by and asked what he did here, in the middle of night. He gave his story, showed his papers, and was not bothered more than necessary.

In the morning, when the first people arrived in the station and filled the quays with chatter and laughter, his train rolled in. He boarded the train and slept once more, until he arrived at Luxembourg. There, he went to a German guard-post in the station. He asked how he could get the fastest to Longwy. There followed an animated discussion in among the men, and a solution was found. A munitions train would reach Luxembourg two hours later and steam on to Longwy. The train brought provisions to the German troops of around Verdun. The train would not get into the station, but be sent on another track somewhat farther on. A guard brought Julian to the place in the middle of many tracks, where the train would stop. Julian waited in the landscape of very many rail tracks intersecting for the train. When the train came and stopped, he explained to the guards he needed to get urgently to Longwy. One of the wagons in the train was used for a few travelling officers and soldiers sent to the battlefields of Verdun. He could have a seat in that wagon.

Still later that day, Julian Vincius could get off that train when it stopped on one of the rails in the large station of Longwy. Again, the train stopped far from the actual station. He said goodbye to his fellow-travellers, and went on foot to his rooms in the Baraine house. He told nobody he was back. He felt utterly exhausted, threw himself on the bed and slept until the next day. Then, he explained to Monsieur Baraine how he had reached the town of Malmedy, and how he had got back. Monsieur Baraine was very relieved and happy to know his daughter in safety.

## Developments on the Eastern Front

In May and June of 1918, a new coordinated offensive of the German and Austrian Armies on the Italian Army led to the Battle of the Piave River. At the beginning of April, Emperor Karl of Austria reproached President Clémenceau of France for wanting to annex the Alsace and Lorraine Regions. Clémenceau set him straight and accused Count Czernin of using false arguments. Emperor Karl discussed the matters with Czernin, and dismissed him, also because of the Sixtus Affair, replacing him as Foreign Minister with Count Stephan Burián von Rajecz.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, Emperor Karl was at Spa in Belgium, at the headquarters of Emperor Wilhelm II. There, Paul von Hindenburg and Colonel-General Arthur Arz von Straussenburg, the two commanders of the armies, agreed to mobilise in each country every available man, arm them, train them, and share war plans. This almost meant total subservience of Austria's military forces to Germany.

Emperor Karl allowed two offensives in June 1918 by the Austrians: one on the Assago Plateau, the other on the Piave river, against the Italian forces. The two commanding officers were Field Marshal Baron Boroëvić von Bojna, a Croat by birth, on the Piave Line, and Field Marshal Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf in the Monte Grappa massif. Austria sent 65 infantry divisions and 12 cavalry divisions in the offensive, without assistance from German troops. The Allies had only 56 divisions, included 3 British and French ones. The Allies had immense air superiority however, with more than 2 times more aircraft than the Austrians, and they had 7,000 cannons and 2,400 mortars against the 6,830 Austrian artillery pieces. The Austrian Army lacked food.

The Austrian attack started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1918 with a Bruchmüller-style cannonade on the Italian Army. This remained inaccurate, though, for the Austrians lacked reconnaissance by aircraft and balloons. Their gas attacks were ineffective, for the Italians had received British gas masks. The results of the attacks were that Boroëvić had to draw back to the eastern bank of the Piave, and that Conrad's attacks in the Assago and Grappa Regions got stopped. The Austrian losses amounted to 150,000 men, whereas the defending Italians lost 80,000, about half as much only.

In July, Emperor Karl relieved Conrad from his command. From July to September 1918, disease and desertion reduced the Habsburg Army by more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of its soldiers. Austria would nevermore risk an offensive in this war!

In Russia, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August of 1918, Germany and Russia signed supplementary agreements to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The Bolshevik Government accepted the sovereignty of Livonia, Estonia and Georgia. They promised to pay Germany 6,000 million Marks in reparation money, plus 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the Baku oilfield production. As the Red Guards, the Communist Bolsheviks had to wage civil war against the rightist movements called the Whites, Germany agreed not to support the last and other separatist movements in Russia. The Bolsheviks were to expel all Allied forces still present on their soil. No Allied Government, however, considered the Bolshevik regime a legitimate or even representative authority of Russia. In December of 1917, the British and the French governments had even secretly agreed to assist the anti-Bolshevik parties.

In Turkey, General Allenby attacked the Turkish troops from out of Palestine with now 57,000 infantry soldiers and 12,000 cavalrymen. He drew 550 cannons with him. The Turkish Army had then only 32,000 infantry soldiers, not more than 2,000 cavalrymen and 400 cannons. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, Damascus fell to the British. Allenby suffered 5,000 casualties, but he took tens of thousands of Turkish prisoners.

In 1918, in Bulgaria, remained about 14 Bulgarian divisions of the Central Powers, 3 German battalions and 2 Austrian divisions. The Allied Forces remained at Salonika. President Clémenceau of France removed General Sarrail there and replaced him in June by General Franchet d'Esperey. With the troops of Salonika, the Allies launched an operation against the Bulgarians. The Bulgarian Army sought an armistice, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, the ceasefire was signed in the Balkan. This surrender, and the advancing Allied troops on the Western Front, would lead to the armistice also on the Western Front.

The Balkan Offensive of the Allies had delivered the coup-de-grâce to the Central Powers, combined with the unprecedented pressure of the Allies on the Western Front. In the Bulgarian cease-fire, Bulgaria had to demobilise, evacuate Greece and Serbia, and allow the Allies to use their territory for further operations. But Germany's aircraft force depended on Balkan oil, otherwise its stocks would run dry after 2 months of battle.

## Longwy in 1918

The years of 1917 and 1918 were the hardest for the population of Longwy.

In the winters of from 1916 to 1917 and from 1917 to 1918, the population lacked even the first necessities of life: food and warmth. Not much coal was left for heating. The coal of the few mines of Longwy and Briey went to the war effort of Germany. Everything that was of wood and expendable, was burnt in the fireplaces. Lucky were the people who could scrape the last coal dust from their cellars. The mines around Longwy and Briey did still provide coal, but all of that was meant for the German Army.

Food was even more important. Food still came in from Belgium and France. It was allowed to pass the frontier as population relief, though much clung to the greedy hands of the frontier guards of the countries.

Monsieur Baraine had his personal network to the villages of Lorraine. Food could be gotten in the countryside by contraband. Julian Vincius brought in some reserves he could obtain in the army. The two of them had enough to survive on, though not far from famine more than once. The population of Longwy was worse off! This, even more than the war, made the French-inclined population of the town hate the occupying power all the more. As the war lasted, resentment rose. The atmosphere in the town was more openly hostile than before. Greedy, hungry eyes, now filled with outright hatred, followed Julian when he walked in the streets. With the weakness of the people came illnesses. These illnesses, Julian thought to have left Europe since centuries ago: typhus, dysentery, rampaging tuberculosis. The poorest used every means they could find to get their hands on a few coins and on goods of first necessity.

Julian knew too well many women gave their bodies to the German soldiers. Syphilis and other venereal diseases augmented in the town.

Sur-mortality, mortality above normal levels rose by 20% to 30%, from 20% to 50% higher in some months. As very many people were out of work, they had to live from public aid. Monsieur Baraine organised what he could. He could never do enough. The people noticed he lived in the same house as a major German officer. Baraine had to repeat many times he had not been able to do otherwise. Had he refused, he might have been shot by the occupiers! The people were out for enemies and traitors they could concretely point out as the causes for their miseries. They often saw Monsieur Baraine occasionally laugh with his German colonel! And where was his beautiful daughter? Had she been brought to safety? Was it true she had been made pregnant by a French cousin of Metz? Was the child not German? What kind of a man, of a mayor, would have offered his daughter to a German officer? Still, the two of them, Baraine and Vincius together, did much good too! They allowed for civilians to be treated in the German field hospitals. The medicines were German, and the care too.

The blast furnaces of Longwy, the metallurgical industry worked now only at 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of its pre-war production, but the iron and steel producing factories continued to work. Mostly for the German war effort! Were not all workers in the factories of Longwy traitors? Many regular French workers had been taken in by the armies, mostly the French Army, the factories now also lacked personnel.

The German authorities put other men to work. There were about 8,000 metal workers in Longwy. Currently, many of these men had been imported from about everywhere. It was not

well regarded for a man born in Longwy to work for the enemy. Large numbers of prisoners from France and Belgium, as well as English soldiers taken prisoner, now worked in the Longwy industry. By far the largest group, however, were Russian prisoners from the Eastern Front. These all worked in the factories of Longwy and environs. Julian Vincius estimated about 10% of the prisoners could not work from severe illnesses or exhaustion; 48% was more or less sick and certainly weak from undernourishment. Only 42% could really work in good health, though usually undernourished.

In July of 1917, Julian got a list on his desk stating of the about 8,000 workers in the factories of Longwy, 4,000 were Russian.

By then already, the people of Longwy were living on an official regime of 100 grams of black, hard bread a day. When the prisoners got so much, they thought themselves lucky. The people of Longwy had some more, from contraband food coming in from the countryside, via roads the German soldiers didn't know of. But they too had not much more. Prisoners around the city were also used as agricultural workers, in the farms. The farms still delivered what they could to the town. At very high prices, of course.

Julian Vincius allowed civilians in his hospitals, in Longwy and around. As the war lasted, as the numbers of victims fallen for the Fatherland rose, protests from within the German Army reached Julian Vincius.

He had two excellent arguments to ward those complaints off: tell me which German soldier in need of care has been refused by the field hospitals of Longwy, and what would you rather have, prisoners who could work or prisoners who could not work because sick? He never received any answers.

So, in the Vincius hospitals patients spoke German, French, English, Dutch and Russian. Many civilians of Longwy received treatment in the military hospitals. Julian gave orders to treat all people with care. But yes, he made sure the civilian patients didn't stay too long in the hospitals. Thus, he kept the official numbers relatively low. Julian also constantly complained to the German authorities to take measures to lower the number of accidents in the mines and in the factories. Luckily, not too many mines had remained in operation: one at Godbrange, and one at Hussigny. Many blast furnaces were in operation and remained so: the *Société des Aciéries de Longwy* at Mont-Saint Martin, the *Chiers*, named after a small river in the territory of Longwy, and a factory of Saintignan.

From early on, after the capture of the town of Longwy in 1914, after a bombardment that had almost entirely destroyed Longwy-Haut, the pillaging of the mines and of the factories of Longwy had been going on intensely. First only the production of the sites went to Germany. Later in 1917 and especially in 1918, the Germans also transported the machinery and the stocks to Germany. The basic German steel works, the factories of Thyssen, Krupp, Röchling, Rombas and Knutange were eager to put their hands systematically on the production means of the prosperous Longwy, on the coal and iron stocks, on the stocks of steel, tools, instruments, all kinds of apparatus. Those were transported by train to Germany! Trains filled with the spoils rolled out of Longwy Station every week. Of course, the citizens of the town also noticed the pillaging of the industrial basin of Longwy. The workers talked! Several organisations were at work in Longwy for the systematic pillaging, as were in other regions of German-occupied France.

There was first of all, the economic department of the occupying German Army. For the town of Longwy, that was the *Wirtschaftliche Abteilung der Etappen, Kommandatur Longwy*. These had the power of arms, and they could autonomously, without any reason to be mentioned, take whatever they wanted, as long as they did not interfere too much with the other German agencies. They confiscated everything that could be of use directly to the army: furniture for the offices of the leaders and higher officers, clothes, all sorts of small tools, horses, cows, fowl, and wine, and you name the rest. Julian called them the vultures of the army. The Germans requisitioned everything that could be of use to them. As of the end of October of 1917, they gave themselves over to outright pillage of the houses of Longwy. These men were especially out for everything that was made of metals, of iron and steel, of copper, tin or aluminium. They took the church bells and the organ pipes in the churches. They pillaged the private houses. Much of the stolen artefacts went into the special provisions of some of the NCOs and officers: statues signed by the name of an artist of some fame, paintings, lamps, chandeliers, door buttons of brass, metal baths, and so on. The objects disappeared into the army trucks. One of the leaders of the commandos was a Captain Dietrich Donnersdorff, a born thief. He expedited everything he could get his hands on to Germany, minus his part. He would be a rich man after the war, at least if he could get all his spoils to Germany.

The second organisation was called the *Schutzverwaltung der Französischen Bergwerke und Hüttenbetriebe*, in short, the ‘*Schutz*’. This organisation emptied the factories and mines of Longwy. The ore and coal stocks went to the organisation, the iron and steel produced in the factories such as of the Thomas and the Martin factories, and of all the other factories. The *Schutz* also managed the steel factories, instead of the rightful owners. They allowed the German firms of the Ruhr basin and other German industrial zones to send all stocks and products to Germany. In the best months of 1917 and 1918, this organisation confiscated all large machines of the factories, such as parts of the blast furnaces, tooling machines, giant pneumatic hammers. Those were sent to Germany. In 1918, they destroyed entirely 2 blast furnaces in the *Société des Aciéries de Longwy*, 2 in the *Chiers*, and one in the Saintignan factory.

Lastly came the *Rohstoff und Maschinenverteilungsstelle des Kriegsamtes*, also called the *Rohma*. That organisation was in the same business as the *Schutz*, but even on a grander scale. It came to be in charge of the mines and of metal factories. In the end, the *Rohma* destroyed the mines in the environs by dynamiting them and flooding the galleries with water. The organisation also took a keen interest in everything that had to do with money and finances.

In April of 1916, the Germans introduced the *Bons de Villes*, the city vouchers. When the German soldiers wanted to buy something in town, they had to buy with these tickets, a kind of alternative, local money. The soldiers could buy those tickets in the *Wechselstube*, the German *Bureau de Change* of Longwy. The shop owners of Longwy could not do much with those tickets! French shop keepers who dared not refuse the use of the tickets to German soldiers, refused them from French buyers. From January of 1917 on, it was also forbidden to the population of Longwy to pay in German coins or banknotes. They had to use the *Bons de Villes* vouchers, which they had to buy with ‘real’ German money at the *Wechselstube*! The aim was to drive out of the local economy the last real money the population had still owned or earned.

The town of Longwy was not occupied by the regular army of the empire. Battalions of the *Landsturm* of Württemberg had taken possession of Longwy and environs since November 1914. The organisations and the battalion itself, led by *Hauptmann* Donnersdorff, were the masters of the city.

Julian Vincius helped where he could. His power in the Army was not great. He was a colonel, so he could counter-order on Donnersdorff, though not in every transaction. When the captain called in the *Schutz* or the *Rohma*, Julian's authority could be overruled. A constant complaint from Donnersdorff was about the care given to civilians in the Longwy hospitals. When Donnersdorff got in higher officers than Julian, Julian had been able each time to convince the higher officers they had all interest in not antagonising the population too much, to keep the inhabitants of Longwy calm and the French resistance at large. It was also in the interest of the *Schutz*, he told, to have the workers in decent condition. When Julian Vincius complained of stupid orders of Donnersdorff, the higher command usually agreed with Julian. This happened several times. Donnersdorff was shouted back.

At one time, Donnersdorff showed a sudden and fierce interest in the morphine stock of the *Hôtel des Récollets*.

Morphine was a pain-killing and a hallucinogenic drug. It had already been known under the Latin name of laudanum in ancient times. As of the 18th century, another opium derivative, also known as laudanum, had remained popular to early doctors. The modern morphine had then been discovered in 1804 as the first active alkaloid substance of the opium plant at Paderborn in Germany by Friedrich Sertürner. He gave the name of morphine to the substance, after the mythological Greek god of Morpheus, the god of dreams. Morphine was 6 times stronger than opium. Sertürner thought morphine, administered in small doses, would not be addictive. He was wrong in that. So, there was a danger to using the substance! The commercial production of morphine started first in Germany, after a small production by Sertürner himself, as of 1827, by the pharmaceutical firm of Merck. The substance was used extensively in the American Civil War, leading to many men addicted to its use. Around 1874, heroin was derived from morphine. Heroin could be twice as affective as morphine, but it worked even more addictively. Morphine was the most usual narcotic pain killer on the front. Morphine was expensive. It could be sold on any black market for fortunes. Julian Vincius alone managed the stock of morphine in the main hospital. He had more morphine than all the other German field hospitals on other front lines.

Julian had immediately taken the key of a small room in the *Hôtel*. He had then fortified the door of another such room on one of the upper floors of the hospital, with steel plates, and installed two sturdy locks which drove deep steel intrusions into the door sides. In that room then, he installed his morphine, other drugs, and even crucial parts of the X-Ray machine. The door could not be broken open, except by dynamite, and then with such noise and damage to the walls, everybody would have known what had happened, and the whole stock of medicines ran the risk of being destroyed.

When Donnersdorff ordered Julian to open the door, Julian refused. He cried out insults at the captain, so that all the personnel of the hospital could hear what was happening. Julian cried the *Hauptmann* was nothing more than a common thief and a junky. That made of Donnersdorff, who had tried to lay his hands on a treasure, Julian's enemy of a lifetime. But Donnersdorff got not into Julian's room.

*Hauptmann* Donnersdorff henceforth tried to harass Julian Vincius with all sorts of menaces, which Julian each time could fend off. Even the other officers of the *Schutz* and of the *Rohma* knew by mid-1918 what Donnersdorff was up to, condemned him for his greed, and finally told him directly to stay away from the hospital. Julian learned to spot some of Donnersdorff's men to spy around his house. He kept the keys of his storerooms on him in all circumstances. He was very glad his personal Audi car, his orderly Ernst Vincius and his beloved Charlotte Baraine, were safe and well at Malmedy. Nobody could blackmail him directly, a fact Donnersdorff probably hated. Julian took more care than ever to do nothing illegal or anti-army that could have been used by Donnersdorff to discredit him. A worry, however, for Julian became, how he could flee from Longwy, eventually to get to Charlotte, without being stopped by the Donnersdorff men.

## The End of the War

Meanwhile, in September of 1918, the Allies were overwhelming Germany's best prepared Hindenburg Line! The strength of the German troops was falling rapidly, due to desertion, capture, illness of the influenza pandemic, and to battle casualties. Since July, complete pessimism over the results of the war had set in at home, leading to much anxiety among the civilian population. The food supplies in Germany were precarious at best.

End September, General Erich Ludendorff concluded Germany had to seek peace with the Allies, and it had to form a parliamentary government. Von Hindenburg shared these views. Ludendorff wanted to protect the army from a totally, disorderly rout. That would render the army useless against a revolution inside the fatherland.

Ludendorff may have underestimated the danger an appeal for armistice might provoke on the army: the very collapse of law and order and discipline he feared so much.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1918, von Hindenburg and Ludendorff convinced Foreign Minister von Hintze of the urgency of the dire military situation. Emperor Wilhelm II agreed with them. Wilhelm II still thought some democratising, handing over more powers to the *Reichstag*, would allow him to remain emperor.

Later in the day arrived Chancellor von Hertling, to hear all decisions had already been taken without him. He resigned, rather than accepting a constitutional change. Von Hintze did the same, but mentioning his staying on might weaken the appearance of liberalisation in Germany.

The German leaders agreed that the war that had to bring for Germany the foremost power position in Europe, was lost! The German people were depressed. Strikes flamed up all over the country.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September then, Max von Baden, the heir to the throne of the Grand-Duchy of Baden, became the successor to von Hertling as chancellor. He was a liberal, with a reputation for claiming only moderate war aims for Germany. He foresaw and he knew the risks of admitting defeat. He was also not convinced the outlook of the war was as bleak as the Generals von Hindenburg and Ludendorff had depicted.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, a Major von dem Bussche briefed the party leaders of the *Reichstag* on behalf of OHL. He explained how the Bulgarian collapse threatened the Danube supply route of food, as well as the contacts with Turkey. In the west, the German soldiers would soon have to confront massive attacks of tanks and of aircraft, supported by millions of American troops. Yet, the German manpower was exhausted, and the weaker Germany grew, the harsher would be the terms of surrender. No, the struggle of five years was lost! It was time to seek peace and use, while it was still time, the advantages reached on the Allies.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, there was an intense exchange of messages between Berlin and Washington. The German chancellor sent notes to President Wilson, to ask him to take in hand arrangements for an immediate armistice and to start peace negotiations, based on the President's 14 points. Having reached an agreement with Germany, Wilson turned to France and Great Britain. Wilson's opinion was that he was willing to go for peace if the Germans accepted his conditions. He refused to allow an armistice for Germany to reorganise and gain any military benefit. He wanted a fully constitutional regime, and parliamentary

control on the high German military command. Wilson talked with the main British and French politicians, some of which were for unconditional surrender of Germany!

In Germany, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1918, Emperor Wilhelm II and Ludendorff had a furious confrontation. It was an outburst of mutual distrust and lack of sympathy. Finally, Ludendorff asked to be dismissed, and Wilhelm accepted the resignation of the Quartermaster General or *Erster Generalquartiermeister* and Deputy Chief of Staff of the German Army. The emperor ordered Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg to stay on.

The successor of Ludendorff would be General Karl Eduard Wilhelm Groener. Groener had been fired as head of the *Kriegsamt*, because Ludendorff considered him too sympathetic to the demands of the working classes. Groener was more subtle and supple, more politically astute than Ludendorff.

The Allies then held a conference in Paris. They met from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of October and again from the 29<sup>th</sup> of October to the 4<sup>th</sup> of November. Foch stressed France's earlier demands of a buffer zone between Germany and France on the Rhine. He advised for the Allied troops to occupy the left banks of the Rhine. The Allies should also keep 3 bridgeheads on the right bank of the Rhine, to expose the industrial regions of the Ruhr and of Frankfurt.

Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George refused the French demands to create a new Rhine State! In its stead, they accepted an occupation of 15 years of the Rhine lands, and a demilitarised zone on the eastern Rhine bank. The USA and Great Britain would guarantee the safety of France.

This last guarantee was never realised, for refused by the American Senate, which later also refused to ratify the Peace Treaty and the membership of the USA to the League of Nations. This League was the main Wilson idealised wish for peace. The refusal showed Wilson's influence in American politics was waning.

The main task of the League of Nations would be to preserve the peace in the world. Initially, the 32 victorious allied countries were the members of it, but later also the Central Powers and Soviet Russia were allowed to become members.

A state that would commit acts of war would declare war on all member states, and would then suffer economic and even military measures. The League would also give itself social and humanitarian tasks, such as ending the slave trade, fight against the narcotics trafficking, stop the trafficking of weapons, and sustain sanitary tasks such as the struggle against epidemics. It was an instrument of collaboration among the governments, and a permanent forum of international politics. Its meetings were to be held at Geneva, Switzerland.

The conference fixed the German ceasefire terms. The Rhine bridgeheads demanded by Foch would be at Mainz, Köln and at Koblenz. A very rapid evacuation would be demanded of the Germans, so that the German Army would have to abandon most of their heavy weapons. Furthermore, the Germans would have to surrender 5,000 artillery pieces, 36,000 machine guns and 2,000 aircraft. This was to make sure their power to resist would be annihilated.

In his depressive mood, Ludendorff had over-estimated the danger of the Allied forces in France overwhelming his armies! The Allied offensive in the Meuse and Argonne Region, as well as the one in Flanders, were stopped by the last, stubborn resistance of the now desperate German troops. The Canadians had crossed the *Canal du Nord*, but were stopped a little

further. The British 4<sup>th</sup> Army did break through the Hindenburg line, but they had first to clear the terrain behind them from enemies, which took time. Nevertheless, after an impressive cannonade, the British forced a breakthrough over the *Sambre et Oise Canal*. From the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, the British troops crossed the Schelde Stream. The Germans were in full retreat afterwards, and the heaviest fighting ceased.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, the British 4<sup>th</sup> Army had advanced to about 50 kilometres from its railheads. It had to stop. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, the American Army, led by General Pershing, took the *Kriemhilde Stellung* at Verdun. From the 1<sup>st</sup> of November on, they pushed forward again. The German divisions were still in place, but barely able to pursue the battle.

In the meantime, also Turkey had been broken. A new Turkish Government was organised under Izzet Pasha. The Turkish treasury was empty, the state bankrupt. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, Turkey sued for peace with the Allies.

Imperial Austria-Hungary was disintegrating too. The army lacked about everything, from food to arms. In the month of October alone, more than 500,000 Austrian soldiers surrendered to the Italians. End October, mass demonstrations took place in Vienna, demanding the republic for the country. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, the Austrians asked for an armistice with the Italians during a meeting at the Villa Giusti near Padua.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, at the Allied Conference of Paris, the Allies told the Habsburg Army to demobilise, and to surrender the major part of its fleet. Austria had been defeated. The Italian king was allowed to occupy the land up to the line promised to them by the 1915 Treaty of London.

By the end of October, a German uprising broke out, which resembled the February Revolution of Russia. In August, a *Seekriegsleitung*, modelled on the OHL, had been created by the Navy in Germany. Its head was Admiral Scheer, his Chiefs of Staff Captain Magnus von Levetzov and Admiral von Trotha. They had developed a new action plan, violating the instructions of Emperor Wilhelm II. But on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, overt disobedience, a mutiny, spread among the battleships. Many men even refused to board the ships. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, sailors broke into the weapon stores and took over command. They set up a Sailors' Council. The revolt of Kiel spread to Hamburg, Wilhelmshafen, Köln and other cities. The Councils demanded peace, democracy, and the removal of Emperor Wilhelm II.

During that time, Julian Vincius received a message brought by a medical orderly, he was supposed to attend a meeting of the leaders of the field hospitals in the region, the field hospitals of Lorraine and environs. The meeting would take place in the city of Metz. Julian knew he would be losing his time at Metz. He had made all the arrangements he deemed necessary to evacuate all the German wounded soldiers at Longwy and environs back to Germany. Still, he did ride to the city in his military car. He drove alone. He wore his white doctor's mantle, and no military cap.

When he arrived near the centre of Metz, he encountered several groups of drunken, shouting German soldiers wandering about, weapons in hand, running through the streets. The mob seemed to ignore him, probably because of his white overall. He never stopped his car. Near the cathedral, he saw one such group of more than a dozen soldiers stop two German officers. The officers walked hurriedly, but the group of soldiers surrounded the two men. They tore off the soldiers' caps from the officers, and their insignia. The soldiers disarmed the officers,

pushed them to and fro, hit one officer in the face and broke up the rifle the man wore, marking him out as one who had fought in the trenches lately. The officers were hit by fists, but they managed to tear themselves away, and escape into a small side street. The soldiers didn't bother to follow them.

After this incident, to which Julian also did not stop his car, he turned the car into a side street, and returned as quickly as he could back to Longwy. He had his excuse not to insist attending the arranged meeting. Later, Julian heard how groups of revolutionary soldiers and workers had chased the representatives of the imperial German authorities out of their offices, ignored the authority of the administrations, and proclaimed the republic. They had run through the streets and squares of Metz, waving large, red flags.

As the German soldiers originating from the Lorraine and Alsace Regions expected soon to return to become French citizens, they demobilised themselves, including the NCOs and officers from the Lorraine companies, and returned home!

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, as far south as Munich in Bavaria, the local USPD leader, a Jewish journalist and intellectual of Berlin, Kurt Eisner, staged an uprising. In the military barracks, weapons were seized. The soldiers deserted. The king of Bavaria fled from his capital. Eisner declared the republic. His coup had been bloodless, but didn't last for long.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1918, Germany signed the armistice with the Allies at Compiègne, in a railroad wagon used by General Foch.

The German commission was led by Mathias Erzberger, the member of the *Reichstag* who had received full powers of the then government to sign the armistice. Germany would have to evacuate the occupied territories in 31 days, one month.

The German government under Chancellor Max von Baden fell. The SPD leaders feared they would lose all control to the USPD, the revolutionary socialists. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, they had therefore told to Max von Baden that unless Wilhelm II abdicated, there might well come a true revolution in Germany on the Russian model.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, Max von Baden, on his own initiative, announced the emperor had abdicated. This was not really the case, as Wilhelm II still clung to his title. Max von Baden handed over the government to an SPD dominated government, headed by Friedrich Ebert. On the same 9<sup>th</sup> of November, from the *Reichstag* building, an SPD leader shouted that Germany was now a republic! Indeed, the Social Democratic member of the Government, Philipp Scheidemann, had proclaimed the republic from the stairs of the *Reichstag* building. Somewhat later on that day, the leader of the Independent Socialists, of the USPD, the *Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands*, Karl Liebknecht, proclaimed the same in Berlin, a Socialist republic, in front of the Imperial Palace! Both parties formed a new government. They worked together with the military authorities.

Mathias Erzberger, the leader of the Centre Party, received full powers to sign the armistice for Germany at Compiègne with General Field Marshal Foch, the Allied military leader.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, Emperor Wilhelm II was still at the town of Spa. He told he would restore order in the army. But von Hindenburg and Groener concluded that with the large cities and the railway junctions under the control of the uprisings, they could no longer repress the revolutionary movements inside Germany. As von Hindenburg also told he and

the army could no longer guaranteed Wilhelm's safety, Wilhelm II refused to start a civil war.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, Emperor Wilhelm II travelled to the Netherlands, and went in exile. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November at 11h00, the war was stopped on the Western Front.

## Julian Vincius' return to Berlin

By the beginning of October 1918, Julian Vincius heard persistent rumours of the talks on armistice going on between the Central Powers and the Allies, which meant mainly between Germany, on the one side and France, Britain and the USA on the other. He knew he would have to make haste with his ideas about the evacuation of the hospitals of Longwy.

The German Army would very probably have to leave all occupied territories. Julian did not doubt Lorraine entire and the Alsace would have to be evacuated by the German soldiers. The front in his section, the front of Verdun, remained extraordinarily calm. Hardly any wounded soldier entered his field hospitals. He receives almost only soldiers badly sick from the flu. It might be the calm before a new explosion of violence, or the beginning of the definite calm! Few soldiers were left to defend the German positions, Julian knew. The Allied troops, mostly American divisions, seemed to find it futile to launch offensives in his section of the front. The generals were waiting for the conclusions of the discussions about the final solution, the armistice and the beginning of the peace talks.

Julian Vincius asked for wagons to be added to the transport trains that still regularly arrived from Germany with munitions and weapons and provisions, and which returned laden with iron ore and steel ingots, direction Germany. Sometimes, such wagons could transport troops also. Sometimes, no such wagons came.

Julian found a few wagons abandoned on the tracks of the vast Longwy station. These just waited there. He found railway men willing to add one or more wagons to a train returning to Germany, despite the protests of the German drivers. When he had such a wagon, he propped it full with wounded men. Mostly, he had the interior furniture of those wagons be broken and thrown out. Often also, he wasn't sure where the wagons would go, whether the wagons had to be abandoned at some border or not because of differences in width of the tracks. He just wanted his wounded far from Longwy, far from France. Nobody at any border would force the wounded back to Longwy! They would not be stopped at the border. And the contents, including his wounded men, would one way or other be transferred to other trains. Julian was only certain of one thing: he should get most of the German men in his hospitals out before the Allied soldiers would enter Longwy and make prisoners of them.

Julian had many wounded men or sick men in his hospitals, who were almost fit for returning to duty on the front. He pushed any man in the wagons that wore a bandage. Some of the wounded who were able to walk, legs unhurt and minds in order, he forced into the wagons that only contained partly the spoils of Longwy and environs. He was cursed at by railway men. He had to show his revolver to guards. Sometimes, officers and NCOs gladly helped him. Julian did not insist too much. When another German officer threatened him with a gun, he relented. Uncooperative officers were able to stop the train somewhere in the countryside and force the wounded and sick out. He had to count at least on some cooperation of the men that led the trains. He then waited for the next train!

When Julian heard a convoy of soldiers were being sent inland, he brought some of the wounded patients of his to the trucks and begged to accept a few of his men. Most often, the wounded were accepted. Pity had not yet entirely left the German Army! When the wounded asked him to where they were being sent, Julian merely answered they would have to find that out by themselves, and he would just grin. He gave them all a typed letter with their preferred end destination. He added a few lines of explaining, often aggravating their

wounds, yet also mentioning what medical treatment they had received, what their proposed medication was. He saw to it all the men had some water, some food, a small paper box with their medicines for one week, and off the train steamed. Wherever the wounded would arrive, these men were Germans, heroes of multiple battles, defenders of the Fatherland. Someone would take care of them!

In this way, by the beginning of November, Julian's field hospitals and his other hospitals in Longwy were practically empty. Only new arrivals stayed, but never remained longer than a few days. Julian managed to hide two Army trucks with enough gasoline to bring the last a few hundred kilometres deeper into Germany. These should hold the last doctors and nursing soldiers, to bring them over the borders of occupied France and Luxembourg, into Germany. More, he could not humanly do.

From the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 on, the German occupying soldiers left Longwy in a great hurry. Most of them did that by foot. By then, Julian's hospitals had been emptied. Julian asked for places to be made in the last trucks for his patients. Several times, *Hauptmann Donnersdorff* came with several soldiers to the hospitals, reaching out for medicines and the so sought-after morphine. Julian opened the doors of his special storeroom, and showed the empty shelves. The medicines had been sent with the wounded in the trains, the rest stored in a place near the railway station only Julian knew of. Donnersdorff was very angry, spoke of arresting Oberst Vincius, but he had to leave empty-handed. Julian had distributed almost all of the morphine to the sick, dispersed in the last trains and the last trucks. Donnersdorff's treasure lay in numerous small, paper boxes, brought back to Germany by wounded or sick soldiers. The rest would be handed over to the Allies doctors by a man of confidence, when the Allied Forces would take over Longwy and the hospitals.

Julian Vincius remained in Longwy after the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. He wanted Donnersdorff to flee before him! He heard the American Army under Pershing was advancing to and past the front lines of Verdun. He should go.

He talked to Monsieur Baraine. He advised Baraine to leave the town. Baraine had changed his mind, and refused. No great harm would come to him, he claimed. The only collaboration with the German Army for which he could really be accused of, would be his work for the hospitals. By then, two German field hospitals remained open. They were filled with sick prisoners of war of the German Army, now abandoned to their fate. Julian had already given these men over to the civilian doctors and nurses of Longwy, brought together by Monsieur Baraine.

Baraine did not expect to stay on as mayor of Longwy for long. An example had to be set. He would stay on a couple of months at the most. He would hand over the keys of the city, he said, smiling to Julian. Then, he would leave Longwy for Metz, find his youngest daughter, now living there with the rest of his family. He would return to Longwy! He hoped Julian and Charlotte would visit him. Julian nodded.

As of the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, Julian was completely ready to leave. His work in Longwy was finished. In the middle of the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, Julian Vincius suddenly woke from noise in the streets. He saw many German trucks leave the city. In the cars, he saw the men of the *Kommandantur* and of the *Wirtschaft* and the *Schutz*. In the morning, there would be no German authority left in the town to stop the French resistance from taking possession of the town. And no Donnersdorff! He got up, dressed in his uniform,

said goodbye to Monsieur Baraine, embraced him a last time, thanked him for everything, and he too drove away in his own military car. He did not follow the *Kommandatur*, though for a while he saw their last lights on the roads, in front of him. They drove east. He drove north! On roads almost entirely empty, he took the direction of Malmedy. He arrived there early in the morning. He had a few cans of gasoline in his car, as Ernst had taught him. He drove in one stretch, and never stopped.

Julian arrived in Malmedy in daylight. He went to the house in which Charlotte lived, embraced his wife and his daughter. Then, he walked to the rooms of Ernst. Ernst had prepared the private Audi of Julian. Together, they fetched Charlotte and the child, and drove off, at relative ease, from out of Malmedy, eastwards. They drove on and on, on roads sometimes encumbered by military convoys heading east, like they. They had maps. They had food for themselves and for the child. They stopped for a few hours at the beautiful town of Goslar. They slept in the car, and drove on as quickly as they could. In the early afternoon of the next day, they arrived in Berlin. Julian drove his car to the door of his house.

Later, much later, Julian Vincius learned the American Army had entered Longwy and liberated the town on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November.

## After the War

A series of conferences followed on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. The Paris Peace Conference opened in January of 1919. It remained in session until January of 1920. Even then, after one year, it was replaced by a standing conference of ambassadors.

The following Peace Treaties were signed:

1. A Peace Treaty with Germany, signed on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1919 at Versailles.
2. A Peace Treaty with Austria, signed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September of 1919, at St-Germain-en-Laye.
3. A Peace treaty with Belgium, signed on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November of 1919 at Neuilly.
4. A Peace Treaty with Turkey, signed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August of 1920 at Sèvres. This Sèvres Treaty was never implemented, or even ratified.
5. The Covenant, the founding document for the League of Nations.

The blockade of Germany was strictly maintained until March of 1919. Then, it was prolonged until July. It caused about a million civilian deaths in Germany.

In January of 1919, elections were held for the *Reichstag*. The result was a constituent assembly, which drafted a constitution for what would later, in 1919, be called the Weimar Republic. The new German Constitution was proclaimed on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1919.

The German Army demobilised in March of 1919. The German Navy was in custody at Scapa Flow in Scotland. Paramilitary forces set up by the German Government, the so-called *Freikorps*, crushed further uprisings in Berlin. In March, a Communist revolt briefly took power in Munich, but was suppressed soon. The German revolution had removed Wilhelm II and Ludendorff from power, but it had left the officer corps, the leaders of the army, the imperial bureaucracy and the judiciary, business and academic elites untouched.

In the peace negotiations, Germany lost the Alsace and the Lorraine regions. It had to cede Eupen, Malmedy and parts of the Moresnet to Belgium. France occupied the Saar coalfields, pending a plebiscite after 15 years. Parts of the Rhinlands remained occupied. The region of the Ruhr remained occupied. Germany lost northern parts of Upper Schleswig to Denmark. Poland received the Grand Duchy of Posen and parts of West Prussia. The port of Memel went to Lithuania, so that Lithuania now had a better access to the Baltic Sea. Smaller parts of southern Germany went to Czechoslovakia.

The Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians formed a separate state, to be called Czechoslovakia. Bohemia and Moravia went to this entity. The German-speaking regions of the Sudetenland were incorporated into this newly created state. Germany lost about 12% of its territories, and 12% of its population.

Austria had to cede Southern Tyrol, Istria and Trieste to Italy. Austria-Hungary had to grant to a new country, to be called Yugoslavia, in fact Greater Serbia, large territories of its empire, such as Slovenia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and parts of the Banat, a small territory on the borders of three regions, of western Rumania; the western part of north-eastern Serbia; and a small northern part in south-eastern Hungary. Hungary had to cede Transylvania to Rumania, as well as the eastern part of the Banat. Before the war, the Austrian Empire had counted more than 50 million inhabitants. After the

war, Austria had still 6.5 million people and Hungary 8 million. The power of the empire was broken entirely. *Vae Victis*. Was not Austria the reason why the war had started?

Bulgaria had to cede small coastal areas along the Aegean to Greece, and also West Thrace, as well as smaller zones yet to the new Yugoslavia. It retained only a coast on the Black Sea, not anymore to the Mediterranean.

Turkey had to hand over East Thrace and Adrianopolis to Greece, with a few smaller territories. It lost several territories in Asia. These clauses in the Treaty of Sèvres were never realised. After a new war with Greece, a definite peace was only signed at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1923. Adrianopolis, East Thrace, the controls over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, then returned to Turkey. Turkey lost its Arabian territories. Later, the formerly Turkish zones under mandates gained their independence: Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Iraq.

Poland received a corridor to the Baltic, along the Vistula Stream, separating East-Prussia from the rest of Germany. Danzig became a free city under the supervision of the League of Nations. Poland was allowed to control the docks and the railways of the harbour. Danzig had by then almost completely a German-speaking population. Around the city, however, the major part of the population still spoke Polish. Thorn remained Prussian. Germany ceded the port of Memel to Lithuania.

Germany also lost its colonies. Its Pacific Islands went to Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Its African colonies were given to South Africa, to Great Britain, to Belgium, and to France. Under a system of mandates, under control of the League of Nations, the German colonies were distributed to the victorious enemies of Germany. To Great Britain went German East Africa, parts of Togo and Cameroun, Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq. Australia got German New Guinea. New Zealand got Samoa. The South-African Union received German South-West Africa. France got Syria and other parts of Togo and Cameroun. Japan received the German islands in the Pacific north of the Equator.

Germany's armaments were limited by the Treaty of Versailles. No more submarines were to be built, not more than 6 battleships to be held, no more airplanes, no more poison gas, no more tanks. Germany could only hold a volunteer armed force of 100,000 men, and no more conscription, so that the militarily trained population would gradually die out. An inter-Allied Commission was to oversee compliance with these Versailles rules.

One of Clémenceau's main demands was granted: a 15-year occupation by Allied troops of the Rhineland, with evacuation after 5 years intervals of the northern, central and southern zones, if Germany complied with the treaty.

Germany gave its parliamentary approval for signing everything proposed by these demands, except for the payment of the War Guilt, enormous sums of money, and the trial of Wilhelm II for crimes of war. The Germans thereafter continued to challenge the Versailles Treaty. They tried the next 2 years to modify it in their favour. The Germans never voluntarily complied with the implementations of the settlements. The German people had to mourn their dead and to care for the survivors, many of which had been handicapped for life. The country slowly recovered from its trauma. Many Germans resisted the moral and military disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty.

Germany failed to comply with the interim reparation payments to be made before 1921. Soon, its steel industry was flourishing again. The Germans argued they had committed no aggression, no atrocities, as a war had been on. They found the Allied charges against them hypocritical and groundless.

Germany and Russia even remembered their friendships of old. They began secret military co-operations. In the Treaty of Rapallo of 1921, they would renounce on financial claims among them.

The United States of America failed to ratify the Versailles Treaty. Woodrow Wilson fell sick and weak. He lost the 1920 elections in his country. Warren Harding became president of the USA. Harding stayed out of the Wilson-founded League of Nations.

Lloyd George and his advisors regarded the German economy as crucial for their own revival, to get Great Britain's export industries out of the depression. Increasingly, the British looked as France as their new, future potential enemy. London reverted to its isolationism of old.

Germany would know an entirely different fate.

Later still, the *Dolchstoßlegende* raged in Germany, the stab-in-the-back myth. Paul von Hindenburg had affirmed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November of 1919, before a commission of the *Reichstag*, the German Army had not been beaten in the war! The German military had not lost the war. The German Army had left the battlefield unbeaten! They had been betrayed by civilians inside the country, and that especially by the republicans who had overthrown the Hohenzollern hegemony. The Socialists, the Weimar Republic, the Bolsheviks, and especially the Jews, had defeated Germany! Advocates of this theory also denounced the government leaders who had signed the armistice of the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1918. They called these the *November Verbrecher*, the November Criminals. The theory would have some following years later. The defeat of Germany was hard to accept for many German citizens. Resentment remained.

## Part III. The Weimar Republic Years of 1919 to 1930.

### The political Evolution in post-war Berlin. 1918-1922

When they founded the Republic of Germany, the first wish of the Social Democrats was to hold the country away from famine, from civil war and from revolution on the Soviet-Russian example. Reforms in the economy, as in the German society overall, were to be determined by a national parliament, on the basis of a constitution. The crisis in society caused by the defeat in the war and by the end of the absolute authoritarian regime of the Hohenzollern emperors should not be aggravated by drastic reforms that would lead to chaos and conflicts.

The SPD, the *Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands*, the main political party of Germany, wanted to avoid a revolution on the example of what had happened in Russia and which had created chaos there. Friedrich Ebert, the main figure of the SPD, sought evolution rather than violent revolution for Germany. He therefore continued to use the administrations and the civil servants of the existing empire and the current organisation of the Army, the *Reichswehr*, as it was now called, to rule. He sought to strengthen even these institutions to avoid civil war. He would succeed largely in that objective.

That, however, was not what a more radical part of the USPD, of the *Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands*, the *Spartakusbund*, wanted. This *Spartakusbund* had been founded in January of 1916 by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. They preferred not a parliamentary constitutional system, but a *Soviet* or Workers' Councils system of Russian-style government. They also desired the socialisation of the large enterprises and the redistribution and ending of the large privately owned agricultural domains mainly held by the old nobility.

In the end, Germany would pass a period of unrest, but never entered a revolutionary state. To begin with, the Berlin Councils of workers and soldiers gave powers of government to a '*Rat der Volksbeauftragten*', a council of representatives of the people. In this government sat the new leading men of Germany, Friedrich Ebert (SPD), Hugo Haase (USPD), Emil Barth (USPD), Wilhelm Dittmann (USPD), Otto Landsberg (SPD) and Philipp Scheidemann (SPD).

Soon also, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1918, the industry organisations and the labour organisations agreed in the *Hugo Stinnes – Carl Legien Abkommen* or agreement, to act as partners. Stinnes and Legien were well-known powerful industry figures in Germany. They and their 21 organisations of the industry recognised the 7 main Labour organisations as partners in negotiations on salaries and working conditions. This agreement did much to avoid the revolutionary chaos in the country. At the same date, the first new political parties were founded.

These were first the DNVP, the *Deutsch-Nationale Volkspartei*, the right-wing conservatives. This party was anti-republican, and the direct successor of the former two conservative parties of the empire. It sought the restoration of the empire, as founded by the Hohenzollern. Its members were strictly anti-Marxist. This party also adhered to the anti-Semitic feelings of the former conservative parties.

The DDP was formed by the left-wing Liberals, and the DVP, by the right-wing Liberals. The DDP was the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei*. It demanded a democratic state of the social left-wing, yet privileging private ownership. They proposed to diminish the ownership of large domains, to create smaller family estates and enterprises in agriculture.

The DVP or *Deutsche Volkspartei* was close to the DDP. They too were for private property, for a democratic state of the social right, and for a privately-owned economy. They too proposed to separate the large, private domains in smaller parcels to promote family businesses.

The *Centre Party* had a program conforming to the *Bayerische Volkspartei*, the BVP. They were for the freedom of the citizens along Christian principles. Both parties want a federation for the state. They didn't want the northern Lands of Germany to decide over the politics of Bayern and the other southern German Lands.

The SPD was the largest party. The USPD remained a revolutionary socialist party.

Later, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1919, was founded the *Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*, the DAP. This party would be called the NSDAP in 1920, for the *National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1921, one Adolf Hitler became the president of this party.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1918, was held a first congress of the workers and soldiers. In this, the SPD was in the majority. The congress decided for elections to a parliament, a *Reichstag*, that would define the laws of the new republic. It chose for a parliamentary democracy, and not for a system of *soviets*. In that month of December also, Friedrich Ebert, the Socialist, and Wilhelm Groener, now the head of the Army, agreed on a pact to repress revolutionary uprisings, for instance the one of the 24<sup>th</sup> of December at the Palace of Berlin, which ended in the so-called *Christmas-Battle*.

In this month of December, also the artists formed groups and organised. The *Novembergruppe* was founded, as well as the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* in Berlin.

By the end of December 1918, sailors in mutiny ran through Berlin, as they had done in other cities. Friedrich Ebert called in the regular troops of the old army to stop the uprising. The three USPD representatives in the '*Rat der Volksbeauftragten*', which served as a kind of provisional government, thereupon resigned. They were replaced by 2 socialists of the majority SPD. So far, the violent revolution had been avoided.

Most of the regular troops dissolved after the signature of the armistice with the Allies, partly also because of the revolutionary tendencies in the land. The Provisional Government dismissed the soldiers and the officers. It decided to create a new force of voluntaries. As officers served young former officers of the front who entered military service anew. These groups were called the *Freikorps*, for *Freiwilligen Korps*, voluntary corps. The *Freikorps* fought under the authority of the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten* to stop the uprisings of the radical left and to secure the frontiers, mainly in the east of the German state. The former regular troops that supported the parliamentary regime, remained rather anti-democratic and still loyal to the emperor. Afterwards, a new regular Army could be formed on a truly republican basis.

In the beginning of 1919, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, took place in Berlin an uprising organised by the *Spartakusbund*. The Provisional Government called in the *Freikorps* to stop the revolt. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January of 1919, very quickly, the revolutionary uprising of the

Spartakus Communists was stopped in the killing by the *Freikorps* of the revolutionaries. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, members of the *Freikorps Garde-Kavallerie Schützen Division* assassinated Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Out of the *Spartakusbund* would later be founded the KPD, the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, the Communists. The Communists were anti-parliamentarian; they regarded a parliament only as a means of the classes in power to rule over the proletarian masses. They sought the dictatorship of the proletarians.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of January of 1919 then took place the first election for the republican parliament. Women also had the right to vote. The SPD came out as the strongest party, though it did not gain the absolute majority of votes. The SPD formed a coalition with the Centre, Catholic Party, and with the German Democratic Party, the DDP.

As Berlin was not restful, the representatives preferred to assemble in the city of Weimar as of the 6<sup>th</sup> of February of 1919. Thus, began the coalition of Weimar, and the Weimar Republic. About 76% of the parliamentarians supported the coalition. Friedrich Ebert became officially the first President of the Republic. The assemblies of the new parliament did not stop the unrest in the land. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February already, the Minister-President of Bavaria, Kurt Eisner, was assassinated. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1919, also Hugo Haase, the then president of the USPD, and former member of the *Rat der Volksbeauftragten*, was assassinated in front of the building of the *Reichstag*.

The promised constitution for the new republic was founded on the traditional constitution of 1848. The main political power for the republic would be the parliament, the *Reichstag*. The chancellor and his ministers needed to have the confidence of the parliament. Nevertheless, the president of the republic retained important powers, such as the command over the army, the *Reichswehr*, and the right to dissolve the parliament. The president had retained the right to use special powers when the public safety and order were in danger. Nobody put anymore in question the unity of the German people. The Weimar republic ordained and published the constitution on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July of 1919. The political parties formed majorities in the parliament and so became fully responsible for the country. The parties developed their programs, and adapted the existing ones to the new system of government.

The Germans largely resented the Treaty of Versailles! The articles on the War Guilt especially, were generally refused by the people. The mixed feelings about the Versailles Treaty quickly turned into bitter resentment against the Weimar Republic itself. Their representatives too were designated as the *Novemberversbrecher*, the criminals of the treaty.

The nadir of the resentment came with the murder of Mathias Erzberger and of Walter Rathenau. These murders could be assigned to the political right-wing organisations. The *Organisation Consul*, which assassinated them, was an ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic and anti-Communist terrorist organisation active from 1920 to 1922. It was formed by members of the *Marine Brigade Ehrhardt*, a *Freikorps* unit which disbanded after the *Kapp Putsch* failed to overthrow the German Weimar Republic in March 1920. Mathias Erzberger had become the Republic's Minister of Finance. He was murdered on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1921. In response to Rathenau's murder on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1922, the Law for the Protection of the Republic, the *Republiksschutzgesetz*, was enacted by the *Reichstag*, resulting in the banning of the *Organisation Consul* on 21 July 1922. The organisation had assassinated at least 354

people. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1922, the *Organisation Consul* still attempted an attack by acid on Philipp Scheidemann of the SPD.

In the meantime, many former soldiers of the Imperial Army, some of whom assembled in the *Freikorps*, regarded the *Freikorps* as a state within the state, with its own rules. Many among these men refused to recognise the republic.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October of 1920, 27 suburbs of Berlin among which Charlottenburg, Schöneberg, Neukölln and Wolkersdorf, were attached to Berlin. Berlin had then reached a population of about 4 million inhabitants! In surface, it had become the second largest city in the world after Los Angeles, and in population the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest after London and Paris.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1920 happened in Berlin the *Kapp Putsch*. It was named after its leaders, Wolfgang Kapp and General Walther von Lüttwitz. Wolfgang Kapp was an East Prussian civil servant, involved in nationalist politics. Von Lüttwitz was a general in charge of the First Group Commando. He had main support from the *Erhardt Brigade* of the *Freikorps*, which ought to have been disbanded by the Versailles Treaty, but wasn't. The coup aimed to stop the German revolution of 1918–1919, overthrow the Weimar Republic, and establish an autocratic government in its place. The local government fled to Dresden first and then to Stuttgart. Parts of the *Reichswehr*, as well as nationalist and monarchist factions supported the Kapp Putsch. The revolt sought to end the parliamentary democratic state, to re-instore the political order of before 1914. The new *Reichswehr* did stop the Kapp-revolt, but also turned its back to the republic. The Labour Organisations and the SPD thereupon called for a general strike, which broke the coup rapidly. Kapp stepped down on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. He declared his mission complete, and handed over the executive powers to the *Reichswehr's* military commander-in-chief. Other revolts then broke out in the Rhinelands and in Saxony and Thüringen. Here too, the *Reichswehr* broke the uprisings. Henceforth, the Republic seemed safe and stable.

At the national elections of June 1920, the coalition of Weimar lost 40% of its votes in the *Reichstag*, and therefore its majority.

In 1921, the Allied Forces demanded of Germany to recognise a War Guilt or debt of 132 billion marks!

The years 1922 and 1923 knew a galloping inflation of money, leading to social disasters in the population. Especially the bourgeois *Mittelstand* blamed the Weimar republic for the monetary débâcle. Fortunes were lost in this period. The state got partly rid of its payments by the inflation, but the German poor also got very poorer. The salaries diminished dramatically with the inflation. The prices of goods rose to very much higher. The industry could produce more by the lower salaries, and increase exportations. The credits did not weigh heavily on the enterprises. Due to the high inflation, paper money constantly lost value. Speculation rose particularly, to create spectacular profits. The men who engaged in these adventures, wanted to continue exploiting the inflation. In this troubled period, the state could not pay anymore the reparation dues to the Allies. On the protests of the Allied financial ministers, the then German Chancellor Wirth resigned. His successor, Wilhelm Cuno, could form a government of the centre-right, a minority coalition, tolerated by the SPD.

## Julian Vincius in post-war Berlin until 1922

When Julian Vincius and his family returned home from Longwy, riding up to his apartment in the *Landgrafenstrasse*, he found his clean, well-maintained, fine apartment in good order. It seemed the war had disturbed nothing here. Had the war been just a bad dream?

Julian was not short on money. He had lived frugally at Longwy. He had spent some of the funds his grandfather Kurt Vincius had granted him, and he had received more, lately, from his father Andreas, who still lived in the city of Thorn. That money, Julian had deposited in two different banks of Berlin, to which he had now access again.

His family consisted of himself, his wife and young daughter, and he had to think of Ernst Vincius. Ernst had stayed with him, as a driver, a companion, and as a constant help and protector for Charlotte. Julian wanted to keep Ernst with them, at least for a few months. As Ernst wasn't sure about what to do next, he had taken Julian's offer. Ernst needed some time to work out for himself what he wanted to do in Berlin, or return to East Prussia. By nature, he was not a man who could be in a hurry. He was no boy anymore, now a young man of 22 years, but without much higher education. He was too young to worry about life, and also not in a hurry to leave Julian and Charlotte.

Charlotte liked to have some company in Berlin. She had known Julian would run to the *Charité* hospitals and throw himself head-on in new work. That was how her husband had been put together! Charlotte had begun to learn the German language. That was not so easy for a French girl, who had known no other language but her native French. There was nothing Charlotte couldn't do once she had set her mind to it, so she persevered, though the harder German words came often as a torture to her tongue and mind. Charlotte already could go shopping on her own. She was glad, however, to have some protection close to her during her first months of stay in the enormous city of Berlin. Julian bought her a book, a guide to Berlin, which she and Ernst assiduously read. Ernst was more interested in knowing the suburbs he shouldn't take Charlotte to for the moment. Moreover, Charlotte was pregnant again. She was a lusty woman. She would have another baby in this year of 1919.

Charlotte, like Ernst, didn't worry much. She had studied. She was an intelligent woman. Yet, she didn't seek another occupation than that of mother and housewife. Julian too, would have been very surprised had she wanted to take up her studies again, and further on seek another occupation. Charlotte continued to be the housewife in Berlin. She took possession of her new kingdom, the apartment in the *Landgrafenstrasse*, the household, and the task of financial counsellor of Doctor Julian Vincius. She continued doing what she had been to her father at Longwy, in France, ever since her mother had died.

Soon enough, Ernst Vincius told Charlotte he had met a Berlin woman who lived in the same street, and who he seemed to like him in a special way. Her name was Eva Trakei. She was an Evangelist, like himself. He had met her at a religious lecture in the Evangelic Church of their neighbourhood.

Eva was a true Berliner, though a rather shy girl. She was pretty, had not studied much at school, but she was intelligent, and loved to read the newspapers. She knew her two and twos in Berlin. She could sniff from the far anybody who might cheat on her, an indispensable quality in this after-war Berlin. She showed a keen interest in the cultural life of the grand city. She was only a few years younger than Ernst. She worked in another house of the *Landgrafenstrasse*, where she had been placed by her parents to keep company to an elder

lady. Eva was nice, good-hearted, a woman who knew what the value was of good work. She read the newspaper out loud for her lady, and seemed to need little to enjoy life.

Like Charlotte, Eva was a rather spectacular blonde, tall and impressive. Ernst never really understood why Eva had taken an interest in him, and so soon. She said she felt at ease with him. That could be the plain truth, for there was no one on earth as dependable, loyal and trustworthy than Ernst Vincius. Ernst had learned a few tricks in the army, and he always carried a small, hidden pistol on him. He knew well how to protect Eva when he accompanied her to films or to the theatre and other entertainment. They liked, for instance, to go to the Luna Park, to skate and to laugh, drink a beer, rarely two, and walk hand in hand under the trees. Ernst would marry Eva in 1921. At first, after their marriage, they kept on to their occupations. Then, they found a small house in the same *Landgrafenstrasse*. Helped by Julian, they could form a family of their own in Berlin. Ernst did not return to West- or East Prussia. He and Eva opened a garage a little later, funds provided by Julian.

In 1921, Ernst and Eva did travel to Thorn and Königsberg. Ernst presented his wife to his father, mother, to his brother and sister and their families, and reported to Julian and Charlotte. Ernst's family went well. The family Vincius would partly continue in Königsberg. Ernst could even attend the marriage of his sister in Thorn. He visited his aunt, Marlene Vincius, and the Gomolenski family. He saw his cousin Micol, but not Dorothea. He told Julian Dorothea Gomolenski lived also in Berlin, now, but he had no address. He told Julian he had visited everyone in the Vincius families of Thorn. He met there the two uncles of Julian, Max the Younger and Julian the Elder, as well as Julian's father Andreas. They all were well-to-do businessmen and traders of the town. Their families thrived. Ernst told for hours about how the families of Max Vincius fared. They lived almost all in houses in the *Breite Strasse* of Thorn, where Julian had grown up, not far from the cathedral.

Julian felt not yet ready to travel east. He still had remained very confused and sad about the past war. He envied Ernst and Eva their light-heartedness. In his mind, the cannons still shot, the rifles still cracked, and the many horribly wounded haunted his nights. It took Julian much time to think about the new Germany and about what had happened to the modern, intelligent society he liked, the men and women of Germany.

He thought he knew why exactly Germany had entered the war. There had been several reasons. The higher of the highest classes of society had desired Germany to be considered a major European power by the other nations. The Emperor Wilhelm II had wanted to shine with the glory of conquests, as his father had done, with the might of the country that was his entirely, of which he thought himself the absolute master.

Wilhelm II and his court felt the country needed to expand to become more powerful yet. Was that not what his ancestors had done for centuries before him? They had conquered lands, and through the conquests become ever more powerful. Julian did wonder where this typical European desire to be more powerful originated from. It was a feeling, a drive, hidden in the nature of all Europeans, a great urge, a devastating urge, which had led to wonderful discoveries in the sciences and the arts, but which had also led to much suffering by the wars that seemed always to be necessary to realise ambitions. The ultimate responsible for so much suffering had always been the kings and emperors! So, Julian considered it only just and right the man, the emperor, had now fallen to nothing. Julian nevertheless wondered whether anybody else would have resisted the urge.

He, Julian, would not have succumbed to the vanity of power, or so he thought, and wasn't too sure he thought right! Such vanity of conquest lay far from his nature. Julian did not feel any desire to become greater than he was. He was a doctor. What was important, was to be a good doctor, and not to lose lives.

Though Julian liked some wealth and be able to live at ease, he had not become a doctor to get rich. Being a healer simply was his calling, his talent too. He did not seek high honours. He did not especially pursue the dream and the ambition to feel greater than the other men he saw walking in the streets of Berlin! Still, he understood the feeling, and recognised how strong an incentive such urges could be. These were the drives by which other men intrigued to climb up the ladder of society. If there was a ladder for him, it was rather Jacob's ladder.

In his mind, Julian was still struggling with the idea of a God. Why had God allowed so many men to die in such most horrific ways during the last war? Was that not bad, and was God not all good? Julian did not understand, and never would in his life.

Though being a doctor, Julian sought the final heights of love and compassion for his fellow-men. In no patient of his could he see a thief, a murderer, a cheating man. He only saw a suffering man or woman. He wanted to help. He knew he was naïve! He should be more realistic, and have more eye for the real inclinations in mankind than for the better intentions. He would have to do that for his own protection! But Julian never succeeded truly in looking at men from two sides. He remained the doctor, who preferred to see and think only of beauty and good. He refused to see the ugly and the bad in mankind. Ugly and bad, though, Julian had seen and experienced.

More and more, as he read accounts of the Past *Weltkrieg*, the World War, as the Germans themselves called the last war, the reality of the numbers grew on him. How many million men had died in both camps to gain the illusion of glory? For Germany, the war had been a major tragedy. Germany had lost so much by this war! Julian had seen thousands of able-bodied men lying face down in the mud of the battle fields. In the dirt of France! Millions! The number meant little to him. He could not imagine the total of these men killed. The number also meant little to the people that crowded in the streets of Berlin. He saw many women walking alone, though. How many sons had been killed, how many fathers? The death of one man one could easily comprehend. The death of millions, in horrible circumstances, no. Often, Julian reviewed in his mind what the most horrible deaths had been. Surely, the men reached by the flames of flamethrowers, or the ones that had breathed poison gas were among the worse. No death had been dignified in the war!

And for what? How much had not been lost to Germany? The Lorraine and the Alsace in France, Posen, large parts of Schlesien, Royal Prussia and Danzig, all the German colonies were gone! Was such loss to the nation worth the cruel game of war? What a major disaster for Germany! How could the emperor have waged so much and lost so much? Could the emperor and his court not have stopped the senseless war much earlier? What was the abdication, not even the death, of that one man, compared to the suffering Julian had seen in the trenches and in his hospitals at Longwy? No, it had not been worth the gamble! And Germany had not only lost so many territories! It had lost, lost the war that should never have begun! Losing was hard for a German to accept.

Julian was far from a revolutionary, but he understood very well, now, why the Russian Communists had sought peace, at all cost. Germany had lost the war and lost its pride. Or was it purely its vanity?

Germany's splendid pre-war economy lay largely destroyed. Few Germans, both men and women, accepted that loss of pride, Julian sensed. For the men, it was part of their manhood. Practically all Germans now resented having lost to more powerful than them. Men didn't like to be defeated. Germans hated being defeated. They were out for revenge, now, and incapable at the moment of accomplishing their revenge. That was utterly frustrating! No despondency remained, just the old pride and vanity showed through the suffering.

Most people Julian met in Berlin did not want to talk of the war. They avoided the subject. It kept merely nagging at the mind. The Germans had pushed the images of horror far into a corner of their mind, and drawn up a wall around that place of memory. The people had changed though, in the frustration. They seemed to Julian to have become meaner, more radical in what they said, shorter-tempered. Julian sensed they too tried to cope with the horrible images that clung to the minds of all who had been in or seen the trenches and the desperate, foolish attacks of offensives launched against machineguns, of men only running with a rifle in their hand and being mowed down instantly. The Germans surely also felt responsible. What had they, in person, been able to do or done to stop the horror? They had merely continued fighting, hoping they would win in the end, and so they had run on, and attacked again and again, against all hope. That was the personal feeling of responsibility that nagged at most people in German society of today. Should they not have had the bravery to throw down weapons? No, that would have been cowardly treason against the nation. And yet, and yet, maybe it would not have been treason but just good sense?

There were now four sorts of men in Germany.

The ones who hadn't been called into the war, and who didn't understand what nagged at those who had. The ones who had fought and detested the defeat, the ones who still sought revenge. The ones who, like Julian, had fought, yet sought no revenge, and tried to cope with their confused feelings. And the ones who were ready to start a new war.

The men who could forget, had already forgotten the horror. Julian knew none of these. Luckily, the ones who sought new glory, who sought the return of the glorious empire of 1870, the ones who still sought the realisation of their vanity, were few. At least, Julian thought so, hoped so. But these too were a sorry lot! They were always talking of what could have been done, what should have been done, how finally, Germany could have surely won! With these men, Germany had been betrayed. And for who the betrayers were, they always had a straight answer: the Jews and the Communists! Even a few, small political parties of the extreme right-wing existed, which proposed the strong continued vision of pride and glory. These groups were few and not at all representative of the current German society. Or so thought Julian Vincius. He gave them very little of his attention in the years after the war.

Julian and his family lived happily in Berlin. Julian worked again in the *Charité*. *Geheimrat* Pütter had kept his word. He had congratulated Julian for his work in the battles of Verdun. Pütter had a few nasty phrases for the generals who had not wanted to promote Julian and not given him responsibilities for the hospitals of wider parts of the German front. The *Charité* deserved that! But Pütter was glad the war was over. He understood fully how awful the battles had been. He was glad Julian was back. He gave him his old job, as head and

professor in charge of the tuberculosis barracks. Pütter told Julian he should come up with a product or a means to defeat tuberculosis. For the rest, Julian had patients to care for.

‘Oh, I know quite well what you are thinking of, Vincius,’ Pütter said, more tired than before. ‘You are thinking all the doctors of the world have been trying out so many different things by now, and none definitely successful. The quest I give you could well forever remain in vain. It may well be so. But what else can we do, but persevere, try out yet more means? They may all be useless. But maybe, just maybe, one in thousands of what we try out, may yet be successful. We may yet stumble on something that works and heals, something that can kill the bacteria or stop its work or halt it from proliferating. The trying is God’s work, so continue! I won’t hold it against you if you do not come up with an effective medicine within a year, within five years, within twenty years! In the end, one of the hundreds of doctors working on the issue shall discover the remedy of all remedies, the one that can stop the bacteria doing its nasty work. Our glory is in the searching, though finding a solution will be worth the Nobel Prize for medicine. Did not God write that somewhere in the Bible? Your way, I know, will be in the systematic, rational, logical searching for the mechanism by which the bacteria works, and thus lead us to a solution. I know your background, Julian Vincius. Your ancestors were Jewish. I respect the Jewish people. They are among the most intelligent on earth. So, use your heritage, your brains. And give us the means to defeat the tuberculosis bacillus!’

Julian nodded. He went to work. He had a purpose, now. It was important for a man and for a man’s happiness to have an aim to pursue! Pütter had given him his.

So, Julian Vincius tried to live well and to work and search well in the *Charité*. He constantly lowered the number of people who died in the barracks. The number of people that recovered from the illness constantly mounted. That was a success. The final remedy to get rid of tuberculosis eluded him, as it eluded all the doctors in the world for many years yet to come. Julian did well. Often, he asked himself how few people he had been able to help, here in Berlin, compared to how many he had not been able to help near Verdun.

Julian Vincius knew the value of money. He had lived through a war rather agreeably with money. What if another war came? Several people now depended on him for survival, no, better than that, to live well. His responsibility was for the money. Not on counting it! Charlotte did that well enough, but for earning it. He had a fine income as a professor at the *Charité*, but he needed much more.

Much more lay for grabs in the *Diplomatenviertel* on the other side of the *Tiergarten*, and also in the Berlin quarter he lived in, near the *Landgrafenstrasse*. It was a bourgeois quarter. Many Jews lived nearby. Also, on the other side of the *Kurfürstenstrasse*, lived many well-to-do businessmen. Among these, he found customers.

There was practically no limit to what he could ask from some of these people to cure them or to diminish their pain and unease. Many of these people living in the vicinity also, were elderly. Like old machines, they needed much maintenance, and maintenance was steady, lasting work that could bring in much, steady money.

Julian Vincius healed around him. He knew by instinct how to handle the worst illnesses. He was intelligent. He could feel, imagine the pain as if it affected his own body. He could represent in his brain the workings of the sick bodies. He knew where to touch, what to kill with medicines, how to strengthen with prescriptions. He had his specialties, for which he

became known: eye diseases, the most delicate of all to treat, pneumonia, of course, tuberculosis and illnesses of the lungs.

He soon gained many private customers, who came to his apartment on Tuesday and Friday and on Sunday. He would have liked Saturdays better, but Saturday was the day of the Sabbath for the Jews. More and more people came to know from what kind of parents he was born. Most clients regarded him as a Jewish doctor. He insisted to all he was of the Evangelic Faith, and a Christian.

‘Yes, yes,’ they said soothingly to him, ‘we know that. But once a Jew, always a Jew.’

Julian would not argue much. If some people thought he was something of a Jewish shaman, he would not contradict them. A fine Jewish doctor could ask more money for his talents. Julian charged as much as he could from what he knew the man or woman that came to him could pay. In his trade as a doctor, as much importance had to be given to the information he gathered on the financial situation of his patients and on the history of their illnesses! What was the value of an eye, of a better digestion, of a cancer of the throat healed or regressed, of relieve for an excruciating pain in the back softened or healed? Julian Vincius worked hard for his private customers. He was truly a great doctor, and he was getting rich. The very rich would only be helped by a rich, sophisticated man of their own class.

Julian was getting rich rapidly. That made Charlotte feel happy. His reward was a very satisfying bed-life, and more children. Soon after his red-headed war daughter Malou, came the boy Anton in 1919, and the French-sounding Maxim in 1920.

Anton was a small boy, energetic, but not very strong of health. After a few years of constant ailing, the boy grew well. He was a happy boy, too, who liked a laugh. Maxim was a taller boy, leaner, as handsome as his mother, with the power of a full-blooded German and the grace of a Frenchman. He turned out to be a great charmer, not as strong of will as his brother. Maxim was and remained the finest, the most sophisticated, and of course, Charlotte’s darling.

After three children, Charlotte said stop. She wanted to preserve her fine figure, her youth, her beauty. Julian told her she could count the days in which they could make love and not have children. For Charlotte, who had her monthly blood losses with the regularity of a clock, this proved not too hard to do. She held charts, shown to her by Julian.

The three children were baptised in the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche*, the Evangelical Church at the square where the *Kurfürstenstrasse* ended and the *Kurfürstendamm* began, in the centre of the *Breitscheidplatz*. This church had been built by Wilhelm II in memory of his father, Wilhelm I, from 1891 to 1895. The first stone had been laid in 1891, but the church had been dedicated only on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1895, and consecrated and used as of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February of 1906.

Its architect had been Franz Schwechter, a man originating from the Rhine Lands. By a strange touch, the belfry held 6 bronze bells, cast from French cannon won by the German Army in the Franco-German War of 1870 to 1871. The Emperor Wilhelm Memorial Church became the family church where sometimes the Vincius Family attended religious ceremonies. It was also in this church that Julian Vincius and Charlotte Baraine married in 1919, soon after they had arrived in Berlin. Charlotte had not to abandon her Catholic Faith. She became in all but early conviction a Prussian Evangelic wife. Right after their wedding, the *Pfarrer* baptised Malou Vincius. She was baptised in the Evangelic Faith, through a girl with a French passport.

Charlotte and Julian then went out more than before. They went to films. Ernst drove them. They went to concerts, to all sorts of art exhibitions, and they accepted more dinners. Julian Vincius became a well-known guest at such events. And he made new patients!

As Julian and Charlotte Vincius attended diverse sorts of social events, their figures became well-known in Berlin's evening world. They found out where the intellectual, artistic, industrial and money-generating circles of Berlin came together. One patient Julian had served well or healed altogether, introduced him to somebody else. At dinners, balls, speeches, concerts, at operas and lighter concerts, Julian Vincius patiently listened with compassion and empathy at what the people around him talked about their health worries. He never tired of such conversations. He understood the desperate cries for help. He understood the despair created by the opinions of such and such a doctor that had not helped at all. Julian had the reputation of someone who could do something in all cases.

Julian then told, 'come to see me. I am sure I can help. I know what to do. You must have this or that pain? This or that inconvenience? I have treated such an illness before! Here is what I did and propose to you.'

And so, the conversation went on. The potential patient was healed and filled with hope before even the slightest medicine or intervention had taken place. And Charlotte was smiling at his side, for her husband was recruiting. She also knew he was quite capable to genuinely help people, because he possessed the very rare quality of being a doctor with talent, who could enter the pain and see in his patient's mind where exactly the cause hid. Julian, her husband, obviously liked helping people. He succeeded in doing so where others failed or abandoned. Her husband was a remarkable man. She not only loved him, she admired him.

In all these mundane appearances, Charlotte moved as a queen. In the beginning, in the first two years after their arrival at Berlin, neither Julian nor Charlotte had shown much appetite for going out to restaurants in the evening. That also changed.

Julian had to win ever more clients, and preferably very rich clients. He asked for a photograph of his most famous and wealthy clients, of ambassadors and royal family. He placed those in a photo-album, and asked for a few words to be written in the owner's own hand next to the photos. Julian fully understood the importance of being accepted, seen, moving about in the mundane life of the capital. His uncle Haim came to help him. Haim had been moving in just these circles for years! The editing company of Goldstern & Vincius was by now part of the flourishing publication industry of Berlin. Haim Vincius too had learned that nothing could be won economically by remaining discreet. The former general was still an appreciated guest in the higher circles of Berlin.

Leah Goldstern, the true, original owner of the Goldstern Publishing Company, had died already before the war started, in 1910. Haim Vincius had remained alone and nobody could console him with the death of his cherished wife. He had not married again. Haim too passed away not long after Julian and Charlotte arrived in Berlin, in 1920. The same year died his son Avram. The publishing house of Goldstern & Vincius was now led by David Vincius. David had worshipped his mother, and kept the name of the editing company as it had been during his parents' time. David was happily married to Rosa Kalpern. Mainly these two, David and Rosa, both decidedly Jewish, befriended Julian and Charlotte and introduced them after Haim in the Berlin cultural world. In 1920, David was 42 years old and his wife Rosa a year younger.

David and Rosa on the one side, Charlotte and Julian on the other, entered the balls and dinners and meetings like royal couples. Charlotte had by then learned to speak grammatically correct German to be able to engage in any conversation. And Julian's income soared.

Charlotte Vincius-Baraine knew instinctively how to dress. She had the elegance of a Parisian beauty. She astonished the Berliners with spectacular, Paris-imported dresses and hats, daring *décolletés*, and very bright colours in the until then rather drab Berlin of yore. She seemed perfectly at ease in the circles Julian and David introduced her to. There was nothing of importance anymore in Berlin of the likes of the old imperial court. But the old nobility and the new wealth did still come together often. These appreciated a splendour now and then. Charlotte was just that, a brightly shining sun in grey Berlin.

In the first years, Julian and Charlotte had feared Charlotte's French accent would immediately betray her being French. Julian at first didn't know how Charlotte would be accepted in Berlin. He had expected some hostility, to outright hatred, from the Berlin circles. This soon proved a fear not based on reality. Charlotte, with her striking figure and beauty and charming manners, was well accepted everywhere.

Julian once heard a famous magistrate of Berlin wryly comment to a friend of his, 'at least, this Doctor Vincius has conquered and brought something splendid with him from France to Berlin. How many of our soldiers can boast having won whatever in the war?'

The men laughed heartily at their pun, and Julian guessed Charlotte would not be bothered with hate and contempt.

Julian taught his wife how to drive a car. Julian remembered the Berlin of before the war. Few cars could then be seen in the streets. Most people still used carriages drawn by horses. The trams of before the war were large carriages, drawn by many horses. Now, cars were forcing horses out of the city traffic! A few ladies drove their own cars. Charlotte had been an easy student. Now, one could see her go shopping in the fanciest streets of Berlin at the steering wheel of a huge automobile. She had no need any more of Ernst to chaperone her. Yet, Ernst stayed on.

Julian Vincius got interested also in the artistic scene of the new Berlin. Through Haim and David Vincius, the publishers, he gained access to the groups of artists *en vogue* in the city. They called themselves *the avant-garde* of the new, modern art. Yet, Julian saw easily the hard lines, the despair, the horror of the last war hitting one like a fore-hammer from out of these artists' paintings and sculptures.

Among the publishing companies, the *Goldstern & Vincius Verlag* was one of the smaller ones. Many newspapers were edited in Berlin and sold in the streets. The largest publication house seemed to Julian to be the Jewish-origins *Ullstein Verlag*. They edited the *Vossische Zeitung* and the immensely popular *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, two of the most-read newspapers of Berlin. Then, there was Rudolf Mosse's publishing empire. This edited the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*. Mosse's editor-in-chief was Carl von Ossietzky, the founder of the German Democratic Party, who currently supported the Weimar Republic. Both the *Ullstein Verlag* and Rudolf Mosse with his *Berliner Tageblatt*, were Jewish-controlled publishing companies.

Von Ossietzky also edited *Die Weltbühne*, a newspaper of the traditional right-wing in Berlin politics. The *Deutsche Zeitung*, another well-read paper, was openly anti-Semitic. The paper *Vorwärts* was the official organ of the Social Democrats, the SPD, the major Socialist party. There was *Die Welt am Abend*, from the publishing house of the Communist sympathiser Willi Münzenberg, which had become also a very successful paper of the masses. The Centre Party, the from its origins Bavarian Catholic Party, edited the *Germania* paper. There was even a weekly paper in Berlin of the Central Society of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, the *C.V.-Zeitung*. Julian Vincius continued occasionally to read this edition. Other papers were manifold. There was *Der Montag*, *Der Berliner Lokal Anzeiger*, and the *Berliner Arbeitszeitung*. Each political party or society tendency had its own newspaper! Julian and Charlotte read these papers once every while, often before social events, and they met the editors.

Through these meetings they also learned to know the artists that tried to make of Berlin a hotbed of art. Julian began to buy paintings to decorate his apartment. Some of the artists from whom he bought work later became famous, so that the value of the works of art he bought augmented nicely.

In 1918 had been founded in Berlin the *Arbeitsrat for Kunst*. Its founders were artists who had already become famous, people such as Max Pechstein, Moriz Melzer, Georg Tappert and César Klein. These organised presentations in which they explained their newest views on the visual arts. The artists formed a very torn, revolutionary group, of which the members based their art of expressionism on the horrors of the past World War.

Max Pechstein was one of the founders also of the *Novembergruppe*, with César Klein. These too organised presentations, talks, about the modern German art forms. The members of this group came from different countries. The Lithuanian painter Issai Kulvianski was a member of the group, as was the Russian Elena Leisner, and the Rumanian Arthur Segal. Julian and Charlotte attended regularly the speeches of this group, and they bought some of their works. The artists sought new approaches to art, in tendencies that were called expressionism, cubism, non-figurative art, and Italian futurism. What Julian liked in these groups, was that they seemed not to have particular political objectives, though most but not all of the artists had leftist preferences. Julian too tried to remain as politically neutral as he could be. He admitted being interested in the politics of his country, but he consistently told he had no particular inkling for this or any other political party.

Of course, Julian and Charlotte met and spoke with Herwarth Walden. Walden was the founder, in 1912 already, of the Gallery called *Der Sturm*. This seemed to have been and it still was, the centre of modern art activism in Berlin. Through Walden, they met Russian artists that visited or stayed a while in Berlin, people such as Alexander Archipenko, El Lissitzky and Alexei Remizov. They met Wassily Kandinski and Gabriele Münter. With these artists, Berlin had truly become an international metropole.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June of 1919 was published in Berlin the Dada Manifest, and the magazine Dada got published. September of 1919 saw the publication of the Stormtrooper Lieutenant Ernst Jünger. His book was called *In Stahlgewittern*, In Tempests of Steel, a very gripping journal of the lieutenant's time as a warrior in the trenches of the war. Julian and Charlotte could read this book early, a copy given to them by Haim Vincius. The book made Charlotte

for the first time have a true, realistic insight in how terrible the battles between the Allies and the Germans had raged.

Julian had a better witness to the horrors of the war. He indeed met each year at Easter his friend Otto von Chrapitz. Otto travelled to Berlin for the special occasion. He came always alone. He did not stay for more than a couple of days then, and always stayed at a hotel. He did meet Charlotte Baraine once. The first time he set eyes on her, and heard her speak German with the adorable French accent, he had remained standing with open mouth. Then, he had exclaimed, ‘you bastard! You told me you had a woman and a child. You were sleeping already in Longwy with this beauty, without telling me you were serious about the affair! You were right, of course. I don’t blame you.’

Otto had then turned to Charlotte, ‘Madame, I kiss your hand. You are a wonderful, bright rose in this dark land. I must admit, Julian knows how to choose!’

Otto never stayed for long in Berlin, each time, and that time had generally been spent only on recalling war memories better not heard by a woman. By some magic, both Otto and Julian held on to the habit of seeing each other once a year, though no longer specifically at Easter.

Julian and Charlotte thus blended in quite rapidly with the society of Berlin. They had friends in Berlin, now, such a David and Rosa Vincius-Kalpern and often went out with them. Charlotte and Rosa agreed well with each other. Rosa explained to Charlotte who the people were they met, what they did, and how important they could be in the bourgeois circles of the town.

## The Years of Worries. 1922-1927

The Republic of Austria had been proclaimed in 1918. In April of 1919, Emperor Karl I of Austria had been formally dethroned by the Austrian Parliament and exiled to Switzerland. Charles spent the remaining years of his life trying to restore the monarchy. He made two attempts to reclaim the Hungarian throne in 1921. Both failed, due to a lack of support from Hungary's regent. Karl was exiled for a second time to the Portuguese island of Madeira. He soon fell ill there, and died of respiratory failure in April 1922, at the still young age of 34. He was a devout Catholic. Julian Vincius had much respect for the young, former emperor.

In the Rapallo Agreement of 1922, initiated by the industrialist Walter Rathenau, who was then briefly Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic, Germany and Soviet Russia abandoned all demands of financial nature for the last war. They announced a tighter economic collaboration. Great Britain and France were everything but pleased with this independent convention between Germany and Communist Russia.

In January of 1923, as the German Republic could no longer pay the war reparation credits, French and Belgian troops entered Germany and occupied the Ruhr region, the industrial heart of Germany. Great Britain considered the occupation illegal.

The government of Germany reacted with an attitude of so-called 'passive resistance'.

To break through this stagnation of the German economy, the new government led by Gustav Stresemann, used a large coalition of German political parties to rule: the SPD, the DDP, the Centre Party and the DVP.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1923, Stresemann ended the attitude of passive resistance. He called for more responsibility in politics. When the government ended an alternative government coalition of the SPD and the KPD in Saxony-Thüringen, and left an anti-republican uprising in Bavaria without reaction, the SPD provoked the Stresemann government to fall. Stresemann lost a vote of confidence in the *Reichstag*. President Friedrich Ebert reacted with anger against this SPD attitude.

The occupation of the Ruhr region had terrifying consequences for the financial system of Germany. It marked the beginning of a period of hyper-inflation, that reached heights of complete madness. When the French and Belgian soldiers began to occupy the Ruhr, one USA Dollar stood at 10,000 Marks. In the summer of 1923, the Dollar had risen to 100,000 Mark, and in the autumn of that year the Dollar was worth 100 million Mark! A letter stamp cost several millions of Marks! When workers got paid, they rushed immediately to shops to buy goods. On certain days, the Dollar rose on the exchange of Berlin at a rate of 613,000 Mark per second. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1923, the first German banknote of 1 billion Marks came into circulation in Berlin!

By mid-November of 1923, the government ended the madness. It stabilised the value of the Dollar at 4,200 million paper mark. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1923, it introduced a new monetary system based on the now called *Rentenmark*. This *Rentenmark* was fixed as one billionth of the previous Mark.

The Rentenmark was covered by 4% of the *Grundschild*, the entire German patrimony of lands, forests and industry.

Until the end of 1922, Julian Vincius lived with his family in total happiness in the centre of Berlin. The years of 1921 and 1922 were of their most blissful ever. Julian loved his wife, cherished her more and more, admired her, would have walked through fire for her, while she gave him the quiet felicity he had always dreamed of. Julian was certain pure happiness had finally become his fate. Julian worked hard at the *Charité*. He was sad, though not discouraged, not to stumble upon the miracle remedy that could defeat the affliction of tuberculosis. He should not have despaired. The hospitals and the doctors that could boast of better results in healing the patients better than he, simply did not exist in the entire world. Julian only now found it a little depressing to have entered a period of routine, in which he was unable to discover new and yet more efficient means to combat the scourge he would probably work upon his entire life. He challenged the illness, but did not succeed in beating it totally. In his private practice, the number of his wealthy patients rose constantly. This allowed him to live very well, and to build up a small fortune.

When the Belgian and French armies had suddenly entered the Ruhr basin, the German Mark entered a period of hyper-inflation. Julian then and often almost could have wept of despair. Not only was the economy of Germany being destroyed. The number of unemployed people rose spectacularly and with it the poverty in Berlin. That was also a disaster for the *Charité* Hospitals, as their income fell. The hospitals did not refuse patients. Large efforts were consented by the management of the hospitals to fight drunkenness and the consumption of all sorts of cheap drugs.

During the year 1923 entirely, Doctor Julian Vincius struggled to save what could be saved, in his home finances and at the *Charité*. Having to think and worry about his work at the hospital and about how to cope in his personal finances while the galloping inflation was on, seemed often too much for Julian Vincius' nerves. He felt the emotional energy he had accumulated the last years flow through his fingers as swiftly as water. The only thing he could think of was how to survive, and hide to Charlotte how desperate the situation might get. When he got paid at the *Charité*, he would run immediately to his usual bank, to instantly buy gold coins with his salary: golden French Francs, golden British Pounds, golden Swiss Francs, and even golden American Dollars.

The inflation took, enormous proportions per day. Julian lost much money, the fruit of his long-time efforts, in the financial catastrophe. But he would have lost much more had he not acted thus and kept to his German Marks.

When the Weimar Government introduced the *Rentenmark*, and when this seemed to stabilise the mint, he could have cried out of joy. He could breathe again. In the meantime, he had asked his private and wealthier patients, most of whom were not Germans, to pay him in their own currency. Julian recuperated even Russian Roubles from the personnel of the Russian embassy in Berlin. With those coins too, he bought gold and hid that in his deposit at the bank. He kept little gold in his home.

The German Mark slowly stabilised. Even in the long months past the catastrophe of the year 1923, he continued to get rid of his Marks. This seemed to him as something of a betrayal, but it was only acting this way he avoided bankruptcy and poverty.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1923 took place in Munich an attempt of a political coup. It was called the *Bräuhaus Putsch*, the brewery coup. The coup did not succeed and one of its then

leaders, Adolf Hitler, was thrown in a Munich jail. The NSDAP got interdicted. The interdiction was withdrawn a year later, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1924.

After some time, France, Great Britain and foremost the political leaders of the USA, understood they had gone too far in their financial demands on the defeated Germany. The Americans and the British worked together on a new plan for the payments of the War Guilt. The plan was worked out by a committee headed by the American financier Charles G. Dawes. Its aim was to successfully resolve the issue of the War Guilt payments. The plan proposed an end to the Allied occupation and a staggered payment plan for the war reparations. Dawes shared the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in 1925.

The main issue with the Dawes Plan was that it was an interim measure, which in the end also proved unworkable. Germany would have to pay the yearly sum of 1 billion gold mark until 1928-1929, and later 2.5 billion. The payments could not but prove a risk for the stabilised mark. The creditors received as guarantee parts of the German resources, such as the revenue from the railway system. The *Reichsbank* was placed under international control. As a starting capital, Germany could loan a huge amount of gold Marks in foreign values. This sum could be used to stabilise the Mark. The scheme seemed to work!

The German Mark stabilised slowly from 1924 to 1928. Thanks to the American Plan, Germany could recover from the crisis. The quota for the war payments could be paid, and the situation remained under control. The Dawes Plan of 1924 pre-supposed the Allies had all interest in helping to stabilise the German economy, in order to get paid. Foreign investments flooded into Germany. The German manufactories could modernise, and production rose. This not only stabilised the currency. It also eased the political climate.

The end of the Ruhr occupation on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1925, when the Belgian and French troops left, resulted in a victory for the German steel industry. Germany could reduce the supplies of coal to France, which was dependent on German coal. German industrialists managed to surpass France's steel industry, while getting their own rebuilt. By 1926, the German steel industry was dominant in Europe and this dominance only increased further on!

As the German economy suddenly began to flourish anew, in December of 1924 the radical parties rather lost the elections. The republican centre won! The DNVP became the largest government party.

In 1925 died Friedrich Ebert, the first president of the Weimar Republic. The *Reichstag* chose as his successor the General Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg! This could be seen as a defeat of the republican forces in Germany.

In that same year of 1925, Gustav Stresemann, dominating the 1920s by his international work, recognised the Allied plans for the modified frontiers in Western Europe. He did not commit to the plans for the borders in the east, however. In July of 1925, the last French troops left their occupation of the Ruhr region. The Foreign Ministers of Germany, Stresemann, and Briand for France, expressed their hopes for future good understanding. For their work and friendship, in 1926, Stresemann and Briand received the Nobel Prize for peace. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September of 1926, Germany was officially accepted to the League of Nations. Stresemann died in October of 1929.

The Pact of Locarno, negotiated from October to December 1925, guaranteed the German frontiers. Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain and Italy guaranteed the French-German-

Belgian borders in this pact. Issues would be solved by international arbitration. The Rhineland would remain demilitarised. In case of real attacks, the states would intervene with military means. The pact of Locarno also contained a similar guarantee between Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In case one of those countries were attacked or threatened, France would intervene with military force. Great Britain refused to bind itself concerning the German borders in the east. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1926, the Germans and the Soviet Russians even signed a Germano-Soviet Russian Friendship Treaty, called the Treaty of Berlin!

In 1926, the German judges and courts ordained not to take into custody any longer the capital of the former governing princes. They ordered to give the money back to these princes. At about the same time, Colonel-General von Seeckt, the current head of the army, invited the crown prince to manoeuvres of the army. The government immediately dismissed von Seeckt. The act remained an example of the sympathy still reigning in the Army for the glory of the Hohenzollern. Moreover, the growing cooperation between the new *Reichswehr* and the Russian Red Army became public. The government fell.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of 1927, the *Charité* Hospital had existed for exactly 200 years. The founder had been the Soldier-King Frederick Wilhelm I. In fact, the *Charité* had already feasted its 200-year jubilee. It did that in 1910, as the building in which the hospital had originally been housed, dated from 1710. The hospital proper, however, had only begun healing on an official basis in that building in 1727.

In industry, the social reforms continued. In July of 1927, a new law was voted upon for the *Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung*, the social provisions for the unemployed. Each employed worker obtained rights on financial support when out of work. The German *Sozialstaat*, the social state, thus continued being built. The law helped the about 800,000 unemployed workers of Germany to get access to social security.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1927, after several violent fights in the streets of Berlin, the Weimar Republic's government interdicted the NSDAP party in Berlin.

By the end of the year 1926, Julian Vincius sought to place his savings in something that might rise in value with time. He wanted to buy a large stretch of wood with view on a lake near Berlin. Buying land in Berlin was expensive. He had thought at first to buy along one of the lakes on the western side of the city, near the Wannsee perhaps. But then, one evening, at a dinner organised by the city of Berlin, he sat in the Hotel Adlon's restaurant next to the proprietor of the shops of ladies' coats preferred by his wife, Charlotte.

Charlotte wore some of the finest dresses of Berlin. She had found the best coats shop in town, no doubt advised to her by one of her now already many lady friends. Julian had never told Charlotte how hard he too had been hit by the hyper-inflation. He wanted to offer her a life without worries, and had by that time had largely succeeded in that. Charlotte liked to dress finely. Julian encouraged her to dress well, knowing also she wouldn't spend fortunes on clothes.

Charlotte had met Hermann Bamberg at one of his shops. Bamberg had bought a castle on a lake on the east side of Berlin. Bamberg was quite rich, and a Jew.

Julian understood then why the organisers had placed him near this Bamberg. He sat here, because not simply his wife was thrilled to be seated at the table of the Bamberg Family. He,

Julian Vincius, was still considered a Jew in Berlin, even though the faith he vowed to was the Evangelic Christian one. It didn't really bother him to know he was still considered at least half a Jew.

The man Bamberg spoke of the wonderful sights around his castle. Bamberg also told Julian his son wanted to study medicines. When Julian confessed he was looking for a terrain to build on, Herr Bamberg looked at him with curiosity, remained silent for a while, and then proposed him to buy on Lake Storkow, on the *Storkower See*. That was the lake on which his castle stood. Bamberg told one could buy woodland there, ideal for a villa with view on the quiet *Storkower See*. The site was called *Hubertushöhe*, and it was relatively easy to drive from the centre of Berlin direction the small town of Storkow, or to take the train to the lake. There was a train station nearby, straight on a railroad that ran directly from the centre of Berlin! The site *Hubertushöhe* had its own railroad station, equally called *Hubertushöhe*! The lake was very quiet, ideal to sail on. As it lay to the east of Berlin, few people came there to bathe and seek entertainment.

'Most people nowadays want to go west, not east,' Bamberg laughed. 'The Berliners have not yet discovered the beautiful lake and woods of Storkow!'

Bamberg promised to send to the by then already well-known Doctor Vincius information by courier. Julian thanked the man. Julian did receive the information. A few days later, he went by car with Ernst to scout the region for himself. He came back to his wife full of enthusiasm. The site was splendid! Not far from the castle, near the *Robert Koch Strasse*, he could buy a piece of land with a wonderful view on the lake. That name charmed Julian Vincius probably even more. Was Robert Koch, the discoverer of the tuberculosis bacteria, not his example of old as a doctor and researcher? Could this be a sign of the Gods and not merely be a pure chance? He didn't hesitate anymore! Nearby, Storkow was a nice, clean, quiet little town. It lay about 15 kilometres southwest of the larger town of Fürstenwalde. It was one of the oldest towns of Brandenburg. Storkow was growing to about 7,000 inhabitants in all.

Later still, the Vincius were invited to visit the castle of the Bamberg Family. The son of Hermann Bamberg indeed studied medicines, and would become a well-known paediatrician, a children's doctor of Berlin. When his father died, he continued to live in Castle *Hubertushöhe*. And he became a friend as well as a neighbour of the Vincius. Julian described to him from where his own family originated.

Julian cleared a part of the wood near the lake, as little as he needed, and started to build his second home. He only built a large villa, a boathouse and a house for his driver. This was the place he could escape to henceforth, when he wanted to flee from the overcrowded city. He built slowly, as money came in. It took him a year-and-a-half to finish the building. With time, he bought a sailing boat and loved sailing on the lake. The site was called *Hubertushöhe* too, so his family used that name too when they talked of their villa in the woods and at the lake.

The Vincius continued to take an interest in the arts and the literature of their times. In 1922, the *Novembergruppe* opened its organisation to writers and composers. More avant-garde artists gathered in the group. Julian and Charlotte met Georges Braque and Fernand Léger, Cubist painters both. They met Marc Chagall, who was in fact the Jew Moshe Shegall, a Jewish artist from Vitebsk in the Pale. Shegall had fled from Vitebsk, a large and mainly

Jewish town of White Russia. Chagall had escaped the difficult atmosphere of the Jews in the Pale Settlement Areas, since long under Russian governance. He had settled in France and adopted a French-sounding artist's name.

The Vincius saw and heard speak Ivan Puni and Theo van Duisburg. They discussed many facets of the avant-garde art in Europe. In 1924, they heard of the founding of the *Rote Gruppe* in Berlin, an association of Communist artists, such as George Grosz and John Heartfield.

They also heard in April of 1925 of the move of the *Bauhaus* Art School and its organisation to Dessau, made urgent by the hostility of the right-wing political groups of the city of Berlin. That happened not so long after the death of the first president of the Weimar Republic, Friedrich Ebert, who died in February of that year. The Russian revolutionary Bolshevik leader Lenin died in January of 1924.

In July of 1926, the Vincius heard of the founding of the association of architects called *Der Ring*, led mainly by Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who had also worked at the original *Bauhaus*. Julian and Charlotte had been present at the opening of the first *Bauhaus* Exhibition, staged in August of 1923. In October of that year, they read about the inauguration of the new airport of Tempelhof in Berlin. They were glad not to have bought a house near the airports of Berlin, however grand and splendid they found the half circle of the Tempelhof Airport buildings.

Julian Vincius had read in the Berlin newspapers of the clashes between the paramilitary groups in Berlin, especially of the brutal ways of the nationalist right-wing patrols. For the first time, he saw a small group of the *Sturmabteilung*, the SA, the brown-shirt stormtroopers associated to the NSDAP party. They marched in closed ranks, stiff and very proudly, challenging the bystanders. Julian did not worry much about these groups. He found they were dangerous for the violence they could deploy. They had better be avoided than admired. Such groups, though consisting of only a few hundreds of young men, had been banned already a few times in Berlin, as in the rest of Brandenburg and in Bavaria, from where they seemed to have originated, from Munich. Their party never reached more than one percent or 2 percent of the votes for the *Reichstag*. The Weimar republic's government and the *Reichswehr* knew how to keep them tightly under control.

Julian saw for the first time the *Sturmabteilung* or SA-men marching in formation in the streets of Berlin. He found them rather ridiculous. The men marched in brown shirts and dark pants, in boots, with their swastika symbols on flags and on armbands. Who did they think they were? They used an ancient Indian sun-symbol as their emblem! Had these people, these youngsters, suddenly all become sun-adorers? Did they think they were the incarnation of the Teutonic Knights? Why then a sun-symbol, the hooked cross on a white circle over a field of blood red. Did they believe in any old religion of India? Who could react otherwise but laughing out loud at how ridiculous these boys were, wearing such old Indian signs without any further basis of religion or ideology? The SA groups could only appeal to over-romantic youths, who still nurtured feelings of medieval chivalry, totally outdated in these modern, industrial times. How had such preposterous feelings still survived in Germany? These guys were simply crazy! The Berlin common people called them '*die Hakenkreuzlern*', the ones with the hooked crosses. Hooked their minds certainly were.

Julian Vincius was of the opinion these groups had better be outlawed in Berlin and Germany, and that was that. In March of 1927, he heard for the first time of violent street

battles between the Communist groups and the nationalist paramilitary gangs. He was truly not very interested in these groups and in their activities, thought their development would quickly die out. He wished all these groups to be disbanded by governmental decree and banned from Germany. As they apparently sought some form of revenge from the defeat in the war, Julian tried to shield Charlotte from the idea of their mere existence.

In those years, when his financial fortune was founded, Julian Vincius and his beautiful, faithful wife Charlotte Baraine sometimes dined and stayed in the chic Hotel Adlon on the *Pariser Platz*, the Paris Square, near the *Brandenburger Tor*. The Adlon stood not very far from the Vincius home in the *Landgrafenstrasse*. The chef at the Adlon restaurant was French, which pleased Charlotte extraordinarily. Here, she was sure to eat the better dishes of French culinary tradition. The rooms of the hotel offered her unheard-of luxury, central heating, hot baths in all seasons, attention of the personnel that made you believe you were a princess or a duchess. The Vincius met the hotel owner, Lorenz Adlon, whose devise was so nicely French: ‘Adlon oblige’! As of 1921, the successor to the old Lorenz had been Louis Adlon. Charlotte and Julian danced in the Adlon. Julian was excessively proud for being able to offer his love and appreciation to his wife. Charlotte seemed happier than ever in his arms in the Adlon. Julian indulged her thus in her sense of luxury. The Adlon became their heaven, where they could forget for an evening, a night, all worries of the world. And, of course, they met the potential customers Julian sought to win as his clientele.

## The Crisis Years. 1928-1930

The new elections of 1928 brought for the last time some respite for the Weimar Republic, as the large SPD once more entered the government. The government could handle the dangerous and violent strikes in the autumn of 1928 in the iron industry of Rhineland-Westphalia, but once more the number of men out of work grew. The industry demanded lower taxes to support the enterprises.

In 1929, the Young plan replaced the Dawes Plan. The Young Plan, named after the other American financier Owen D. Young, demanded new mechanisms to pay the War Guilt, which Germany, due to the new crisis in the world economy and with a once more ailing German economy, could no longer support.

A definite amount as War Guilt was agreed upon. Germany would have to pay in total only 112 billion gold mark in 58 years, the equivalent of about 27 billion Dollars in 1929. Later, this amount was reduced to 3 billion gold Marks per year, or 473 million American Dollars of 1929, to be paid into two components: one unconditional part, equal to one third of the sum, and a postponable part, equal to the remaining two-thirds, which would incur interest and be financed by a consortium of American investment banks coordinated by J.P. Morgan & Co. Even that amount was never fully paid! The Young Plan was signed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1929. Many protests rose in Germany against this Young Plan. The conservative parties and groups were most outspoken against the plan. One of the parties that joined the coalition was the NSDAP under Adolf Hitler. Their protests led to not much.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1929, the New York Exchange crashed, on Black Friday, leading to the largest economic crisis the modern world ever experienced.

By 1929, Germany was well on its way to the stabilisation of its economy, its politics and its finances. All of this was destroyed by the worldwide financial crisis of 1929-1930. The political parties once more radicalised in confrontation with each other. In the political arena, the most extreme parties blocked a democratically, naturally formed majority in the *Reichstag*. Several parties fractioned and lost so many votes in the elections, they practically disappeared from representation in the *Reichstag*. A new Centre Party government under Heinrich Brüning became a government over the parties, not anymore a government of the parties. It was not supported by a parliamentary majority, yet continued to govern Germany. The system of Weimar was more and more thrown in discredit.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February of 1928, there were in Germany 3.2 million unemployed workers, and the number still rose! By the end of the year 1930, Germany would have the burden of 5 million unemployed, of which only half enjoyed rights to state financial support. The number of unemployed workers continued to rise.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, Berlin was the scene of protest manifestations. As the uprisings were repressed, many dead and wounded workers fell in the streets. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the *Rote Frontkämpferbund*, an association of Communist former front soldiers, was outlawed. The ensuing chaotic political feeling in the country made the voters lean to the KPD, the Communist Party, and to the NSDAP, the extreme right-wing party founded in 1924. The voters radicalised. Germany had reached a new stage of political radicalisation and polarisation. The Weimar Republic was running out of solutions to govern Germany in a stable way. Added to the inner German political blockage came the crash on the exchange of

New York, which introduced a worldwide financial and hence economic crisis. Foreign investors withdrew their credits from Germany. As investments dwindled, Germany sank in massive unemployment. The industrialists tried to diminish the salaries to gain in economic competitiveness. Poorer Germany went on strike.

With the economic and financial crisis came a political crisis. A last coalition under Hermann Müller to form a government, broke. The number of unemployed had risen by 80,000 men. The SPD left the government. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1930, Heinrich Brüning was chosen as the new chancellor, but he too was not supported by a parliamentary majority! When the *Reichstag* refused his radical program of financial diminution of state expenses, President von Hindenburg dissolved the *Reichstag*. Brüning hoped on securing a wider basis for his government. In comparison to the elections of 1928, however, the new elections of 1930 resembled a political earthquake.

The Communists of the KPD augmented their number of representatives by half to 77 and the NSDAP came from a mere 12 to 107! Because of this radicalisation of the *Reichstag*, the German parliament got entirely blocked, as the extreme parties' programs could not be reconciled. The most radical parties blocked all chance on a stable majority in the *Reichstag*! Germany entered an uneasy presidential system of government. As of the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1930, the Brüning Government ruled by decrees, by a series of *Notverordnungen*, based on the constitutional right of the president of Germany to edict urgency laws. This made the president independent of parliament, and led to a crisis of the state itself.

Von Hindenburg became the key political figure of Germany. Germany henceforth had a weak parliament and a strong president. Parliament got more and more excluded from the power in the country. There were still democratic elections, but these only strengthened the undemocratic parties in the *Reichstag*. Large groups of the population turned their back to the parliamentary form of state. They looked to an authoritarian solution for the social and political conflicts.

The economic result of the worldwide crisis was equally disastrous. The values of the German enterprises fell dramatically on the exchanges. The German banks could not execute further payments.

In this crisis, the extreme right-wing parties and groups formed in October of 1931 the *Harzburger Front*. This was a coalition of several political parties and influence groups of Germany. Members were the conservative German National People's Party (DNVP) under millionaire press-baron Alfred Hugenberg, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party (NSDAP), the leadership of the *Stahlhelm* veterans' association, the Agricultural League and the Pan-German League organizations. They asked for the dismissal of Brüning.

The *Stahlhelm* had been founded on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1918, as the *Bund der Frontsoldaten*, the organisation of the soldiers of the front.

The SPD continued to tolerate the Brüning government. As the crisis could not be mastered by the political parties, also President von Hindenburg talked of a new opening to the right-wing political parties.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> September of 1930, the NSDAP won the elections for the *Reichstag*, though gaining far from an absolute majority. Another era could begin for Germany.

The Vincius Family of Julian Vincius lived quietly in the three years of from 1928 to and included 1930. Julian grew his fortune modestly, as well as his fame of being one of the best doctors of general practice in the centre of Berlin. He still worked as a professor of the Berlin University in the *Charité* hospitals.

Doctor Julian Vincius also remarked as of the beginning of 1928 a new economic crisis had started in Germany. The crisis developed into a real catastrophe for the working people in 1929, and then augmented yet more dramatically after the crash of the New York Stock Exchange, and later still about everywhere in the world. Germany became the victim of multiple strikes, large ones and more local ones. The governments found it almost impossible to form parliamentary majorities, as to many parties fractioned the votes. And the parties reflected the confusion in the public opinion. Voting results got fractured by so many parties, each party could gather not more than 20% to 30% of the votes. The economy of Germany sank into disaster zone. Julian Vincius knew quite well the situation in Germany, but he had already long ago decided to not let himself be drawn up or bothered by politics. He pursued a noble cause being a doctor. He continued to cash in much money from his wealthier patients and from his status and work as a professor. He lived within the circle of his family. In 1930, he and his wife Charlotte still had three lovely children. These fulfilled him with happiness and joy, though as they grew up, worries grew with them. His children had strong characters of their own!

In 1930, Malou was a young woman of 13 years old. She had developed into a striking redhead, slim and quick, also in words, a little malignant of breed, and as lightheaded and fickle as a bird in the air. The boy Anton was 11, and his brother Maxim 10. The boys loved to sail on the Storkow Lake, with or without their father. They knew that if Julian did not allow them to sail on their own, they could always ask their so-called Uncle Ernst to take them out! Charlotte and Ernst's wife Eva, had become good friends.

For Julian, his second home on the lake was his haven of peace and rest. He tried to play the role of the always-angry father who was not to be disturbed by trifles, and who was a severe man. That did not work with Malou. It did with the boys, at least for the moment. Life passed slowly in the woods south of Storkow. Julian often lay in a long seat near the lake, and rested in the sun.

In the summer of 1928, Julian received another letter from a figure of his past. Otto von Chrapitz had survived the war. He was now 42 years old, for Julian's 43. He proposed to visit the Vincius of Berlin. He proposed a longer visit than their yearly Easter meetings. Julian wrote back, giving his addresses and telephone numbers, and proposing Otto to come to the *Landgrafenstrasse* first, but to stay, for as long as Otto and his family wished, at the villa on the *Storkower See*. Otto accepted in a return letter, announcing the days he could stay in Berlin.

The von Chrapitz did arrive a little later in Berlin, on a Sunday of August of 1928. Julian immediately drove the von Chrapitz to his villa near the lake. Julian's villa was large enough. He had visitors' rooms there to invite family and friends. The von Chrapitz would be the first to stay. They were four, Otto and his wife Elisabeth, and their two children, Johann of ten years old and a girl, Anna-Maria of nine. The children made friends with the Vincius youngsters, now with five to devise all sorts of surprises to their parents.

Julian was particularly interested in Elisabeth von Grabia. Otto had depicted her at first, long ago, at Longwy, as much of a non-entity. Elisabeth proved not only to be a tall blonde and blue-eyed elegant beauty, quite charming in her conversation and capable of warm, heartfelt remarks.

Otto and Elisabeth had evolved into a fusal couple. This, Julian could see. It had made of Elisabeth a shining, glowing personality. Love had been gained for these two, Julian concluded, as Julian had once proposed to Otto to consider. Otto now seemed to relish the relationship with his wife, respect and admire her. Otto was of Julian's age. Elisabeth was three years older. Their stay was quite agreeable. They too, all, went sailing together on the lake, or they sat in chairs on the lawn facing the eternal waters of the lake, in the shadows of the high trees, which could have been hundreds of years of age.

One evening, while Charlotte and Elisabeth chatted a little farther away, and then entered to prepare a light supper, Julian and Otto sat, sunken in their large chairs, facing the lake over which the sun sank behind them.

'So, what has become of you,' Julian wanted to know. Are you still involved in the *Reichswehr*?'

'No, not at all,' Otto von Chrapitz gave honestly and decidedly. 'I got demobilised like hundreds of thousands of others at the end of 1918. I returned to Thorn. Since then, I heard nothing of the Army. I understand, of course. I was a butcher in the last war, and of butchers even generals are afraid. They weigh on their conscience, I suppose. Anyway, I too had enough of the war after the armistice of 1918. I received an official letter with my resignation from the Army, one of those letters that must have been sent by the hundreds of thousands, and that was that. The generals obviously were relieved to get rid of me. I have my medals and my rank. I softened a lot. I was lucky.

You know what? I saw my wife as quite more beautiful and intelligent than I remembered, quite worth coming back to. I suppose I hadn't even looked well at her, with the right eyes when we departed and when I rode off to the army's battles. To make my shame short, I fell in love with her, and love hasn't left me ever since. We are but one, now, in our couple. So, what am I now? A loving husband, a father, a manager of a large domain in Prussia. We have recuperated more than half of the ancient von Chrapitz Domain, minus the castle, as well as a quarter of the much larger former domain of the von Grabia. We live in an old manor of the von Grabia, which we transformed into almost a palace. Managing the domains takes most of my time, even though we both work at it. Elisabeth is amazingly intelligent and practical! She is a genius in finance. Did you know that? I didn't! I do now.

So, we work together, quiet agreeably. We live nicely in the quietness of our woods and fields, hidden from the rest of civilisation, and not regretting that. We are getting richer than we were before the war, though it is a constant struggle to make money out of our domain. We initiate new projects all the time to grow our fortune. We have even set up an industrial terrain nearest to Thorn. We own a distillery there, a tobacco factory, a wood transformation factory, a water mill, and even a porcelain factory. Other investors have joined us. We have about a dozen factories installed on our lands. Our porcelain factory does not turn out Meissen quality, just ordinary stuff, but we have a couple of fine painters to make our porcelain more beautiful. We are doing very well.

Also, Julian, I have no mistresses! Now, who would have thought that possible? I don't feel the need, nor even the taste for mistresses. I have Elisabeth. I am quite satisfied with her.

Who would have thought God would have provided me with such calm happiness, after all I did in the war? In the beginning, I was still restless, of course. Already after a few months with Elisabeth, I was changing drastically. I suppose my deep hidden true nature emerged.’ ‘The same for me,’ Julian laughed.

They touched their glasses as old conspirators. They were drinking old French Cognac. ‘I am a doctor in Berlin, and a professor at the *Charité* University hospitals. I work hard, but feel my work to be rewarding. I have many patients, also in my private practice. I am doing well.’

‘I can see that,’ Otto smiled, making a wide gesture with his hand over the lake. ‘I definitely should dig me out a small lake near our manor. How do the people of Berlin feel about the past war?’

Lakes and grass and woods were not really in top of Otto’s mind, Julian noticed. At least, when Otto came to visit the capital, he was still thinking of his years of war again.

Julian answered, ‘you can find as many opinions as there are people living in the city, Otto. The opinions get reflected in the political parties, which are so manifold nobody still knows how to bring together a consistent, stable government.

The old aristocracy and the wealthy middle-class cry after their former emperor. They would like to have the former empire back in power, and with it, absolutism as regime. After all, the emperor had the same ideas as they had. When you come to think of the result of that reign, the millions of young men rotting in the earth from Verdun to the Atlantic Coast, one might really wonder what a kind of magnificent era the time of the empire really and actually brought us.

The wealthy form right-wing and extreme right-wing groups. They have in common they are anti-Communist, understandably, for another kind of dictatorship, and they are ferociously anti-Jewish. You can add a few Evangelic Liberals, remnants also from ideologies of long ago. There is a Catholic middle-class. These have docile, believing followers, most of them Bavarians.

The working class wanted an end to the war, and the end of the exploitation of the poor by the rich. These have not enough guts to call for armed revolution to end the dominance of the wealthy, and God be thanked for that. The Reichswehr is strong and would make very many victims in a clash with strikers. At least, the Socialists are actually conservatives too.

The true Communists are practically the only ones radically opposed to the war. Few Germans still have illusions about that subject. So, the Communists actually are few, and so extreme in their theories on economy and finance nobody would want to hand them power in Germany. They would destroy the country in the time it takes us to recite a poem, as quickly as the Bolsheviks ruined Russia. The *Spartacus Group* has practically ended with the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, already quite some years ago.

And then, there are splinter groups of all those main directions! The confusion is terrible. There is even a party on the extreme right that calls itself Socialist too! They are nationalists, of course, and outright fascist, as they do not want power for the people but for their leaders, which means they simply formed an oligarchy, and derive into a fascist dictatorship. What they actually are after, I do not understand. There is that book, called *Mein Kampf*, my Battle, of that Austrian fellow gesticulating and crying in Munich, one Adolf Hitler, who utters the largest amount of nonsense of all. He is a pure nationalist, a fascist, one who seeks dictatorship in his party and in Germany, and his credo is a strange error of an economic

theory saying that any country must be large enough to sustain its population. Of course, Germany is too small a territory for its number of people, so she should be out for expansionism, according to Hitler.

Any expansionism, of course, must mean a war with our neighbours, when we tread on their feet. But that seems to be no issue for this man and his followers. He is asking for new wars! Can you believe that? It is of the utter meanest nonsense I ever read. His party does have a following in Berlin, of mainly very young, very muscled young men with hard knuckles and mean faces, assembled in a few hundreds to a paramilitary group called the SA, the *Sturmabteilung*. They are so young! They march around, proudly, in brown shirts and black boots all, some kind of uniform, and wearing flags, on which is printed in a white circle, and yellow background, some Aryan sun-symbol in black. They call it the Swastika.

They are fanatical idolisers, usually stark drunk when they march, and they are very, very brutal and aggressive, and totally ridiculous. Their idol is that man Hitler, who must be something of a demagogue and a man who knows utmost well how to excite the masses.

Well, masses ... His party is called the NSDAP, the *National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*. You cannot but have heard of them. They are the extreme right. They try to bring all nationalists under their banner. They are dangerous men, for they do not hesitate knocking down anybody who doesn't agree with their view of things. They pretend to incarnate the law, the constitution, only they. They would as easily burn the constitution as all the effigies of the past. They take example on that infamous Italian nutcracker Mussolini, who calls himself a fascist, whereas he is melancholically looking back to the ancient Roman emperors and dictators. Can you believe it? And I could go on!

One thing is common to all such opinions: nobody is left to tell the rubble what two and two makes. We lack true leaders in Germany, so much is sure. On the other hand, nobody could lead the assembly of differing opinions in Berlin!

What is truly dangerous, Otto, is that out of the cacophony, out of the confusion, could rise one man who might speak so well and who would literally beat everyone down by brutal force, so that all the noses suddenly get pointed in his direction. The diversity of opinions is bad. But all Germans believing in one extreme war-like opinion can be really worse. Isn't it laughable and sad? Poor Germany! The Emperor Wilhelm is cutting wood in the Netherlands, Von Hindenburg is too old to lead, Ludendorff got defeated and made too many mistakes. Bismarck and the old von Moltke are in their graves. Poor Germany!

'It is not a fine picture you draw there, Julian. Is there then no hope for our country?' Otto remarked.

'Oh, hope there is, always! Even our art is torn and dark,' Julian continued in the same tone. 'The artists' subjects are representing the horrors of the war and of our current, confused society that has ended believing in any ideals and values whatsoever, and certainly in any figure of God. Where was God in the trenches, they ask. Where was the merciful God when millions of men got smashed to pulp by cannon shells? When people burned inside from poison gas, or when they cried out being burned by flamethrowers? Where was the eternal goodness then? God does not exist, they conclude. God died in the war! We are alone. We can do what we want. Was the war not proof enough? The insanity shows in all the pictures of our greatest artists, made by Grosz, Dix, Kokoschka and so many other.'

'I gave you a dark confession once, in France, Julian. You present me with a far darker view of things, here!'

‘Right, absolutely right! The Weimar Republic, our great hope of after the war, has also turned into a constant nightmare. The best one can do is to work, earn money, live in some ease, eat well, sleep well, have sex with one’s wife, dig one’s own garden, and keep one’s mouth. And that is what I do. I say, Otto, prepare your reserves, look out for a way to escape out of Germany. Something must arise out of the current confusion! Something will rise out of the chaos. What it is going to be, I have no idea.

So, what is Berlin? I would say, a place where depressed people live, people without ideals and values, all old ideals and values regarded as vile and as so many illusions. The people are very nationalistic, filled with deep resentment and hatred against the former Allies around us. They cannot feel pride for contemporary Germany! They blame the first culprit they can find for their own stupidity of 14-18, the Jews, for all the bad things happening to them then and now. The human mind always looks for simple solutions first! The people cannot cope with the complexity of this, our modern world. So, they simplify. Where is the guilty one? Berlin believes in nothing, but wants to believe in everything. It certainly believes not in any form of justice, of solidarity, of love of others. Berliners are looking out for someone who says what is right, presenting someone who can be blamed, and then force everybody to march in the same direction. Who would not be disappointed, wild, vengeful, wanting once more to grab to arms? There is much violence and fighting in our streets, Otto. You’d better remain in your Domain Grabia and Chrapitz near Thorn and make everybody forget your manor even still exists. Hide, dig in, protect what you have, and prepare for the next conflagration! Then, leave as quickly as you can. Don’t wait one day!’

Otto remained silent. He sighed. He leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes. He presented a cigar to Julian, who refused. Julian filled their glasses once more.

Then, he said in a small, low voice, ‘Dorothea is in Berlin you know. She works in the same hospital buildings as you. She manages an army of nurses, I heard. She seems to have broken with her husband and with the rest of her family. I don’t think I’ll try to talk to her. Let bygones be bygones. Nothing good can come of me, Otto, trying to talk to her. You?’

Julian looked up, quite surprised.

‘I didn’t know she actually worked at the *Charité*,’ he told Otto. ‘But then, I haven’t looked out for her, particularly and lately. I have Charlotte. I have the children. I have my work. I have my research. We are doing fine, together. I may try to see Dorothea, but then, I too don’t know what good can come out of that. I don’t know. I have to think. Frankly, at the moment, I lack the interest entirely. I don’t have the courage to seek her out. There are the children. Charlotte and I, we hate leaving them alone in Berlin, even with Ernst and his wife caring for them.’

Elisabeth von Grabia and Charlotte joined them. They came to stand around them, drew seats nearer. The conversation of Otto and Julian turned to more joyous items.

The following days, Otto and Julian had the occasion to talk more about their family, though both did not envisage throwing themselves into the life of the larger family again.

Otto von Chrapitz and his family remained almost two weeks in Berlin and Storkow. Then, they returned to Thorn by train. Julian and Charlotte promised to travel to Thorn soon, which they never did, as the events in Germany condensed quickly and took their full attention.

Julian Vincius had been intrigued by Otto's announcement of Dora being in Berlin and working at the *Charité*. The *Charité* consisted of so many departments and buildings, it was quite possible for them never to have seen one another. Also, Julian almost never left his labs and barracks, and he arrived and returned home by car. Julian hesitated for a long time to look for Dora Gomol in the *Charité*. He did that only in a bout of unjustified loneliness in the beginning of 1928, in the middle of a harsh winter.

Julian Vincius could no longer restrain his curiosity. He asked around for the name of Dorothea Gomolenski among the doctors and nurses of other departments. He found her as the head nurse and doctor of the Chirurgical Hospital. She was the *Oberschwester* Dorothea von Gomolenski. She had once more taken on her full Prussian name of the nobility. Julian hesitated. One afternoon, he made for the buildings of the Chirurgical Hospital and asked where her office was. Yes, Dora had an office of her own, but the door - as he later learned - was always open, nurses hurrying in and out for orders, advise, or aid. The receptionist at the Chirurgical Hospital told Julian where her office was.

A little later, Julian remained standing in the door opening, while two nurses were discussing with her, talking loudly and adding to their words with movements of arms and hands. Dora stood with her back to him. Julian had come, dressed in his white doctor's uniform. The two nurses noticed him, recognised him as another doctor of the *Charité*, and at first ignored him. Julian had the time. He waited patiently. After a short while, the two nurses stopped talking. Maybe they had finished. They looked at Julian, a question in their eyes. Julian just stood there, smiling. Dora turned.

Dorothea drew her right hand to her mouth to hide her embarrassment, but exclaimed an unmistakable, 'Ach du, Lieber Gott! Da bist du ja!' for dear God, there you are!

Dora had to grab the seat behind her desk and sit. Julian entered. The two nurses looked at him in astonishment. He had made a strange effect on their boss. Julian smiled and came forward. Dora got back up from the chair behind her office desk, came forward too, and embraced Julian. She was on the verge of weeping heavy tears in his arms. They remained standing thus, her arms around him, holding him tightly. She didn't get out of the embrace. He held her. He hadn't expected such a reaction.

Dorothea was crying on his shoulder. After a long while, she seemed to pull herself together, remembering the two nurses were still in her office. She pulled away from the embrace, as by then Julian also had his arms around her. They looked at each other. The two nurses fled out of her office.

'Good God, is that really you, Julian?'

'Of course,' Julian answered softly, also visibly touched by the strong emotion of the moment. 'Have I changed that much?'

'No, no, you haven't, though now you look really like a professor. You are the same, not tall, well-built, like you already were in Freiburg. Balding already. Your French wife fed you well. You are somewhat thicker in the belly. But you look splendid! Sit down! How did you find out about me?'

'Well, I don't look over the lists of hospital personnel. I should have. No, I didn't know you were here. Otto von Chrapitz told me you were here, in Berlin, and at the *Charité*! I had not looked for your name in the lists before. Yet, here you are!'

‘Ah. Otto!’

Her eyes darkened.

She nevertheless continued, ‘yes, it is ! I have been working at the *Charité* for quite some years, now. I knew you worked here, too. In fact, I knew that since my later Freiburg years. And then you went to the war. I also heard you came back. But I didn’t want to bother you. You came back from the war with a wife and child. I heard you got married to a splendid French woman.’

‘Indeed!’ Julian nodded. ‘I married the daughter of the former mayor of the town of Longwy, who provided me with rooms during the war. He helped me setting up the *lazarettes* around Longwy for the battles of Verdun. I stayed in Longwy during the entire war. I married Charlotte Baraine. We have three children. We live in a house of the *Landgrafenstrasse*. We have a villa near Storkow. How have you been all these years?’

She sat again. Dora grabbed for her cigarettes. Julian went to a chair on the other side. Julian was sure nobody here, in the hospital, allowed smoking in the hospital. But this was her office. Her fingers trembled when she lit her cigarette from a golden lighter. She pushed the cigarettes to him, but he shook his head.

‘I don’t smoke anymore, Dora,’ he added.

‘Good!’ she gave back, ‘I didn’t either, really. But you came in as a total surprise. I thought you knew about me working here, but you never came to see me.’

‘No, I didn’t know you worked here. Otto told me a long time ago, many years ago, you were in Berlin. I hadn’t expected you here. I also didn’t very much believe him, then. You are married too, I believe.’

‘Yes and no. I did marry an old man, wanting to settle and forget. I married the very rich Albrecht von Papau, right before the war, in 1913, but that marriage was a mistake, an idiotic idea of mine, and Albrecht a cruel man. It did work for a while, until I learned to know him. That took no more than a few months. Then, the marriage didn’t work anymore. We are not divorced. That would hurt his image. We live our lives separately. I haven’t returned to Thorn over the years.’

‘Neither have I,’ Julian agreed.

They continued to look greedily at each other, studying each other’s faces, trying to find out whether the old passion was still there.

In this year of 1928, ten years after the end of the war, Dorothea was 41 years old. The years showed on her face. She had more wrinkles around her eyes than he remembered, and also around her mouth. Her cheeks were more sunken for her age. She wore no trace of makeup. But she was still very attractive. The strain of work at the hospital showed on her face. But she glowed intelligence and knowing, and her eyes never left him. Under her nurses’ white uniform, no cap, Julian imagined her still fine body. She had worked hard, and not spared her figure.

Julian was 43 years old, and still as lean as before, though thickening at the waist, and balding. Charlotte’s fine cooking and the wine he drank almost daily at dinner was having its effect. He was balding young. He inspired no special charisma in anybody, though must have looked a little as the archetype of a professor, for people rapidly recognised him as such. In the streets and at dinners, he was a non-entity as a man, a civil-servant style earnest and stern

type, with his small, round glasses. He never wore a uniform of any kind. He was much a nobody. Charlotte was splendid. She was a real lady, of the old elegance of her class. Was Dora as elegant as Charlotte? He wondered, and thought not. Dora, compared to Charlotte, looked like a girl from the country, like a working woman – which she was.

Then slowly, Dora stood up from her chair. She pushed her almost unused cigarette in an ashtray on her desk, apparently thinking of something, saying nothing. She remained silent, and stood. She drank water from a glass. She stepped from behind her desk, came again up to Julian, to very close to him. He did not step back. She did not embrace him again, kept her hands behind her back, and then kissed him on his lips. He did not withdraw. He could have, at that moment, but let fate and Dora decide. He was too astonished to move. He kissed too. He should have drawn back, but he couldn't. He had been touched. He put one arm behind her back to support her, and then kissed her hard. She curved her back, and they held the kiss. The kiss became ever more passionate, until she stood with her back to her desk, entirely curved in his arm. Still kissing, she lay almost entirely with her back on her tabletop. His body was between his legs. They continued to kiss, as lovers do, teeth to teeth, tongues working frantically, his mouth almost entirely over her lips. They were both greedy. 'Not here,' Dora Gomol whispered. Julian did not let her be free.

Dorothea von Gomolenski lived in a house near the *Charité*, closer to the hospitals than Julian. Her bedroom was much smaller than his. Her bed was softer. Dora and Julian were lovers.

'You will not divorce from your Charlotte for me,' whispered Dora late in the evening. 'No. I gave an oath. Charlotte has helped me too much. I am linked to her too. Marriage means a lot to me. Passion binds us. You choose. I cannot and will not.'

'I could tell your Charlotte what you have been doing with me,' Dora challenged. 'Yes, you can do that. Would you?'

'I don't know. Three children against me is a formidable challenge. I think of the children.'

'The weight and the error is entirely on me. Not on you. I love Charlotte. I owe her a lot. Without her, I would have gone crazy in France. I love the children.'

'You would. We shall have to remain lovers, then. We shall have to live our lives separately, except for spare moments like this.'

'I do feel ashamed. We shall have to stay content with what we can get. As before. As at Freiburg. Will it work? I wonder. The greatest strain will be on you, Dora.'

'It will. I know. I think I will hold out. I have aged, Julian. Soon, I will not be beautiful anymore. Your desire will fade.'

'Maybe. I don't think so. We are linked by forces too strong. A love at such a young age as we were then, is extremely strong. I rather believe you will soon not be satisfied any longer by what we can have, having me as your lover. You will have other lovers, to dare me. You have done so before.'

Dora laughed raucously, 'I have, haven't I? I gave it a try to make you flee from me. For quite a while, it didn't work at Freiburg. You came back to me. Then, you did flee. It felt as if I was committing suicide! But ever, you would have children of your own, so that your family could continue. By you. The strain almost killed me. I am not a woman who likes to

have other and many men on my back and between my legs, Julian. I felt raped each time. But I had to do it, to flirt and attract other men. That is what happened, nothing else. I loved you so much I had to push you away from me, and I knew I had to do awful things, for otherwise you would come back. I wanted you to shy away from me in horror. My heart bled, I cried my soul out at night when I was alone in that house of Freiburg, but I did what I had to do! I managed to get you to hate me, didn't I? I succeeded so well, didn't I? It felt as if I was committing suicide. But ever, you would have children, though not from me. Your family would continue, though not by me. I almost died, but I succeeded. You got disgusted by me. That is what happened, nothing else! I loved you so much! How much would I have liked to have children by you! I could not have children. I could not give you what you wanted most in life. I could not save the continuance of your family.

Don't worry, now. I could not bear seeing you hated or despised by your own children. I shall not come between you and your children. How I would have loved having children by you. Love! I could not have children!

Dora waited, almost weeping. Then, she continued.

'I have aged, Julian. The old fire and power in me are gone, except that link that drives me to you. I wanted you, ever since we were still very young. And very stupid, to make you disgusted with me. I did succeed well in that, didn't I? Those times are over. Why are the links between the young so strong, why do they last? Never present me to your wife, though. I might be tempted to scratch out her eyes. And she being a woman, will only need a moment to feel what remains hanging between us, so strongly.'

Julian did no longer smile at those words. He considered Dora quite capable of reacting exactly so. No, he could not let anyone in his family know how he felt about Dorothea von Gomolenski!

And so, Julian Vincius began to lead a double life. It was rather easy for him to hide his relation with Dora from colleagues and friends, even though he and Dora worked on the same grounds. They had worked next to each other for years without interacting. This continued. Professor Julian Vincius was seen more often in the company of *Oberschwester* Dorothea von Gomolenski, but their conversations in public remained on the professional level. It was, as if they were consulting each other. They told to who made remarks, they were but good friends of old, as they had studied at the same university, though in different years, came from the same region, and were far family from each other, nothing more.

Did Charlotte sense there was another woman? Probably. Women have a special sense to perceive there might be another woman in their man's life. She never told anything of those suspicions to Julian. And they continued to live happily together, with their children.

During the years 1929 and 1930, Julian Vincius lived well in Berlin with their family. The world was crumbling into misery in those years. Yet, the fortune of Julian was growing steadily. He placed most of the money at the Deutsche Bank, but left little in figures on a sheet of paper or in banknotes. He placed everything in gold, in various gold coins. In September of 1929, the Deutsche Bank fused with the *Disconto Gesellschaft*, forming a larger concern in which Julian placed more confidence. Nevertheless, he also moved some of his money to a Swiss bank in Zürich, Switzerland, and kept a separate account on the name of Dorothea von Gomolenski, on which he placed money regularly.

In the second half of 1929, much changed in Germany. The anarchy in the management of the country and in the German government was very much in the open. In the German economy, large events shook the world of finance and industry and services. In the beginning of the autumn, the exchange of Wall Street in New York began to fall. The final crash came in five days of dramatic changes, the falling of the stocks from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1929. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, more than 13 million shares were sold at the exchange, on the 29<sup>th</sup> more than 16.5 million. The New York Times Index fell 43 points in one day, annulling the gains of the entire previous year. All the values continued falling. Julian Vincius had no paper stocks. He had a little money in cash on his accounts, and mostly gold. He did not have to worry too much. But he should have been blind not to see the situation on the stock exchanges resulted in the breaking also of the German economy. The number of unemployed rose fast and drastically. Julian Vincius understood what this meant: desperate men, hungry men, men ashamed to their family, men begging in the streets, and men begging not even for coins anymore, but for bread and food.

Galloping poverty struck Berlin, debauchery in the lower classes, violent strikes, terrible clashes between men of the Labour Unions and the Communists against right-wing fascist paramilitary groups of the *Stahlhelm* and the SA. The right-wing, foremost the NSDAP, tried to reject the Young Plan in a referendum, but this too failed miserably, as the people still – luckily - did not give these fractions much credit. The NSDAP and the DNVP assembled but 5.8 million votes on the 21 million votes needed to change anything. Their propaganda became sharper and louder. When the new Chancellor Brüning formed a new minority government at the end of March 1930, he could only govern by exception decrees. This was still allowed by the German Constitution, as the president signed the decrees with his name, as stated in the law. But it was a very bad sign for the democracy in Germany.

While thus much deteriorated around them, the Family Vincius of Berlin lived quite agreeably. They stayed as much as they could in their villa near Storkow. The children could even, accompanied by Ernst, take the train and move on Friday's to the lake, where they sailed. In winter, when it had frozen, the landscape was a scene from a fairy tale. Julian worked in the *Charité*. He lived sometimes quite alone in the *Landgrafenstrasse* – when he was not in the house of Dora Gomol.

Julian Vincius continued to be interested in the art of his country. He met several painters who worked for the Goldstern & Vincius publishing firm, and bought pictures from them for decorating his hall and corridor. He turned to literature, as the remarkable new novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, written by Alfred Döblin, was published. It depicted the life in the city. The novel disturbed Julian. The writer was a doctor and psychiatrist, who like him, had studied and received his diploma at the medical faculty of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. Julian had missed Döblin, as the author had just finished his years at the university when Julian had arrived there. Julian had never met Döblin in Freiburg, but would have liked to. Döblin had been born a Jew too, the son of a tailor, though he had left the Jewish community in 1912. He had been one of the co-founders of the magazine of *Der Sturm*, been a friend of Herwarth Walden and Else Lasker-Schüler. These details sounded sympathetic to Julian Vincius. The author was somebody who had life-events in common with him.

In January of 1929 also had been published the novel *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Nothing New in the West, of Erich Maria Remarque. It was a novel of how a soldier had fought in the war

in the trenches. It was a pacifist novel, which received a very large success in Germany and abroad. Also, in December of 1929, Thomas Mann had received the Nobel Prize for literature. German art became known again in the world.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, the Chancellor Brüning finally dissolved the *Reichstag*, the German Parliament. The *Reichstag* had rejected his proposal to resorb the deficit of the country by – among other measures – a reduction of the salaries of the civil servants. The ensuing elections for a new *Reichstag*, held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1930, brought an earth-shaking result. The evolution that also Julian Vincius had not felt, which had been simmering almost invisibly in the German society, erupted suddenly to the surface. The National Socialist NSDAP Party led by Adolf Hitler, the man from Munich, became the second party in number of seats in the *Reichstag*. It got 107 seats against the 143 of the Social Democrats. On the left, nevertheless, also the Communists advanced slightly. The Communists reached 77 seats. The German Democratic Party diminished to 20 representatives, the German Party of the People to 45. The Centre Party had not moved at 68 seats, the German National Party, the DNVP, diminished to a mere 41. Its seats had been absorbed into the NSDAP. Several other, smaller parties, got a few seats each.

The *Reichstag*, as the expression of the will of the people, had dramatically changed overnight in constellation. It had radicalised, as had the opinions of the people. Germany had voted nationalist, resolutely German and angry. They voted still primarily Socialist, though the NSDAP did not seek rule by the people, but rule by a few men around the Munich demagogue Hitler. The NSDAP was expansionist again, which meant once more war-like, oligarchic, nationalistic, fascist probably, and definitely anti-Semitic. The sudden evolution for the worse, drew Julian Vincius out of a lazy dream right into a reality he had not expected of the German people. He was shocked, and outright panic overpowered him. It was a nightmare come true. In such a community, there was no place for him.

## Author's Notes

For the first time in history, film cameras secured images of the life in the period as of 1900 in the European countries. I particularly appreciated the documentaries of that period made or adapted by Hugues Nancy. The films have been meticulously coloured to the tints of the times. They allow a fine view of how people lived, how the streets were filled with people, and also how the most miserable layers of society suffered. I would hereby bring a well-felt homage to Nancy. His work is remarkable, and worth of more consideration than maybe received so far.

My sincere special thanks first go to Monsieur Joseph Brembati of the French town of Longwy. I looked a long time in vain for where exactly the German campaign hospitals had been organised in and around the town of Longwy during the Battle for Verdun in the First World War. Finally, Monsieur Brembati provided me the list, via a host of friendly people of Longwy, among whom Mrs. Lucile Dupuich and Mr. Gilles Warnimont, who forwarded my question, to ultimately arrive at Monsieur Brembati.

As far as I know, there was no *Hauptmann* Donnersdorff serving in the last years of the war at Longwy. His name is fictitious.

For the notes on the pogroms and other persecutions of the Jews in Russia, I primarily used the *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland* by the Jewish, Belarussian-born writer Shimon Meyerovich Dubnow (1860-1941), founder of the *Jewish Literature and Historical-Ethnographic Society*, plus other publications, such as Julius Höxter's *Quellentexte*. Dubnow was murdered by the Nazis in December of 1941, and buried in the Riga ghetto. In 1995, in honour of Simon Dubnow, was founded the Centre for Research on Jewish culture, the Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture. The centre is situated in Germany, Saxony, in Leipzig, affiliated to the University of Leipzig.

I have been criticized for writing more about history in this novel than about the drama of the Vincius Family. I received those critics also for earlier novels of this series. The First World War and every move or event that preceded it in international politics was so much a tragedy, any plot would fail in grandeur in its presence. This novel is not easy reading. So be it. I was myself astonished about the power of the events, so I could not avoid them. I sincerely thought it was time again to put together a book about it, and, well, my saga of the Vincius Family had arrived at that point. The tragedy outclassed any single human tragedy that could have happened in that period. I agree it makes a book difficult to read. I never sought easy reading, nor easy writing.

In this novel, as in the previous one, I called pieces of artillery somewhat differently from the usual terms. I used the word *cannon*, ignoring the fact that also howitzers and mortars are included in artillery. The plural of cannon is usually the same, cannon, as my Oxford dictionary claims, but I preferred *cannons* with an 's' to avoid confusion. A cannon is usually called a *gun* in the English language, but I found the latter word too general. Rifles too are called *guns*! Hand-borne weapons such as muskets and rifles, I called by those, more specific words. In 1914, most guns were rifles, hand-borne guns fired from the shoulder, with spiral-grooved barrels aimed at spinning the bullet and thus give the bullets a longer and more

precise, straight trajectory. I kept the word gun in *machine guns*, confusion impossible. Machine guns came in heavier and lighter models.

An infantry *division* had about 20,000 men and officers, equipped with about 70 field artillery pieces and 25 machine guns, all of these, plus or minus 33%. The Austrian divisions, for example, were about 30% larger than the mentioned numbers. An *army corps* usually comprised two divisions. An *army* held two or more army corps. An *army group* assembled several armies, to a total of maximally about 1 million men.

One *division* consisted of *brigades* of about 5,000 men plus their equipment; *regiments* held about half that number of men, *battalions* were of about half the strength of a regiment and *companies* were about one-fifth of a battalion. A *platoon* was about one-fifth of a company, and *squads* or sections consisted of about ten men. So, one division consisted of about 4 brigades, each brigade of about 2 regiments, a regiment of 2 battalions, a battalion had 5 companies and a company held 5 platoons, a platoon 5 squads or sections.

A cavalry division could hold as much as 5,000 men on horseback, a dozen artillery pieces and 5 machine guns. In the British army, the numbers were more than double these.

Needless to mention, these figures could vary considerably in actual units thrown into battles.

The *Geheimer Regierungsrat* Pütter of the *Charité* was a historical figure. Of course, anything concerning the fictive figure Julian Vincius is fiction.

The castle of *Hubertushöhe* exists. It is a very beautiful castle, set in the woods. It is being transformed into an arts and literature park. It comprises a hotel and a restaurant and is worth visiting. The surroundings are wonderful. One must visit Storkow to have an idea of how a small city in Brandenburg could look like. The castle of Storkow itself was used between 1934 and 1945 as a Hitler Youth centre, a *Jugendburg*. It was destroyed by a fire in 1978, and then rebuilt from 2000 to 2009, after the German reunification. It is now a listed monument.

The warships in this novel are divided in *dreadnought-class battleships*, *battleships*, *cruisers*, *torpedoboats* and *destroyers*. The dreadnought-class battleships were the behemoths of the high seas, the largest warships built, with about three times the numbers of the heaviest cannons used on the previous largest battleships built (about 10 12-inch cannons instead of the usual 4). They had a water displacement of around 17,000 tons. The ships were equipped with steam turbines, allowing them to navigate faster. Their first example was the British *H.M.S. Dreadnought*, built in 1906. *Battleships* were pre-dreadnought warships, of about the same or somewhat lower tonnage. *Cruisers* were from 2,000 to 14,000 tons in displacement, armoured or not armoured. *Destroyers* were smaller, with a displacement of from 500 to 1,000 tons. The destroyer-class vessels that wore torpedoes could also be called *torpedoboats*. Among all these ships, all sorts of variants existed, of course.

The Austrian Empire was a dual empire. The Austrian Habsburg Emperor Franz-Joseph, had to grant more autonomy to Hungary after the Prussian-Austrian War of 1866-1867. Franz-Joseph was emperor of Austria and king of Hungary. The two entities had separate parliaments, separate governments, budgets and armed forces. The armed forces were called the *Landwehr* in Austria and the *Honvéd* in Hungary. The countries had two different Prime Ministers. There were 3 common ministers: of Foreign Affairs, War and Finances.

Further information used in the novel come from many various sources, especially from the books cited in the bibliography added hereunder. I used these books and many, many other

texts on the subjects of the novel as basic information, but my sources also extended beyond them.

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