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Introduction

The dominant picture of World War I in the West is, quite naturally, the trenches of the Western Front: immobile, pointless, static. Expanding our focus to the war on the Eastern Front, and particularly to Russia's role in that war, changes the picture fundamentally. The front lines in the east advanced and retreated for hundreds of miles, putting over one hundred thousand square miles of territory under foreign occupation. For all its slaughter, the war altered the landscape of Eastern Europe irrevocably. In the West, those who went through the war could legitimately say that millions had died, but that nothing had changed. In the East, no one could make that claim. Millions had perished, but everything had changed. The war on the Eastern Front, and particularly Russia's experience, is the focus of this book.

By the end of 1914, four empires were at war in Eastern Europe: the Austro-Hungarian, the Ottoman, the German, and the Russian. Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Germany made up the Central Powers; Russia alongside Britain, France, and much smaller Belgium and Serbia made up the Allies. Though distinct in many ways, those four eastern empires had much in common. None was fully democratic. Though electoral institutions existed, enormous power still lay in the hands of hereditary monarchs and the men they personally chose to administer their realms. All had been built up over centuries by a lengthy process of conquest, and that accretion left its marks on their internal structure. Each had groups or regions within it that enjoyed different legal standing than oth-
ers, and were marked by ethnic and religious divisions. Germany was the most homogenous of the four, but it had substantial confessional tensions between Protestants and Catholics, sharp social conflicts, and a significant Polish minority in its eastern territories. Austria-Hungary was proverbial for its polyglot society of a dozen national groups and sharp division between its Austrian and Hungarian halves. The Habsburg monarch ruled Austria as emperor and Hungary as king, and the combined army was accordingly referred to as “imperial and royal.” The Ottoman Empire was divided by ethnicity and religion, and those divisions exploded into violence during the war.

As for Russia itself, it possessed all the characteristics of empire under its ruling Romanov dynasty: authoritarian government, varied political structures, and a heterogeneous population. Russia enjoyed an elected legislature, the Duma, as result of its 1905 revolution, but electoral rules guaranteed that the Duma was dominated by conservative social elites, and enormous powers were still reserved to the tsar himself. Nicholas II regarded himself as an autocrat, answering to God for the exercise of his powers, and never fully accepted the constitutional restrictions that had been forced on him in 1905. The Russian state divided its citizens any number of ways, and included substantially different legal regimes. Finland, for example, was largely autonomous, and Central Asian Muslims were exempt from conscription into the army. Only about 40 percent of Russia’s population was ethnically Russian. Even if closely related Belarusians and Ukrainians are included, these East Slavic peoples still only made up 70 percent of the population. In addition to the numerically dominant Orthodox Christians, Russia included important populations of Catholics on its western frontier, Lutherans around the Baltic Sea, Jews scattered throughout Russia, and Muslims in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Of those four empires, none survived. The four emperors ruling in 1914 were out of power by the time World War I ended on 11 November 1918, and only one lived to see the end of the conflict. Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Joseph died on 21 November 1916 after nearly sixty-eight years on the throne. Ottoman sultan Mehmed V had taken the throne in 1909 but never enjoyed real power, since the sultanate had been stripped of authority by the Young Turk revolution of 1908. He died on 3 July 1918. Two weeks after that, on the night of 16–17 July, Tsar Nicholas II was murdered along with his entire family by his former subjects. Germany’s Kaiser Wil-
helm II lasted the longest, but the end of the war found him fleeing into the neutral Netherlands to escape the victor’s justice and the wrath of his own newly revolutionary people.

The empires those men ruled did scarcely better. Nicholas had outlived his empire by a year, which had become first a ramshackle democracy in March 1917 and then, after the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917, a communist dictatorship. Franz Joseph’s successor and grand-nephew Karl ruled barely long enough to preside over the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire into new national states at the end of the war. Mehmed VI succeeded his brother as Ottoman sultan, and suffered through a four-year term over a rump empire. From March 1920, the Ottoman capital of Constantinople and Mehmed himself lived under Allied occupation. A nascent Turkish nationalist movement obliterated even that attenuated sovereignty. The new Turkish Grand National Assembly declared Mehmed’s government null and void and abolished the sultanate on 1 November 1922; Mehmed himself went into exile. And in Germany, even before the end of the war, Wilhelm’s regime in October 1918 abolished many of the prerogatives of empire by transforming itself into a constitutional monarchy in hopes of winning a better peace from the victorious Allies. By November, revolution spread through Germany, and the politicians of Germany’s moderate left proclaimed a new German republic in hopes of staving off social revolution.

As that litany shows, Russia’s descent into anarchy, revolution, and civil war was hardly unique. Russia’s experience of the war is often seen as one of unrelieved catastrophe culminating in ignominious collapse. While that story is correct in its broad outlines, a deeper understanding of the war in the east suggests something different. While the Russian Empire and its ruling Romanov dynasty both disintegrated as a result of the First World War, the other empires and dynasties of Central and Eastern Europe did no better. As a result, Russia’s fall and the creation of a fundamentally new Soviet regime needs to be seen in comparative context. Russia did have specific political, social, and economic weaknesses that shaped the way it fell apart and then ultimately returned as a new communist Soviet Union under the rule of Vladimir Lenin’s Bolshevik Party. The same is true of all Europe’s empires: they all fell in ways that reflected the particular strains on their social fabric and their individual experience during the war. While the Russian Empire failed in ways uniquely Russian, war brought with it
burdens that none of the other eastern empires could sustain either. None of this is to argue that in any sense Russia won World War I, or even that it did not lose. The point is that Russia’s failures must be seen in context. Russia’s struggles to meet the challenge of industrial warfare were different in degree, not in kind, from those faced by every other major power. Russia was not the only great power to collapse under the strains of war; it was only the first.

Russia’s war, on both the front lines and the home front, had much in common with the other European powers. It had many incompetent generals, particularly early in the war, who sent soldiers across open ground against machine guns and quick-firing artillery to be slaughtered, but the same was true of all the powers. Casualty rates across Europe in 1914, when the true nature of modern war had not yet become clear, far outpaced those of later years. Though tactically and operationally Russia was always unable to match its German opponent, it performed quite respectably against Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. The test of equaling German performance on the battlefield was a difficult one. The Germans found their own allies unable to meet it. As John Schindler remarked, this was “a test which all other armies of the Great War would have failed in some respects,” and Britain and France never outfought Germany man-for-man. Russia ran desperately short of munitions and supplies, proving at times unable to provide its soldiers with rifles and uniforms, and a crippling shell shortage in 1915 left Russian troops unable to defend against a major German offensive. All the powers, though, found their prewar stocks of munitions utterly inadequate. Every European government had to fundamentally restructure its economy in order to cope with the demands of war.

On the home front, Russia was not the only power to face both military and popular discontent. The 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland and its suppression by the British government crippled recruitment there. The crisis provoked by the German spring offensives in 1918 produced an effort by the British government to extend conscription to the Irish. Only a paltry 5,000 recruits total, all volunteers and a fraction of the daily British casualty count in March 1918, came out of Ireland. By 1917, soldiers on all sides were tired of the war, resentful of profiteering industrialists and distant generals, and unwilling to waste their lives in pointless military actions. To the degree that patterns can be teased out from the mass of open and more subtle in-
indications of discontent, the soldiers of the Central Powers (like their popu-
lations) suffered more from material deprivation than did the Allies, pri-
marily as a result of the Allied blockade. British and French soldiers were,
至少, better provisioned. Even Russian soldiers ate reasonably well,
though high food prices in Russian cities proved fatal to the tsarist regime.
On the other hand, by late in the war the Central Powers were largely on
the defensive, so it was Allied soldiers who bore the burden of sacrificing
their lives in attacks. The spring 1917 offensives of French commander
Robert Nivelle destroyed the morale of the French army. Beginning with
minor disturbances in April 1917, mutinies reached a crisis point by late
May and left half the French army facing some form of collective disobe-
dience.4 Domestic unrest and serious discontent was thus by no means
unique to Russia. Indeed, in some ways, Russia was better prepared for the
privations of war. The daily life of Russian industrial workers and peasants
was one of hardship and toil, with sudden death a routine part of daily
existence. Ian Beckett remarked that “the peoples of Europe were condi-
tioned by their ordinary expectations to endure the kind of ordeal that was
soon to confront them.”5 If that was the case for the relatively developed
societies of Western Europe, it was even more so for Russian peasants.

One key way in which Russia did not share the experience of other pow-
ers was fateful: its failure to systematically and comprehensively reorgan-
ize its society for war. In the wake of the forced and improvised modern-
ization and mobilization of the first year of the war, the three westernmost
powers all embarked on substantial programs of total mobilization for the
needs of the war effort. In Britain, David Lloyd George, first as minister of
munitions and then as prime minister, presided over an overhaul of eco-
nomic life to provide material for the conduct of war. The elderly but fero-
ciously energetic Georges Clemenceau took office as French prime minis-
ter in 1917 with a single-minded determination to commit all resources to
the war. The Hindenburg Program of August 1916, instituted by Ger-
many’s de facto military dictators Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Lud-
dendorff to devote maximum resources to munitions, had deleterious ef-
fects on food production but nonetheless demonstrated a commitment to
total war. By contrast, imperial Russia never found a way to integrate state
power and private enterprise into a cohesive war effort. Tsar Nicholas’s
government always mistrusted initiatives and institutions outside the
reach of the state. Even when forced by circumstances to accept a role for
civil society, as with the large portion of medical services run by Russian city and local government or the war-industry committees that retooled production, the Russian government resisted full popular participation.

Context is also vital to understanding the particular rhythm of the war in the east. Though World War I lasted from 1914 to 1918, only this book’s last three chapters deal with campaigns from 1916 on. That division is deliberate, and results from the necessary connections between the Eastern Front and the Western Front. The first eighteen months of war were marked by an almost uninterrupted sequence of campaigns in the east. At the very beginning of the war, Russia attempted to achieve rapid victory with whirlwind operations in East Prussia and Galicia. By the autumn of 1914, the German high command responded to the failure of its initial attack on France with a series of efforts to win overall victory by driving Russia from the war. These key campaigns in late 1914 and 1915 were an enormous test for the Russian Empire, but also demonstrated that Russia’s resources of population and space made German victory difficult to achieve. By 1916, Russian exhaustion and German conviction of the difficulty of final victory in the east meant that the balance of German effort shifted back to the Western Front. From 1916 on, the Eastern Front became for Germany a place for economy of force: countering Russian actions and engaging in limited attacks to achieve the maximum results from the minimum expenditure of men and supplies.

Emphasizing the common fate of Europe’s multinational empires, and then the particular circumstances and events that shaped their experience of the war, affects how we think about the war and its meaning. The eastern empires’ race toward collapse underlines the importance of contingency. By contingency, I have in mind the impact of specific events and individual choices, as opposed to long-term social and economic structures. Contingency is the idea that things could have happened very differently, that individual events and choices had an enormous impact on history’s direction. It is a central theme of this book. War is of course profoundly influenced by the societies that wage it and the economies that sustain those societies. This is even more true of World War I, the first industrial war. Nonetheless, war is also the quintessential theater of contingency, where the decisions of soldiers and diplomats, and the chaos and friction of the battlefield, determine events. It mattered a great deal that the final collapse of Russia’s war effort came in November 1917, and not in November 1916.
or November 1918. Precisely when and how Russia lost the war was influenced by the structural strengths and weaknesses of its social and economic system, but also by the outcome of events on the battlefield. This book will focus on those events.

The importance of contingency is easiest to see when looking at the outbreak of war. The event that precipitated war, in a Europe already fraught with tension, was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. But the actual killing was a comedy of errors. Young student and Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip, along with his coconspirators, missed several chances to kill Franz Ferdinand. He and his wife fell victim only because their motorcade took a wrong turn in Sarajevo. The archduke’s car stopped to reverse direction in front of Princip, who had been wandering the city aimlessly. This random event allowed Princip to step to the archduke’s automobile and shoot him and his wife. The spark that brought the war might not have happened at all. Of course, the long-standing stresses in European politics might well have brought war eventually, but the fact that the war started in 1914, and not in 1915 or 1916, made an enormous difference. The outbreak of war caught the Russian Empire in the midst of a massive program of rearmament, as well as long-term improvement in its railroad network. Both those facts meant that with every year that passed, the Russian military would predictably and reliably improve and German vulnerability increase.

Once fighting began, contingency continued to be extremely important. One of the recurring patterns of World War I in Eastern Europe was the way in which whole armies fell apart when the strain of war became too great, or when faint prospects of victory seemed to disappear entirely. At the October–November 1917 battle of Caporetto, for example, 300,000 Italian troops marched into Austrian captivity as three armies collapsed. The Italian war effort survived this debacle, but just barely and with substantial British and French assistance. The Italians managed to return the favor a year later. As Austria-Hungary itself was disintegrating in October–November 1918, the Italians captured 300,000 Austrians who no longer saw a point in fighting in a lost war. On the Macedonian Front, a largely Bulgarian force managed to bottle up the British and French troops at Thessaloniki for three years. In September 1918, however, an Allied offensive finally broke Bulgarian resistance and forced the Bulgarian government to sue for peace in a matter of weeks. Even the German army, rightly noted
for its discipline and operational effectiveness, lost its cohesion in the late summer of 1918. After the German spring offensives failed, German troops recognized that the weight of men and material on the Western Front was inexorably against them and that there was little point in continued resistance. Erich Ludendorff called 8 August 1918, the first day of the Battle of Amiens, the “black day of the German Army” because of the clear failure of German morale.

Armies in the First World War did not just reach defeat gradually and incrementally, but in the face of disaster could fail suddenly and catastrophically. As John Keegan has remarked, “The sensation of defeat . . . is unmistakable and often uncontrollable. . . . When the germ of defeat takes a hold, even very large armies can fall apart with epidemic rapidity.” At a number of points during the war, the Russian war effort could easily have suffered such a sudden collapse, or produced an unprecedented triumph. The Russian invasion of East Prussia at the outbreak of war was handled with astounding clumsiness. In more skilled hands, it might easily have produced a real political crisis for the German government. In November 1914, the German attack on Łódź came very close to encircling and annihilating two full Russian armies, at a point when Russia’s ready reserves had been fully mobilized and few resources remained for the defense of Russian Poland. Even more seriously, in the summer of 1915 an offensive by the Central Powers expelled Russian troops from Poland altogether and pushed the front lines hundreds of miles to the east. Though the Russian army suffered terribly, it remained intact, capable of effective defense, and generally disciplined and under control. In the other direction, the Brusilov offensive of summer 1916 inflicted terrible losses on the Austro-Hungarian army, pushing it to the point of collapse. In all those cases, it is easy to imagine how the war might have turned out quite differently. If the Russian defense at Łódź in 1914 had been just a little less tenacious, if the Russian withdrawal from Poland in 1915 had gone just a little worse, or if Brusilov’s offensive in 1916 had been managed with just a little more creativity and skill, World War I would have ended very differently. Russia might have had to sue for peace in 1914 or 1915, or Austria-Hungary might have been driven from the war in 1916.

All this is, of course, counterfactual reasoning—it extrapolates consequences from choices and events that did not happen, in order to see differences from the actual historical events. This sort of thinking tends to
make historians very uneasy. Historians are trained to analyze what actually happened, and speculation that runs down other paths can, if taken too far, verge on fantasy. But counterfactual reasoning, if only in a disguised form, is something that all historians do. To make the claim that a particular decision was wise is necessarily to make a simultaneous claim, either implicit or explicit, that some other decision would have produced a worse outcome. To condemn a policy as foolish or short-sighted requires a claim that some other policy would have produced better results.

The easily imaginable ways in which Russia’s First World War could have come to a very different conclusion are not important simply in themselves, but for their profound impact on Russia’s subsequent development. Any of the four potential turning points mentioned above—a successful Russian invasion of East Prussia, successful German encirclement of Łódź, Russian collapse during the Great Retreat of 1915, or Austrian collapse as the result of the Brusilov offensive—would have made Russian history after the war very different. For example, a victory for the Entente in 1914, or a Russian loss in 1914 or 1915, or an Austrian collapse in 1916, would have brought the war to a close with the Russian state and the ruling Romanov dynasty in far better condition than they actually were when the collapse did come in 1917. By 1917, Russia had suffered through three full years of growing inflation, casualties at the front, deteriorating support for the monarchy, and burgeoning class antagonism. While the regime might well have been fundamentally altered by a war that ended earlier, it is difficult to imagine such a complete and devastating political collapse as the one that happened in 1917 without the embittering experience of three years of war.

That the war could easily have ended differently means that Russia’s subsequent history could have been different as well. The concrete experience of imperial Russia at war matters not only because of its inherent interest, but because of what came after: the revolutions of 1917 and the creation of a new Soviet Russia. Historians are always wary of teleology, the short-sightedness that reads historical events exclusively in terms of where we know the story will end, and thereby neglecting how things might have turned out differently. It would naturally be foolish to neglect the Russian Revolution in thinking about Russian experience of the war, but reading Russia’s prerevolutionary history as leading inevitably to revolution would be a mistake. Had Austria-Hungary, say, broken under the stresses of war
before Russia, the history of the twentieth century would look very different. If Russia had left the war before Nicholas’s regime had lost all legitimacy, it is easy to imagine Nicholas remaining as tsar, or the Romanov dynasty’s continuing through Nicholas’s son Aleksei, his brother Mikhail, or the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. The fact that Russia collapsed before Austria is the result of the contingencies of war. Understanding them requires careful attention to the military history of the war: the plans and campaigns that determined its outcome, and that is where this book will focus.

While comparative context and contingency are worth exploring, my primary goal in this book is simpler: to present a clear and brief synthesis of scholarly research on Russia’s experience in fighting the First World War. The book is not really intended for my fellow specialists on Russian military history, who are themselves familiar with much of the literature that I draw upon. While I have done archival work on the Brusilov offensive of 1916, most of what I present here is based on the careful research of dozens of scholars, beginning with the generals of Russia’s imperial army who digested their own experience in a series of histories written immediately after the end of the war, and continuing with Russian and Western scholars who are mining the archives now. My debt to all of them is great.

My emphasis is primarily military and operational, though I include discussion of society, politics, economics, and diplomacy in order to make that primary military narrative comprehensible. My motivation for emphasizing military institutions and operations is that this book is, after all, telling the story of a war, and wars are fundamentally about the organized application of large-scale violence in pursuit of political aims. Militaries and battlefields are integral to that story. Finally, good work already exists in English on the Russian home front at war. Peter Gatrell’s *Russia’s First World War*, for example, fully incorporates recent scholarship on the important social and economic developments of wartime Russia, but has almost no coverage of military matters. Histories of the war in the east date back to 1931 and one of Winston Churchill’s lesser-known works: *The Unknown War*. A number of more recent brief, popular accounts rely heavily on English-language sources, and the story of the war in the east is told primarily from the German point-of-view as a result of the relative predominance of accessible sources covering the German side. Two older works give comprehensive accounts of the Eastern Front from the Russian point
of view: Norman Stone’s 1975 *The Eastern Front* and W. Bruce Lincoln’s 1986 *Passage through Armageddon*. Each is the product of a knowledgeable scholar and skilled writer. They have suffered, however, from the passage of time: written when the Cold War and the Soviet Union were still going concerns, before a flood of recent archivally based scholarship. There is thus room for a clear and readable military history of Russia in World War I that incorporates the research of recent decades. In addition to those broader works, recent detailed campaign studies have covered important parts of the campaign in the east for an English-speaking audience, and I have found them invaluable. As a group, though, they do not use a great deal of Russian-language sources or scholarship, and as a result describe events from the point of view of Germany, Austria-Hungary, or Romania. There was another side to the war in the east, and this book tries to bring that story across.

Finally, some technical notes. This book will not put a great deal of emphasis on numbers. Even given the modern, bureaucratic states waging war from 1914 to 1918, the most basic statistics on the size and scope of the war effort, particularly on the Eastern Front, are difficult to obtain. This is particularly true for Russia, where sources agree on the rough size of the Russian army at the outbreak of war (1.3–1.4 million) and the approximate number of soldiers added through immediate mobilization (3 million), but more precision than that seems impossible. Even such a well-defined and manageable group as the Russian officer corps admits to only a figure of 40,000–50,000, but little agreement beyond that. Part of the problem is conceptual: Russia had (then as now) large militarized groups such as the uniformed gendarmes that could in some ways be reasonably counted as part of military manpower. Part is practical: Russia began fighting in 1914 before all mobilized troops had arrived at the front, so careful recordkeeping was necessarily sacrificed to the exigencies of war. Casualty figures are even more problematic than manpower. Most combat deaths were the result of artillery, and high explosives could bury or obliterate those whom it killed, leaving no trace for military bureaucrats to track. When troops failed to make roll call after a battle, they might be dead, have been captured, or simply have deserted to go home. In Russia, where space was vast, government thin, and the population still largely illiterate, records were difficult to maintain. It was even more difficult for the powers at war to assess their opponents’ losses. Accounts from the time judge military
success in ground captured, prisoners taken, and artillery pieces seized. These were not necessarily bad measures of military success, but they were the only measures available.12

Though all powers, the Russians included, attempted to monitor their losses in killed, wounded, captured, and missing, the strains of the war made precise recordkeeping impossible. On the Western Front, universal literacy and relatively static lines meant that records were more reliable and the number of prisoners taken relatively small, at least until the last few months of the war. Even so, major offensives overwhelmed the statistical machinery on both sides, leaving casualties in dispute during the war and ever since. In France, half of all corpses went unidentifed.13 Things were worse in the east. For example, spring 1916 reports from the Russian Eighth Army for the two weeks prior to the major Brusilov offensive record 62 officers sick, 25 wounded, none “missing or left on the field,” and 2 killed for total officer losses of 89, only 27 of which were combat losses. For lower ranks, the figures were 5,571 sick, 1,725 wounded, 9 missing, and 188 killed, for a total of 7,493 losses, 1,922 of which were from combat. For the next two weeks, the beginning of the offensive, casualties rose to 48 officers sick, 410 wounded, 8 missing, and 188 killed for 654 casualties—a 2200 percent increase in combat losses. Lower ranks lost 6,568 sick, 37,222 wounded, 2,094 missing, and 6,035 killed, for 51,919 casualties, 45,351 in battle. That meant a 2350 percent increase in combat losses. This was only one of four Russian armies participating in the Brusilov offensive. Casualties on that scale necessarily overwhelmed the feeble administrative machinery in place to track them. The rise from 9 missing to 2,102 is particularly noteworthy. Since this was a period of unqualified Russian success, few Russians were taken prisoner and few bodies were abandoned in a retreat. Nonetheless, the Eighth Army simply lost track of more than 2,000 men. Periods of active combat produced an enormous leap in the human toll of the war, and deceptively precise figures in official records can be only an approximate guide.14

Names, dates, and places are fraught with peril. I have presented Russians by their first and last names, not including their patronymics. My reasoning is that those who know what patronymics are and wish to find them can do so easily enough, and readers who do not would find them off-putting. During the period covered by this book, Russia still used the Julian calendar instead of the Gregorian calendar employed in the West. As
a result, a particular day was dated thirteen days earlier in Russia than in the rest of Europe. The German declaration of war on Russia took place on 1 August 1914 for the Germans, but on 19 July 1914 for the Russians. Russia’s 1917 February Revolution took place, from the Western point of view, in March, and its October Revolution in November. At the beginning of 1918, Lenin’s government switched Russia to the Gregorian calendar, to the enormous relief of historians of Russia and the Soviet Union. The discrepancy caused great headaches for diplomats and generals of the time, and does for scholars and readers now. Since this book is intended for general readers, likely to be far more familiar with events in the West, I have rendered all dates according to the Western Gregorian calendar (New Style) rather than the Russian Julian calendar (Old Style).

Place names in the part of the world covered by this book are notoriously difficult. The city of L’viv in present-day Ukraine has been also known as L’vov (Russian), Lwów (Polish), and Lemberg (German). Sibiu in Romania has also been called Hermannstadt (German) and Nagyszeben (Hungarian). I have generally used the present-day name of a particular place, except where that would be blatantly anachronistic. In cases where the English name of a place is well established, I have used that instead (Warsaw instead of Warszawa). My use of place names is not intended to imply any judgment on the validity of territorial claims by any group or government; the index indicates alternative names.

Finally, some military terminology. The hierarchy of increasingly larger military units, from platoon to company to battalion to regiment to brigade to division to corps, is relatively uncomplicated. “Army” is an ambiguous term. It can mean the armed forces of a state generally, as “the Russian army” or “the German army,” but also a specific subunit of a country’s armed forces comprising two or more corps, as “the Russian Second Army” or “the German Eleventh Army.” For levels above that, the Germans used the term Heeresgruppe, “Army Group,” to refer to the largest formation of more than one army. The Russians used the term “Front” to express the same idea. Thus, the Russians opened World War I with two Fronts: the Northwestern and Southwestern, each comprised of several numbered armies. The Germans also used the term Armeegruppe for an ad hoc organization assembled for a particular mission and often referred to by its commander’s name, as for example Armeegruppe Gallwitz.