

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 90

“I Will See It Through”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

On August 15, 1914, the day before his departure to the front, the Austrian Chief of Staff, General Franz Josef Conrad von Hötzendorf had an audience with the Austrian Kaiser. “God willing, all will go well,” the Emperor told his general, “but even if it goes wrong, I will see it through.”

The next morning, Conrad boarded his train in Vienna. With him on the platform before he departed was his mistress, Gina von Renninghaus. He made her promise to divorce her husband and marry him when he returned after the war. Then he boarded the train for the Russian front.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 90. I Will See It Through.

In episode 87, we traced the early movements on the German Eastern front. Today, we look at developments along the front between Austria and Russia. The region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that borders the Russian Empire is the province of Galicia, which you no doubt recall me mentioning a few times before. Galicia was part of the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy; it was Austria’s share of the spoils from the partition of Poland in the late 18th century.

At the time of the Great War, the population of Galicia was majority Ukrainian, with a substantial Polish minority and smaller populations of Jews and ethnic Germans. Ukrainian people generally practice Orthodoxy, but in Galicia the predominant church among ethnic Ukrainians was the Ukrainian Catholic Church. This was because, during Polish rule, the Catholic Polish government forced Orthodox clergy in Galicia to switch loyalties to the Catholic Church, and so was created an Eastern-rite Ukrainian Catholic Church.

This Ukrainian Catholic Church had been created by the Polish rulers as a means of maintaining state control over their Ukrainian minority. But during the 19th century, when Catholic Austria ruled the region, things changed. Austrian rule in the 19th century was tolerant toward ethnic

minorities, as we have seen, and Austria's Catholic rulers supported a reorganized and strengthened church which would become an important part of the cultural identity of Ukrainians in this region. The church and its clergy would also become fiercely loyal to the Habsburgs.

Galicia was an impoverished region. When it was part of Poland, Galicia had trade and cultural links to the rest of the country. Partition severed those links, and Galicia now found itself joined to an Empire that lay on the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, ruled from faraway Vienna. It was deliberate Austrian government policy to keep Galicia rural and undeveloped. Taxes were high, investment was discouraged, and public spending was minimal. Few railroads were built, meaning Galician farmers had no way to ship their harvests to other parts of Europe.

The result was a province with extreme poverty. Galicia was the poorest province in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and one of the poorest in all of Europe. Famine and disease were endemic. Alcoholism was chronic. Hardly anyone ever saw the inside of a schoolroom. And so, large numbers of Galicians emigrated in search of opportunities elsewhere, especially the young and able bodied. There are no firm statistics on the number of emigrants, but estimates range from two to three million between 1880 and 1914. In 1913, the last year of peace, emigration peaked at about 400,000 in that year alone. Half a million or more of these emigrants settled in the United States, and in our time, millions of Americans are descended from Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian Galicians. Including your host.

Austria's malignant neglect of Galicia would come back to haunt her in 1914. When the mobilization orders went out, Vienna found far fewer young and able-bodied men for the army than expected, because of emigration.

Galicia is shaped something like the arc of a circle. For our purposes, you can think of Galicia as a giant shield protecting Hungary from a Russian invasion. Much of Galicia is lowlands, but the Carpathian Mountains run along the inside edge of the arc, and mark the border between Galicia and Hungary, with the Galician lowlands on the eastern side of the mountains, closer to Russia. The mountains make a strong defensive position, which is advantageous for the Dual Monarchy. It would be important not to allow the Russians across these mountains, because if the Russian steamroller penetrated to the lowlands of Transcarpathia and the Hungarian plain, this would allow for a quick Russian offensive aimed at Budapest itself, and perhaps even on toward Vienna.

Now you may be wondering why I'm looking at the Austrian border regions and pondering what they mean in the face of a Russian offensive, rather than looking at the Russian border regions and pondering what they mean in the face of an Austrian offensive. Yeah, hold that thought for a minute.

The capital of Galicia was the city the Austrians called Lemberg, which is today called Lviv, and lies within the borders of modern Ukraine. It was the fifth-largest city in Austria-Hungary, with a population over 200,000.

Behind Lemberg and in the mountains lies the town of Przemyśl. Ever since the Crimean War of sixty years ago found Austria and Russia on opposite sides, Austrian military planners have been conscious of the potential for another war with Russia. One of the consequences is that Przemyśl is surrounded by a ring of fortifications intended to hold a garrison of some 85,000 soldiers as a defense against a potential Russian invasion. In 1914, Przemyśl was regarded as one of the most formidable fortresses in Europe, right up there with Verdun and Liège.

When General Conrad got on that train in Vienna, Galicia was his destination. Conrad would have preferred to personally command the offensive against Serbia, where there was likely to be more glory. But Russia was the greater threat, and would require more of the Austrian Army, so that's where he's going. Specifically, he set up his headquarters at Przemyśl, and from there oversaw the Russian front while also keeping an eye on Potiorek's campaign against Serbia.

We've already looked at that Austrian offensive against Serbia and the Russian offensive in East Prussia, so I'll just remind you that Conrad has made some really hard-to-understand decisions. There are two things Conrad must have understood clearly as the July Crisis was playing out. One was that Germany's first offensive was going to be in the West and therefore she needed Austria to bear the brunt of the war against Russia, at least for the first six weeks or so. The other is that Austria did not have a military powerful enough to wage offensives against both Serbia and Russia at the same time. And yet his actions defied common sense with regard to both of these facts.

In all the years they had been allies, Austria and Germany had done surprisingly little planning for the joint war against Russia that they had always known was a possibility. The general staffs of the two empires seemed not to trust each other with their military secrets. Russian Poland was a tempting target, to be sure, wedged as it was between Germany and Austria. But the Austrians knew that initially, the Germans would have only a small defensive force in the East. Huge numbers of reinforcements were expected, once France capitulated, but that would take at least six weeks, and in six weeks, Russia could be expected to mobilize its own vast army and be ready to launch her own offensive.

Officially, Conrad had gotten his own mobilization down to a rapid sixteen days. So that leaves a period of roughly four weeks before Russia can get its own forces fully mobilized, during which Austria should have a temporary numeric superiority. The logical strategy would be for Austria to mass the largest possible force on the Russian border as quickly as she possibly can, and then go on the offensive, hopefully disrupting the Russian mobilization and putting Russia on the defensive, and buying Germany enough time to finish off France in the West. By the time Russia is fully mobilized and ready to begin pushing back against the Austrian assault, those German reinforcements from the West should be heading east.

Well, you already know from our episodes on the war in Serbia and in East Prussia, that's not how it's going to go. But the full truth is even worse than it already appears. You know that

Conrad sent his Second Army, the so-called Force B, to the Serbian front instead of to the Russian front. No one knows exactly why Conrad did this, but it sure looks like he was hoping to steal a quick victory against Serbia and still have time to get his full army to the Russian front before the Russians were fully mobilized.

But if that was the plan, then Conrad had badly underestimated Serbia. Worse, he left his Eastern front vulnerable to the Russians. You can tell that Conrad understood well enough that his effort to score a quick conquest of Serbia would put an offensive against Russia out of the question. During the Austrian mobilization, the troops designated to be sent to the Russian border were not sent all the way to the border as was originally planned. Rather, they were sent to positions in the Carpathian Mountains nearly 100 miles *behind* the border. Apparently, Conrad had decided to double cross his German allies by sending a smaller Austrian force to hunker down to the rear, in a defensive posture, waiting for the Russian attack. That's my best guess, anyway. No one really knows what he was thinking.

And it took the Austrian Army closer to a month to mobilize, rather than the official estimate of sixteen days. And, as you know, the Russian Army did not need the full six weeks to begin its offensive. It actually began its incursion into East Prussia in a mere two weeks, much sooner than anticipated.

And you already know the Russians began attacking Germany so soon because they were under pressure from the French, who were getting desperate and were begging the Russians to do something—*anything*—to slow the German advance. Well, similarly, when the situation started getting dicey in East Prussia and fears grew in Germany that a victory in the West might be nullified by a defeat in the East, the Germans prevailed upon the Austrians to get an offensive going against Russia.

Well, with her army 100 miles behind the border, and not at full strength because of the diversion of the Second Army to Serbia, Austria was in no position to begin an offensive against Russia. So guess what happens next.

[music: "Entrance of the Gladiators"]

On August 20, a meeting was held at Conrad's headquarters in Przemyśl. Present were the Archduke Friedrich, the Emperor's cousin and the man who had replaced Archduke Ferdinand as the commander of the military, the Archduke Karl, the Empire's new heir presumptive, who had just celebrated his 27th birthday three days earlier, and some of Conrad's army commanders. The mood was bleak. Only the young Archduke Karl was upbeat, and we can ascribe that to naïveté. On the Serbian front, Potiorek had been promising a great victory for the Emperor's birthday, two days ago, but had not made good on the promise. The Russians had already invaded East Prussia, making it clear that Russia was getting its army organized much faster than anticipated.

And so the Germans began pestering Austria to get going on that invasion of Russia already, and take the pressure off their Eighth Army in East Prussia. The response of the two Austrian commanders at the meeting in Przemyśl, amazingly, was to gripe that the Germans were obsessed with the French. As if Germany was supposed to be covering for Austria in the East, rather than the other way around.

Conrad, the same Conrad who had ordered the army to deploy a hundred miles behind the front, now decreed that the provincial capital of Lemberg was dangerously exposed, and that the only way to protect it was to...begin an offensive against the still-mobilizing Russian Army.

Um, wasn't that supposed to have been the plan all along? It was, until it wasn't. And now it was again.

General Moritz von Auffenberg, whom you may recall from episode 70, when he was Austria's war minister, is now commanding the Austrian Fourth Army on the Russian front. He was one of the commanders in attendance at this August 20 meeting. Afterward, he returned to his own headquarters and wrote a diary entry that nicely sums it up: "We are not in a good situation. The war has been badly prepared and badly begun."

The danger facing the Austrians was that they were up against a much larger Russian force, capable of outflanking the Austrian Army and threatening to encircle it. Conrad's plan was pre-emptive attacks on that Russian flank before the Russians could begin their own offensive.

But the Austrians had underestimated the Russians: underestimated both their numbers and the state of their preparation. Before the war, Conrad's staff had projected Russia would have some 24 divisions mobilized in the first four weeks of the war. The actual Russian mobilization was triple the projection. There were already 74 Russian infantry divisions at the frontier and ready to fight the ten German divisions of the Eighth Army and the thirty or so Austrian divisions on the Russian front, with the Second Army still *en route* from Serbia.

Conrad was a highly regarded commander before the war broke out. But his reputation was based on his military writings and his mastery of peacetime issues, like modernization of the army and securing funding. He improved Austrian military training, as we have seen. In his philosophy of war, however, he was hopelessly old fashioned. Like the French, Conrad emphasized morale. That sounds all right, until you realize that in the vocabulary of early twentieth-century tacticians, "morale" means "stay on the offensive," and "stay on the offensive" means "lots of frontal assaults on entrenched enemies armed with modern weapons." Here we go again.

Neither army was particularly well led or well equipped. The Germans and the Austrians at least had reasonably unified commands. On the Russian side, Archduke Nikolai was officially commander-in-chief, but he had to go through his cousin the Emperor or the war minister to move units or supplies between the German front and the Austrian front. And supply and

logistical issues will be a chronic problem for the Russians, because of Russia's huge army and long distances. We've already seen how the sandy soil of Eastern Europe slows down horse-drawn wagons, which in 1914 are still the main way armies move supplies and equipment. And the horses themselves require a lot of fodder, which also has to be carted along.

In this podcast, we've already encountered many examples of how quickly modern warfare consumes ammunition. Neither Russia nor Austria had the industrial capacity to manufacture arms and ammunition fast enough to meet their respective armies' needs, and both countries, but especially Russia, struggled to get even these inadequate amounts of munitions to the front.

Here's a fact that seems incredible in retrospect: at the beginning of the war, both Austria and Russia were conscripting workers out of their armaments factories and shipping them off to the front lines, which of course further aggravated ammunition shortages. This was because at this stage of the war, most military leaders are still thinking that the length of the war will be measured in weeks or months rather than years, and it would be over before rates of arms production would matter. They were still focused on winning the war by getting larger numbers of soldiers to the front lines faster than the enemy.

Conrad ordered his First Army, the northernmost army on the front, to attack to the north and east, into Russian Poland. But remember that Conrad has deployed his soldiers nearly 100 miles behind the border. So this offensive is going to have to begin with Austrian soldiers spending several days on tiring marches through Galicia to cross territory they could have ridden over on trains in a matter of hours. Through the August heat they marched, carrying their packs, dragging their equipment, and herding the livestock meant to feed them along the way. Soldiers recruited from Alpine Austria carried ropes, crampons, and ice axes across the sandy plains of Galicia under the blistering August sun. And they wore heavy mountaineering boots that sank into the soft soil.

The northern offensive was directed against what Conrad estimated to be ten Russian divisions. Actually, it was 34. Still, the Austrians did well enough, considering. Austrian commanders still favored mass bayonet charges, tactics that had already failed them against the Prussians in the Austro-Prussian War of almost fifty years ago now. The lessons learned in Serbia about the dangers of modern firepower had not yet taken hold here on the Russian front. And, in fact, Austrian officers still had a tendency to lead the charges personally, sabers raised over their heads—which made them obvious targets, and meant that the Austrian Army was losing its officers at an alarming rate. Still, this offensive overall matched Austrian and Russian forces that were approximately equal in size, and the Austrians prevailed in the early going.

For a little while, it was looking like Conrad's strategy had been vindicated. But as the Russians fell back into their own territory, they were able to link up with newly arriving units, while the Austrians were stretching their supply lines and opening up their own flanks to counterattacks. The Russians saw this opportunity and acted on it by sending their Fifth Army to attack the right

flank of the Austrian offensive. But Conrad saw this vulnerability too, and sent his Fourth Army, the one commanded by Auffenberg, to head north along this right flank and counter the Russian attack. He also detached one corps of the Third Army, the XIV Corps, and sent that unit north as well. This corps was commanded by another Austrian archduke, named Joseph Ferdinand. Now, normally I wouldn't bother you with the movements of a unit as small as an army corps, but keep an eye on this one, because it's going to become the poster child for Austrian military incompetence.

Anyway, the danger in these orders Conrad has just given is that he has drawn more than half his available forces into this offensive, and away from the key prize in Galicia: Lemberg, the provincial capital. In fact, Lemberg now only has the Third Army to defend it. And the Third Army has been reduced by one corps: the XIV, which Conrad sent north with Auffenberg's Fourth Army, remember? Lemberg's defenses are stretching thin, and the Russians have two whole armies of their own lined up to attack it.

Auffenberg met the Russian Fifth Army at the Battle of Komarów on August 26, and was lucky enough to find the Russian left flank, since the Russians were looking too far to the west for the Austrian First Army. After a few days of heavy fighting, Auffenberg won a convincing victory against a superior Russian force.

Now, remember that XIV Corps, commanded by Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, the one that had been sent north to assist Auffenberg? Well, they marched 30 miles north to link up with Auffenberg, but on August 26, the same day that the battle of Komarów began, those two other Russian armies began bearing down on Lemberg. The badly needed Austrian Second Army was still moving east from the Serbian front and they were not yet in a position to help. So on the 26th, an alarmed Conrad ordered the Archduke's XIV Army Corps to turn around and retrace their steps, marching 30 miles south across ground which they had just marched north across, to assist the defense of Lemberg. XIV Corps received these orders just as they were preparing their attack in the north. Four hours were spent reorganizing the XIV and pointing it south. So the sleep-deprived soldiers of the XIV Corps marched southward in the dark that night, until 1:15 AM on August 27, when the corps received a new order from Conrad's headquarters: "Suspend the march to Lemberg and carry out the original plans." You can imagine what this does to morale. Auffenberg wrote in his diary, "What must these troops think of us? We've sent them zigzagging around under steaming heat on roads of sand."

The reason for this sudden reversal—or sudden re-reversal, if you like—was that although Auffenberg was winning the Battle of Komarów, he was not quite able to surround and destroy the Russian army he was up against. Austrian pincers had advanced on the Russian flanks, but here is where Russia's manpower advantage was beginning to tell: as the Austrians moved deeper into Russian territory, they found not that they had more room to maneuver, but quite the opposite. They kept bumping up against newly arriving Russian reinforcements.

Conrad's response to this problem was to order the advancing armies to advance further. He believed this northern offensive would win the war for him. Auffenberg, who was actually at the front, was astonished. His flanks were becoming increasingly exposed, XIV Corps was now a couple days behind the rest of the force owing to Conrad's contradictory orders, and new Russian units were arriving every day.

Meanwhile, the Russians had the Austrians badly outnumbered farther south, in front of Lemberg. The Russian offensive was slow to begin, as the Russians had overestimated the strength of the Austrian defense, and it was only this mistake, and the slow advance that resulted, that bought the northern offensive enough time to get as far as it did. By August 30, though, the Russians were approaching Lemberg from the east and the south and they outnumbered the city's Austrian defenders three to one.

Units of the Austrian Second Army—that's the one that's redeploying east from Serbia—were now arriving at Lemberg, but it was already too late. The overwhelmed Austrian defenders were forced to withdraw, and the Russians took Lemberg on September 2. The capital of the province, the fifth-largest city in the Empire, and the obvious logistical base for Austrian operations against Russia, was now in enemy hands. Not to mention about one thousand railroad locomotives and fifteen thousand railroad cars the Austrians had left behind as they retreated. Unlike in Germany, here the Russians were being provided with plenty of rolling stock to use to support operations deeper into Austria.

In the last week before Lemberg fell, Conrad sent a total of four telegrams to the German high command requesting four German army corps be redeployed from the Western front to bolster Austria in the East. This was after the battles in East Prussia, and just as the Battle of the Marne was beginning in front of Paris, the decisive battle in the West. Moltke and his staff could hardly believe what they were hearing. The Austrian general who was liaison at German military headquarters reported to Vienna that relations with the Germans were suddenly growing very chilly. (Ha! I wonder why.) Kaiser Wilhelm pulled him to one side and said, "Our little army in East Prussia has diverted twelve enemy corps and destroyed or defeated them; hasn't that made your Austrian offensive any easier?"

Conrad ordered Auffenberg's Fourth Army to turn around and march south now, giving up all the ground it had gained. The soldiers marched back into Austrian territory across battlefields still strewn with unburied corpses. This order included the hapless XIV Corps, now redeployed for the fourth time. The idea here was to attack the flank of the Russian force that had taken Lemberg, but Conrad seems to have overlooked the fact that he had sent the Fourth Army north in the first place to protect the First Army flank. The Russians, predictably, took the opportunity to attack the First Army, so Conrad ordered XIV Corps to turn around again and move north to bolster First Army's flank. For those of you keeping count, that would be the *fifth* time XIV Corps had been ordered to turn around and march back over territory they had just marched over, and no, I am not making any of this up.

But the Second Army was finally ready to fight, and Conrad ordered all his forces to go on the offensive on September 7. Auffenberg's Fourth Army went on the attack and was promptly hammered by a superior Russian force, which spurred Conrad—you guessed it—to order XIV corps to turn around for the sixth time in two weeks, and go to the aid of Auffenberg. One disgusted officer wrote in his diary, "That which we'd been trying to do, yet had been repeatedly prevented from doing, was now ordered done when it was too late to do."

[music: "Entrance of the Gladiators"]

The Austrian Army was disintegrating under the weight of superior Russian forces and staggering command incompetence. Conrad's response, characteristically, was to blame his subordinate officers, demanding to know why their units were not attacking. Well, General, let me explain it to you. They aren't attacking because they've been marching and fighting for weeks now without rest, on one or two hours' sleep at night, on inadequate rations, often without ammunition, and they have no idea where they are going, what they are doing, or why they are doing it.

The collapse of the First Army on the northern flank now meant that the Russians were threatening to surround the Second, Third, and Fourth Armies. On September 9, as the scale of the unfolding disaster became apparent, Conrad gave orders that were humanly impossible to execute, then stayed up half the night writing long letters to Gina. He fretted to his staff that if he lost the war, Gina would never marry him, and he would have to live the rest of his life alone. Which, it has to be said, would still be a better deal than hundreds of thousands of Austrian casualties were getting.

This catastrophe is known to history as the Battle of Rawa, and it would be the largest battle of the war for Austria. Austria and Russia suffered about 50,000 killed and wounded each, including Conrad's youngest son, who had been a cavalry officer in the unhappy XIV Corps.

Some 70,000 Austrian soldiers were taken prisoner. As the Austrian Army collapsed and the lives of the soldiers became unbearably miserable, many simply ended their woes by surrendering. Slavic troops were especially liable to surrender *en masse*. No doubt Russian Pan-Slavic propaganda sounded better and better as the orders coming from their own officers sounded more and more ridiculous. In one well-known incident, a patrol of six Russian soldiers stumbled into the encampment of an Austrian battalion in a forest in the middle of the night. The Russians threw up their hands and surrendered. "No," said an Austrian officer in Czech, "let us surrender to you." These six Russians then escorted their 2,000 prisoners back behind the Russian lines.

By September 11, even Conrad had to admit failure and order the army to retreat, which they had in fact already been doing. Of the situation, Conrad would later write, "Tactically, the situation wasn't bad, but the operational situation was untenable." To which Auffenberg would respond, "[W]ho placed the army in this operationally unfavorable predicament, so that all tactical

exertions and successes were bound to fail?" The retreat was so chaotic that even after the armies had withdrawn from contact with the Russians to the safety of Przemyśl, it took days for them to sort themselves out. It didn't help any that the roads west were now clogged with civilian refugees, many of them Jewish, fleeing in terror from the prospect of being ruled by the Russian Emperor. Russian soldiers were known to whip the Jewish civilians they encountered as they advanced through Galicia because in Imperial Russia, that's how we roll.

Conrad also blamed his allies for the failure of his offensive. "The Germans have won their greatest victories at our expense and left us in the lurch; they have sent troops not to join us in the great struggle...but to defend the stud farms and hunting lodges of [East Prussia.]"

Conrad may not have been much of a commander, but he was really good at shifting blame.

And as the army was sorting itself out at Przemyśl, the Russians continued their advance. At the southern end of the front, the Russian Eighth Army, commanded by General Aleksei Brusilov, had reached the Carpathian passes, and was poised to enter Hungary. Other Russian units were already brushing up against the defenses of Przemyśl.

Conrad ordered further retreats, pulling his army behind the Dunajec River and moving his headquarters to Neu Sandez. He garrisoned the fortifications at Przemyśl against what seemed sure to be a Russian siege. And in yet another of those strange decisions that I have no explanation to give you for, he left behind 130,000 soldiers in the Przemyśl fortifications, which had been designed to house 85,000. These additional 45,000 soldiers wouldn't be much good for defending the town, but one thing they can do is help eat the food stockpiles.

Przemyśl would hold out for 133 days, the longest siege of the Great War. It would surrender on March 22, 1915, after bloody and futile attempts by the Austrians to break the siege. We'll come back to that story in a future episode.

The casualty figures for the Austrians when you add together the offensive in Galicia, the retreat, the siege of Przemyśl, and the efforts to relieve the siege total up to something like this: about 400,000 Austrian soldiers killed or wounded and about 250,000 captured. Add in an additional 80,000 or so casualties from the fighting in Serbia and you have total losses of over 700,000, which is about three-quarters of the initial size of the Austrian Army, and an even higher proportion of officers. Small wonder that by the beginning of 1915, Austria was mobilizing men in their forties for front-line duty. The Russians lost about 300,000 killed and wounded and 40,000 captured. That's less than half the Austrian losses, and a much smaller proportion of Russia's total manpower.

Seven weeks into the war, and Austria's record looked like this: three weeks of mobilization, two weeks of combat, three weeks of retreat. Even worse, by this point in the war, German soldiers are supposed to be pouring in from the West following France's capitulation. But there was no French capitulation. Nevertheless, Germany now has no choice but to draw troops from the

Western front to rescue Austria. And in 1915, Austria is essentially going to have to recruit, train, and mobilize a whole new army out of the male civilians it had already rejected in 1914.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks for listening, and thank you to listener Rob for becoming a patron of the podcast. If you'd like to be a patron of the podcast, go to historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the Patreon button. If that's not your thing, you can still help out by liking or tweeting or by leaving a rating and review at the iTunes store. That will help other people find the podcast, people who hopefully will like it as much as you do.

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we examine the naval war, and see what Germany gets in exchange for all the money she's invested in the High Seas Fleet. The Luxury Navy, next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Moritz von Auffenberg never stopped touting his victory at Komarów. He would go on to argue that it was an even bigger win than the Battle of Königgrätz. That's the Prussian victory in 1866 that settled the Austro-Prussian War in a matter of weeks. Auffenberg captured more prisoners and more artillery guns at Komarów than even the great elder Moltke had at Königgrätz. In fact, Auffenberg would go so far as to say that Komarów was the greatest military victory in the history of the Austrian Empire.

And if you go by the numbers, he has a point. But the real story of the numbers is how much warfare has changed. Losses that could decide a war in 1866 were nothing more than an inconvenience in 1914.

On September 29, 1914, as the Fourth Army was retreating, Conrad, Archduke Friedrich and Archduke Karl visited Auffenberg at his field headquarters to award him the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold. The following day, a courier brought him a written message from Archduke Friedrich relieving him of command. Conrad blamed him for the loss of Lemberg: "Auffenberg struck in a direction at Komarów that made it impossible for him to assist quickly at the Battle of Lemberg." Auffenberg's assessment was more blunt: "Here I was, the victor of Komarów, being relieved of command by the loser of Lemberg."

In April 1915, the Emperor granted Auffenberg the title Baron von Komarów. A month later, he was arrested and prosecuted for financial improprieties dating back to when he was war minister. The ones we talked about in episode 70. He would be acquitted, but that was the end of his military career. The Baron von Komarów died in 1928, just a few days shy of his 76th birthday.

[music: Closing War Theme]