

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 98

“Shackled to a Corpse”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

By mid-September 1914, it was clear on the Western Front that the Schlieffen Plan had failed. France was *not* going to be knocked out of the war in six weeks. German soldiers were *not* going to be “home before the leaves fall.” Indeed, it looked likely that Germany was going to be fighting a two-front war at least into 1915.

But if the news in the west was discouraging, the news in the east was calamitous. Just seven weeks into the war, Austria-Hungary was collapsing. She had suffered something like half a million casualties already, and the Russians had pushed her armies more than a hundred miles back. Worse, from the German point of view, was that the Austrian collapse was opening a gap that would allow a Russian offensive into Germany. And Germany has no troops to spare.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 98. Shackled to a Corpse.

The Austrian Army had taken a battering. In Galicia, over 400,000 casualties. Now, bear in mind that “casualties” represents soldiers no longer able to fight for any reason. They could be killed, or wounded, or captured. So the numbers in Galicia break down this way: 100,000 dead, 200,000 wounded, and 100,000 captured by the Russians. Add in the 81,000 additional casualties in Potiorek’s failed campaign to defeat Serbia. Add in the over 100,000 trapped in the besieged Austrian fortifications at Przemyśl, and the bottom line is: about one-third of Austria’s army of 1.8 million has been killed, wounded, captured, or trapped since the beginning of the war, less than two months ago. This does not include the loss of hundreds of artillery guns, of which Austria was in short supply from day one, and thousands of railway cars and locomotives.

A whole generation of young men, Austrian active-duty soldiers and the first tier of reservists, have either been lost to the nation as casualties, or are demoralized and exhausted and in desperate need of reinforcement. Austria’s officer corps is depleted. Her ablest commanders and best-trained soldiers are gone. Back home, the government is now calling up reservists in their forties and dressing them in surplus 19th-century uniforms, the kind with the garish colors that

make them hopelessly obsolete for twentieth-century warfare, and shipping these men to the front unarmed, because—rifles? Who's got rifles?

The man in command of this disaster, as you know, is General Franz Josef Conrad von Hötzendorf. Before the war, he was reputedly Austria's greatest military strategist, and many ranked him as one of the greatest military minds in the world. Remember how he was Mister War-War-War during the July Crisis? And then he went on vacation? He had come back from his romantic getaway in the Alps and promptly led Austria into an historic military catastrophe. His reputation as a strategist was now shredded.

How was Conrad handling all this? He spent part of his time lamenting that Gina was never going to marry him now, and part of his time complaining about how when he ordered his troops into frontal assaults against entrenched enemies armed with modern weapons, they kept dying on him before they reached the enemy positions, which in Conrad's mind was proof his soldiers and field officers just weren't doing it right. But most of all, he complained about the Germans. His initial, successful offensive into Poland would have destroyed the Russian Army, if only the Germans had coordinated with him. But the Germans, in Conrad's view, were wasting resources in France and in defending the nothing that was in East Prussia, rather than using their forces properly, and Austria was paying the price for German fecklessness.

Let's take a moment here to examine Conrad's complaints one at a time. First of all, Gina *is* going to marry him, and sooner rather than later, so no worries there, although don't ask me *why* she wants to marry him. With regard to his second complaint, frontal assaults into entrenched enemy positions have been made obsolete by modern weapons, and military commanders like Conrad were far too slow to grasp this basic truth, so shame on them. Although in fairness to Conrad, I should point out that he is not the only European general of this period who hasn't twigged to this basic truth yet.

The Austrian army field manual in use at the time advised infantry soldiers that they could defeat even superior numbers of enemy soldiers even without heavy weapons support if they were "tough and brave." Mass assaults that concentrated large numbers of soldiers in a small space were still seen as the best way to break an enemy line. Strategists like Conrad recognized that modern weapons would mean greater casualties, but still clung to the view that though the battle would be bloody, a mass assault was still unstoppable.

In fact, modern weapons make it possible for soldiers to spread out and cover a wider front with fewer numbers than ever before. But even when commanders understood this, it was hard to convince the troops. There's reputedly a German saying that soldiers like the feel of cloth, by which is meant, the feeling of brushing up against other soldiers. There's safety in numbers—that's what instinct tells you. When you are under constant rifle fire, with artillery shells booming like thunder overhead and shaking your very guts, it can be hard to convince yourself that you and your comrades are better off spread out over hundreds of yards rather than bunched

together someplace where you can reach out and touch each other. And so, it would take a while for this idea to percolate through the world's militaries.

Another idea that was slowly percolating through the world's militaries at this time was that soldiers needed to wear metal helmets to protect their heads, which is kind of interesting when you stop and think about it. In the early twentieth century, metal armor has been militarily obsolete for about four hundred years now, but hey, it's about to make a comeback.

But I digress. Conrad's most bizarre complaint is the one he goes back to most often: that the Germans have let him down somehow. Conrad knew about the Schlieffen Plan; he knew that the initial German offensive was going to be in the West. He knew that the Germans were counting on *him* to hold the Russians off, at least for the early stages of the war. He may have expected more help from the German Eighth Army in East Prussia than he got, but the Germans there were dealing with a much larger enemy force than they had anticipated, and they had dealt with it pretty darn well, considering. Much better than Conrad was dealing with *his* opponents.

Conrad continued to complain that his one-half of a pincer movement into Poland had failed because the Germans weren't there to provide the other half of a pincer. And that may be true, but Conrad knew full well that the Germans weren't going to be helping when he started that offensive, and yet he went on with it anyway, although it gets a bit puzzling when you try to figure out what he thought he was going to accomplish with it.

It isn't like the Germans have been taking it easy all this time. The German Army is also racking up casualty numbers in the high six digits. Germany has also lost many of its best officers and soldiers and is calling up older men to fight and pulling retired generals out of retirement and giving them field commands, like, um, Hindenburg himself. You can imagine how German commanders felt when they heard Austrians complaining about how *they* were carrying all the weight. The Austrian ambassador in Berlin warned his government that the German Chancellor, Bethman-Hollweg, was going around saying that his war goal was to "secure Germany's future," which, the ambassador warned Vienna, primarily meant humbling France and Britain. Austria's future depended on a *Russian* defeat, which meant that Vienna had to do everything it could to reorient Germany's attention eastward.

Of course, Conrad had helped that little project along by getting himself and his army humiliated. The Russians were now in the Carpathian Mountains, poised, some would say, for a breakout into the Hungarian plain. Russian commanders were already dreaming about their triumphant marches into Budapest.

I want to pause here for a moment to take note of the fact that Russia was also suffering appalling casualties by this time. But this fact was obscured by Russia's larger manpower reserves. It only took Austria a few weeks to lose enough soldiers to face a crisis. It's going to take Russia longer. But don't worry; that crisis is coming. But at this point in the war, Russian commanders are still thinking of soldiers as an inexhaustible resource.

There's also the matter of Russia's advance into Galicia, which has been so rapid, across such underdeveloped and inhospitable terrain, that supplies have not been able to keep up. Russian soldiers are going days without food, except for what they can forage on their own. This is not an army that's poised for a sweep across Hungary, although the Central Powers don't realize that yet.

Amazingly, General Conrad, the Mr. War-War-War of a few weeks ago, was by now beginning to float the idea of Austria making a separate peace with Russia, on the argument, incredibly, that Austria shouldn't be shedding so much of her own blood just to protect Germany.

Yes, the wheels are already starting to come off this alliance. Part of the Austrian fear is that the *Germans* might decide on a separate peace with Russia, so that they can concentrate on their war with Britain and France. The Germans might even find it expedient to offer *Austrian* territorial concessions to the Russians in exchange for that peace deal. And so Conrad and the foreign ministry set to work lobbying the German government for a stronger commitment to fight—and defeat—Russia.

And you know who else is lobbying the German government for a stronger commitment to fight the Russians. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, of course. And they have a pretty good argument, which is that so far the German Army hasn't been the decisive force it was supposed to be in the West, but it has exceeded expectations in the East. Hm. Maybe the French are better than we gave them credit for? And maybe the Russians are worse. Maybe it was time to reverse the Schlieffen Plan. Settle for holding what we've already taken in the West, where the German Army is, let us remind ourselves, already on foreign soil, and concentrate offensive energies in the East, where the Russians are on Austrian territory, and are threatening to return to German territory.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff are not going to get a commitment to all-out war in the East—not yet, anyway—but it was clear something more needed to be done on that front, now that everyone knew France wasn't going to collapse anytime soon. In particular, the collapse of Austria has opened up a new Russian threat against Germany.

In the East, Russian Poland sticks out like a tongue—people even called it the “Polish tongue.” North of the tongue is the German province of East Prussia, and we followed the early battles between Russia and Germany there back in episode 87. South of the tongue is the Austrian province of Galicia, and we watched the Austrians collapse on that front back in episode 90. West of the tongue is the German province of Silesia.

In East Prussia, the German Eighth Army, commanded by Hindenburg, holds the field after decisively defeating the first Russian incursions into that province. But the Austrians have all but surrendered Galicia to the Russians, who are already making plans to incorporate the largely Ukrainian and Polish population into Imperial Russia. But the collapse of the Austrian front leaves Silesia dangerously vulnerable.

Silesia happens to be Imperial Germany's main source of coal, and the prospect of Russian soldiers rampaging through Germany's coal supply was a cause for concern, much more so than Russians rampaging through the forests and dairy farms of East Prussia. And if that isn't bad enough, Silesia is also halfway to Berlin. And, um, there are no significant German army units in Silesia or between Silesia and Berlin, so yeah, that's a problem.

[music: Mazurka]

In the center of the Polish tongue lies the city of Warsaw, on the Vistula River. Warsaw was the traditional capital of Poland, it is the third-largest city in the Russian Empire, and it sits at the center of the road and rail networks in Russian Poland. So although Russia doesn't have Germany's well-developed road and rail links, she does have pretty good connections as far west as Warsaw. Recall that when the Russian Second Army had invaded East Prussia, they had come from the south, from the Warsaw region. Russia is close to fully mobilized by now, and new troops in large numbers are assembling in and around Warsaw. Those units couldn't contemplate marching west into Silesia as long as there was a German army to the north and an Austrian army to the south. But the Austrians are in retreat, and that German army in East Prussia isn't going to be able to hold back all the Russians by itself.

On his last day as German Chief of Staff, Helmuth von Moltke discussed this issue with Erich Ludendorff and they agreed that some kind of German force was needed to be deployed to Silesia, like, yesterday. This new force would not only protect Silesia, but would also shore up the Austrian left flank. But that was as far as the discussion had gotten before the following day, September 15, the day on which Moltke was succeeded by Falkenhayn. Falkenhayn was brought up to speed on this matter, and now it's his call.

Only, as you know if you heard episode 92, Falkenhayn is still committed to the Western strategy. He's not ready to give up on the original plan, the one in which Germany wins the war by defeating France first. This is the beginning of the "Race to the Sea" on the Western front, where the Germans are trying to mass a force on the French left flank and do an end run around them. As Germany continues to call up reservists for the war, Falkenhayn envisions sending every last one of them to that French flank, in the hopes that the French might yet be pushed back.

And since Falkenhayn still has hopes this strategy will win the war, you can imagine his reply when Ludendorff starts asking him to redirect some of those reservists to Silesia. In fact, his reply probably began by pointing out that Moltke had already pulled two army corps off the Western Front and sent them east just before the crucial Battle of the Marne, where two additional corps might have made the difference, and you're asking for *more*?

Yeah, that's not going to fly. But, hey, now that you mention it, that German Eighth Army in East Prussia is now overstrength. How about if we move some of *those* units to Silesia? And so, the German Ninth Army was born. Hindenburg was transferred to command of the new

formation, and Ludendorff went with him to be his chief of staff. Meanwhile, Conrad complained that the Ninth Army should have been put under *his* command, and complained even louder when the Germans requested that *Austrian* army corps be attached to the Ninth Army.

We saw during the early actions in East Prussia in episode 87 how the Germans were able to take advantage of Germany's good transportation network to rapidly redeploy her soldiers from one sector to another. Similarly, the German Army was able to assemble this new Ninth Army in Silesia in good time, so quickly in fact that they were ready before there was any sign of a Russian offensive. Rather than sit around and wait for one, Hindenburg gave the order for the Ninth Army to advance into Russian Poland, with the goal of reaching the Vistula upriver from Warsaw, somewhere near the Austrian border, and then circling north to take the Polish capital.

In fact, while the Germans and the Austrians were working out who was going to be doing what on the Silesian front, the Russians were having their own internal discussion. Back in early September, as the Battle of the Marne was brewing and it looked possible that Paris might fall, the French ambassador in St. Petersburg—excuse me, the French ambassador in *Petrograd*, which is what the Russians are calling St. Petersburg now, intending to scrub the German sound out of the city's name. Anyway, the French ambassador in Petrograd, Maurice Paléologue, was demanding, pleading, cajoling, begging—whatever it takes, for crying out loud—to get the Russians to renew pressure on Germany and take some of it off France. Sukhomlinov, the Russian war minister curtly pointed out to Paléologue that Russia had already tried to take the pressure off France, and the result had been 120,000 Russian soldiers killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. That response didn't stop Paléologue, who pointed out that France's losses were north of half a million and still climbing, and maybe it was time for the Russians to give it another shot.

So Sukhomlinov conveyed that to Grand Duke Nikolai, the commander at the scene. The Grand Duke was not keen on another offensive against Germany, not when the offensive against Austria was going so well, but Paléologue appealed to the Emperor and the Emperor ordered his cousin to switch his attention to the Germans.

This was a lucky break for Austria, whose army is really on the ropes by now, but not such good news for Germany. The Grand Duke pulled significant forces off the Austrian front and sent them to Warsaw to prepare for a thrust against Germany.

But while the Russians were able to redeploy those forces efficiently as far as Warsaw, there was one little problem. Russia has very little in the way of roads and railroads farther west. In fact, it has been Russian government policy *not* to develop road and rail links between Warsaw and Germany, because of Russian fears that the Germans would use them to invade. We already saw how the lack of transportation links in western Poland led to the debacle at Tannenberg; now it's hampering the Russians' ability to take advantage of German weakness in Silesia. Apparently the

Russian officials who made these decisions never considered the possibility that their own army might be the one taking the offensive.

But Grand Duke Nikolai and his staff had a solution to this problem. By late September, intelligence reports were coming in that the Germans were massing troops in Silesia, with the apparent intention of an offensive aimed toward Warsaw. So the opportunity for a push into Germany was disappearing, but a new opportunity was replacing it. Russian units in southern Poland would withdraw before the German advance, all the way to the Vistula, maybe even farther. And as the Germans advanced, the mass of newly redeployed soldiers in northern Poland would surprise them with a flank attack.

It's worth noting how uncommon it is in the Great War, at least so far, for any commander of any of the militaries involved to contemplate a strategic withdrawal. We saw how in the West the French were so keen on the offensive, and how painful it was for them to give up French land. The Germans in East Prussia regarded it as a matter of honor that Russian boots not be permitted to tread upon sacred Prussian soil. But Russian commanders are more accustomed to the idea of trading land for advantage, because Russia is such an enormous country. Not only manpower but space, too, is an inexhaustible resource, to a Russian general. A 150-mile withdrawal by the Austrians was a calamity. Russia can give up 150 miles and not even notice the difference.

The newly created Russian Tenth Army, which was now in position opposite East Prussia would begin a diversionary offensive intended to tie up the German Eighth Army there, as well as mislead the Germans by making it look as if the real Russian effort was farther north.

This diversionary offensive made some early gains, retaking territory in East Prussia from the Eighth Army. The Germans in East Prussia seem to have been suffering from a case of overconfidence after their dramatic victories the first time around, and for now are being forced back. Perfect. Just the sort of distraction the Russians want to create.

In Silesia, Hindenburg and Ludendorff and their new Ninth Army were preparing for a late-season offensive into Poland. In the West, Falkenhayn's plan to outflank the French via the Race to the Sea was in progress and not looking so good, so Hindenburg hoped that a successful offensive into Russian territory, in combination with yet another failed offensive in the West, would be the final clinching proof for Falkenhayn and the Kaiser that the key to a German victory was to reorient their strategy toward Russia. If the Ninth Army could take Warsaw, the regional rail hub, the uncoordinated Russians might have to withdraw from Poland altogether.

The Germans were confident enough of taking Warsaw that they brought along the King of Saxony, a lesser monarch in the German Empire who had a weak claim to the Polish throne. The Germans had some idea of creating a new Polish state that would be a German dependency or dominion or some such thing. This isn't going to happen yet, but I mention it just to point out that both sides in this war are now talking about creating a Polish state in between Germany and Russia, an acknowledgment of the need for a buffer between the two Empires, as well as an

admission that over a century of German and Russian efforts to erase the Polish national identity had failed.

[music: Mazurka]

On September 28, the German offensive began, and it was immediately bogged down in mud, which brings us to Russia's third great advantage, besides inexhaustible manpower and space. It's mud. Simple, humble mud. But in Eastern Europe, mud is anything but humble. Mud is a ferocious enemy. For several weeks during the autumn rains and again during the spring thaw, comes a time of soft, deep mud that turns movement into an exhausting slog. So important is this time in the lives of the people of this region that the Russian language has a word for it: *rasputitsa*. During his own invasion of Russia, 102 years earlier, Napoleon had declared that "God has created a fifth element in addition to water, air, earth, and fire: mud."

Once the Germans left the hard roads and rails of Silesia for Russian Poland, where paved roads were a rarity, their advance slowed to a crawl. Soldiers' feet sank in mud to the tops of their boots. Supply wagons and gun carriages sank down to their axles and had to be dragged along by exhausted men and horses. The Russians had their own challenges. In their haste to mobilize, they had not issued winter clothing to their own troops, who were now tromping around in the cold autumn rain and mud in summer uniforms, not to mention in cloth shoes or even barefoot, because there weren't enough leather boots to go around.

The Germans were advancing in a pincer formation, intending to outflank and surround the Russian forces in Poland, essentially to recreate the victory at Tannenberg on an even larger scale. Unbeknownst to them, the Russians were planning a larger pincer movement aimed at surrounding the Germans. The developing battle was as large as anything that had taken place on the Western Front. Both sides had good plans, but both would be frustrated by the lack of mobility and especially by the mud.

The Austrians picked up on the fact that the Russian forces facing them had gotten smaller, and began an offensive of their own, gaining back some of the ground they had lost and even relieving the siege of Przemyśl on October 9. But soon after, the Germans began picking up Russian radio transmissions, as well as discovering a map of Russian deployments in Poland on the body of a dead Russian soldier. Now that the full scale of the Russian redeployment into Poland was becoming clear, it also was becoming clear that the Germans were advancing into a trap.

Hindenburg ordered a withdrawal, and the Germans pulled back into Silesia by November, destroying bridges along the way. This, combined with *rasputitsa*, guaranteed the Russians would not be able to keep up. The first German offensive into Russian territory had failed.

The German withdrawal also had unfortunate knock-on effects for Austria, by exposing the flank of the Austrian advance. The Austrians hadn't even finished burying the tens of thousands of

Austrian and Russian corpses left in the vicinity of Przemyśl, the human cost of the Russian attempts to take that Austrian fortress, when it became clear that Austria was going to have to withdraw again. Conrad faced a dilemma. Should he evacuate Przemyśl to preserve its garrison of 100,000 soldiers at the cost of abandoning a fortress that had come to symbolize Austrian resistance? Ha! Of course not. Of course Conrad chose the symbolic over the practical. The Austrians devoted a few days to shipping as many trainloads of supplies into Przemyśl as they could manage, to restock the city against a second siege. Conrad did not, however, reduce the overstuffed garrison at Przemyśl to something reasonable, like maybe 50,000. He left the full garrison in place, and even the Austrian effort to evacuate the civilians was half-hearted, so by the time they retreated, Przemyśl was still overstuffed with troops and civilians, and still ringed with corpses. This time, the Austrian Army would not be coming back, and the Russians would wisely forego assaults on the fortress in favor of a five-month siege that would last until the Austrian garrison was starved into surrender, which happened the following spring, on March 22, 1915.

As the Russians advanced in Poland, to his north, Conrad added to his own woes by attempting yet another ill-advised attack on the Russian flank. As usual, the Austrians were outnumbered and the effort ended in more failure and more bloodshed.

The German offensive had failed, but the Germans had withdrawn back into Silesia in good order. Hindenburg's reputation as the most successful general in the German Army remained intact. On November 1, Hindenburg was assigned command of all German forces on the Eastern Front.

Of course, there were still just two German armies on the Eastern Front, the Eighth and the Ninth. Hindenburg continued to believe in the eastern strategy and continued to demand more troops, occasionally threatening to resign if he didn't get them. That was a threat both Falkenhayn and the Kaiser had to take seriously; the political fallout of Germany's most successful general resigning in disgust would be hard to bear. Hindenburg was promised his reinforcements.

He was also ordered to hunker down in Silesia for the winter, while Falkenhayn concentrated on the developing Battle of Ypres in the West, which he saw as Germany's last chance to make the Schlieffen strategy work and end the war with France before Christmas. But Hindenburg was not content to wait. On the Russian side, Grand Duke Nikolai was still looking to invade Silesia. The German offensive had postponed that plan, but now that the Germans had withdrawn from Poland, the Silesian offensive was back on the agenda.

But the Russian advance was slow. *Rasputitsa* was over and winter setting in, but the damage the Germans had done during their retreat was still making it hard to advance. Hindenburg, meanwhile, was getting intelligence reports of the approaching Russians, but was not willing simply to hunker down in Silesia and wait for them. Taking advantage once again of Germany's

excellent rail network, Hindenburg sent the entire Ninth Army north, to Torun, in West Prussia. The Germans ran 80 trains a day for ten days to effect this redeployment, which all took place in complete secrecy, while the smaller Austrian Second Army replaced the Germans in Silesia. The Russians had no idea. Now it was Hindenburg's turn to begin a surprise flank attack. On November 11, the Germans at Torun marched into Poland and surprised the Russian right.

Now the Russians were forced to withdraw, as the Ninth Army pursued them. It was winter now and the ground was frozen, making it easier to maneuver, and impossible to dig trenches. But the Russians still outnumbered the Germans, and as the Germans attacked, pressure grew on their flanks. Meanwhile, as the Battle of Ypres raged on in the West, Hindenburg's reinforcements would be delayed. Finally, after it became clear to everyone, even Falkenhayn, that the Western Front was stalemated and there would be no victory there in 1914, some German reserves were sent to reinforce the East. Hindenburg used these to assault the city of Łódź, an important industrial and textile center west of Warsaw. Łódź fell to the Germans on December 6. By this time, winter weather had fully set in, ending the 1914 campaign season in the East.

The fighting on the Eastern Front was every bit as terrible as on the Western Front, maybe worse. But we hear more about the Western Front, partly because more memoirs exist from those who fought there. In the East, the majority of Russian soldiers were illiterate, and hence not able to record their experiences, while too many of Austria's best and brightest were killed. Also, for both Austrians and Russians, the hardships of the Great War were less memorable than the dramatic upheavals to come, as their respective Empires collapse.

We know that the Russians fought under conditions of extreme deprivation, lacking even food and weapons, which makes you wonder how many of them can actually be called "soldiers." Russia was unable to supply many of its soldiers even with rifles. New conscripts were sent to the front lines with orders to wait at the back until one of their comrades was wounded, then grab *his* rifle and move to the front. Soldiers with rifles were urged to be ready to hand them off after they got shot.

The casualties in the East were appalling; far beyond anything anyone could have imagined just six months ago. Russia's fully mobilized army numbered about 3.5 million, and she was already down to two million, although she had millions more who could still potentially be called up. Austria had suffered similar losses, though with far fewer reserves available. Worse still, from the Austrian point of view, the soldiers already in uniform were almost all of the available ethnic Germans and Hungarians, the people most committed to fighting for the Empire. The soldiers who remained to be called up were mostly Slavs, who were far less enthusiastic.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thank you for listening, and thank you to Wayne for becoming a patron of the podcast. If you'd like to become a patron, go to the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the Patreon button. Patronage starts at just \$2 per month. Or you can click on the PayPal button to make a one-time contribution. Your

contributions help keep the podcast going. And while you're at the website, leave a comment and let me know what you thought of today's episode. And you can check out the playlist of music for this or any episode, so if you hear a piece of music and you want to know more about it, that's the place to look, including links. Most of the music I use on this show is free and downloadable.

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we take a look at the Middle East in the early part of the Great War. The Ottoman Empire has joined the Central Powers. What does that mean for military strategy? What does that mean to the Muslim world? And what does it mean for the Empire's minorities? Jihad, next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. I titled this episode "Shackled to a Corpse," because it is a phrase often used to describe Germany's relationship with Austria during the Great War. I like it. It's pithy, so I used it. But figuring out the origin of this phrase turned out to be a challenge. I have seen it attributed to Winston Churchill and sometimes to Erich Ludendorff, but I couldn't confirm either attribution.

As far I can tell, neither of these men ever actually said it. Churchill did write in his history of the Great War that Germany and Austria had begun the war allied together, but later became shackled together. Ludendorff recounted in his memoirs an incident when a civilian in Poland remarked to one of his officers that he couldn't understand why Germany had allied herself with a corpse. My best guess is that the phrase "shackled to a corpse" is a conflation of these two authentic quotes. No doubt it endures because it's so well conveys Germany's dilemma.

[music: Closing Theme]