Kaiser Wilhelm II was considered one of the architects of the German militaristic policy.
German illustration.
Artist: unknown.

resolving international conflicts. Furthermore, the arts of Mars were considered instruments for rejuvenating the patriotic spirit and consolidating the nation. As will be seen, political power was, in large measure, transferred to army headquarters.

Based on the analysis of the immediate previous wars, foremost military thinkers had developed aggressive strategies, considering it more effective to bring the war into enemy territory. Said strategy enjoyed the support of the government, as it assumed a war of short duration and economic savings; as von Schlieffen himself put it, 'armies of millions of men cost thousands of millions of Marks'. At the same time, a brief war between European

the conflicts of the 19th Century; nothing less than the hegemony of the European powers in the world was in play. These transcendent political objectives would mark military strategy. It was the culminating point of imperialism; thus, and only thus, with the background of these crucial disputes, can one understand the acceptance of tremendous human and economic sacrifices, the long duration of the trench war perpetuated on the so-called Western Front, and the reasons that this was the conflict's decisive military theatre.

Militarism supported the political and economic strategies. The great powers addressed their problems with an arrogant diplomacy protected by vertiginous rearming, facilitated by a vigorous economy and a flourishing arms industry.

The politicians and military men made the war both possible and, indeed, desirable, public opinion having for many years flirted with an approaching war.

The military class applied great pressure on the civilian power. Liberal leaning British and French politicians accused the monarchy of Kaiser Wilhelm's Second German Reich, inheritor of the Prussian military character, of the 'bastard ingestion' of this bad habit. However, it is no less certain that these same powers were hugely increasing their own military expenditures, that they too were victims of pre-war pressures, and that they did not have the parliamentary control proper to a liberal spirit.

On the other hand, the elitist European military castes emanated from the same families as produced the dominant political and aristocratic class, and the conviction prevailed that war occupied a legitimate and, indeed, necessary place as a way of

belligerents would not give rise to transgression of the 'Rules of War' signed by the civilised, legally knowledgeable gentlemen in their treaties for the 'civilised' countries of the world, approved at Oxford, and ratified by accords in Geneva and at the Hague. The experience of past wars had been in line with these principles; this one would be perfectly acceptable from the human, political and economic standpoints, being a 'surgical intervention', painful, Yes, but controlled and necessary.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND 'TOTAL WAR'

No wartime policy could have maintained the drawn-out trench war without the extraordinary industrial, technical and scientific development facilitated by the Industrial Revolution that had preceded the Great War. The 20th Century's foremost nations, in which the agrarian sector still held a vitally important place in the respective economies, would not have been able to carry out this superhuman effort otherwise. The Industrial Revolution and its technological advances put at the service of the armies an arsenal of weaponry unimaginable a few years earlier. Revolutionary advances in the fields of siderurgy, chemistry, the combustion engine, the telephone, mass production, allied to the rise of the great armament makers, represented from then on by the famous Krupp and Vickers companies, were all decisive protagonists of the trench war.

During the 19th Century, a nation could impose its will over another with just 1,500 artillery shots, as Napoleon did at Jena. That said, to meet the needs of the trenches, only France managed to make more than 200,000 artillery projectiles a day. Yet, paradoxically, the armies remained static.

In the battles at the front, the war was one of factories and logistics, adding wartime muscle for the millions of soldiers who had left for the front. Society as a whole had to participate in the conflict and to sacrifice in ways previously unknown. Mass production required considerable organisation, management, direction and planning of the war production, as well as a resolution of the problem of financing, which entailed a novel experience for government and society. Thus conceived, the war caused a terrible amount of human and material destruction in an escalation of means without comparison, which had to be repeated and even surpassed.

The Western Front trenches swallowed up more blood, more machines and more effort by the whole nation. The monster of 'Total War' had been born; without it, the trench war could not have fed itself and become a war of means and materiel.

'Women work that men might fight: Busy scene in one of the munitions workshops during the summer of 1915'.
The illustration reflects the colossal effort of wartime industry and the massive exodus of males to the frontlines.
Industry was forced to hire female labour to compensate for the loss of the male workforce.
Artist: F. Matania

THE TRENCH WAR

WAR AND PHILOSOPHY

Throughout history, the evolution of the military art has included continuous important changes: an army is suddenly defeated by an enemy that uses a revolutionary weapon, different tactics, a new way of organising its armies, or an ideology that provides invincible morale. As in all ambits of human activity, traditionalist thinking, especially of the art of war, has been opposed by the revolutionary ones. Nonetheless, armies resist change: the military culture is grounded in, amongst other things, the tradition of its weapons, its customs, its methods for making war and its history. Associated with this last, which we might call 'military tradition', there is another, more pragmatic reason to resist all change; we might call it the 'victorious tradition', that is, confidence in the technology, weapons and methods used successfully in the last war. Thus, if an army wins a war, it always believes that it holds the 'recipe for victory' in the next conflict; and so it will continue until something substantial applied to war causes the 'victorious tradition' to suffer a disastrous defeat before armies that practise a 'revolutionary' form of the art of war.

Is it so difficult to foresee changes in the art of war? Of course, there have been visionaries and revolutionaries in the military arena, but in favour of the conservatives one can cite there being few fields as dangerous for experimentation as war, in which everything in play is supremely transcendent: the fate of a people, vital economic resources, the lives of innumerables warriors and the very history of a nation. The new means, weapons and techniques of combat require implementation of something most important and irreplaceable: the 'experience of war'. The wartime experience previously acquired is all or almost all in war; thus, experienced units and veterans represent double or triple the combative value of novice troops.

A difficult problem must be faced: new weapons and tactics are not put into practice without experience, and no experience is valid without a previous war. One war having ended, a period of peace arrives, short or long, but during it various changes may occur that have an important potential for application in a war. These changes are then incorporated gradually into armies: new instructions, new equipment and weapons... but despite everything, all armies cling to the recipes of proven success with which they have acquired a unique, never-to-be repeated 'experience of war'.

These same reasons explain the prolonged lapse of time in which the armies accepted and adapted to the appearance on the battlefield of the bow and crossbow and, later, firearms, and also why mediaeval knights so stubbornly insisted on prolonging the wearing of their already useless armour. Much later we will see the same resistance to the incorporation of steam by wartime navies, to the appearance of air power and to mechanised war.

The Great War of 1914 brought on one of those moments of rupture, and now nothing in the military art would be the same again. But, what was it that introduced such a drastic change in the manner of making war?

WAR AND TECHNOLOGY

The military experience of the European powers in 1914 remained anchored in the 19th Century, fundamentally in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. During the subsequent period of peace, technical advances incorporated into military arsenals had been exceptional, but military men thought that they still possessed the recipes for victory, that their own war experiences continued to be valid. This was based on the fire discipline of marksmen, the capacity for manoeuvre, the offensive potential of the cavalry, and artillery to provide mobile support. It was clear that the evolution of armament had advanced much faster than military doctrine; a new way of making war, which the French would call *la guerre moderne* was about to begin.

The convergence of new weapons and old theories gave rise to military disasters culminating in the so-called trench war. Nowadays the blindness and lack of foresight of the military men becomes obvious. Even at the end of the 19th Century, some perceptive observers foresaw the failure of military tactics to be used in future wars, arguing, with reason, that the extraordinary increase in the efficacy of the new weapons cancelled out the techniques of military art in use at that time and, more important, all pos-

Uhlan lancers hindered in their advance by barbed wire.
Artist: F. Matania.

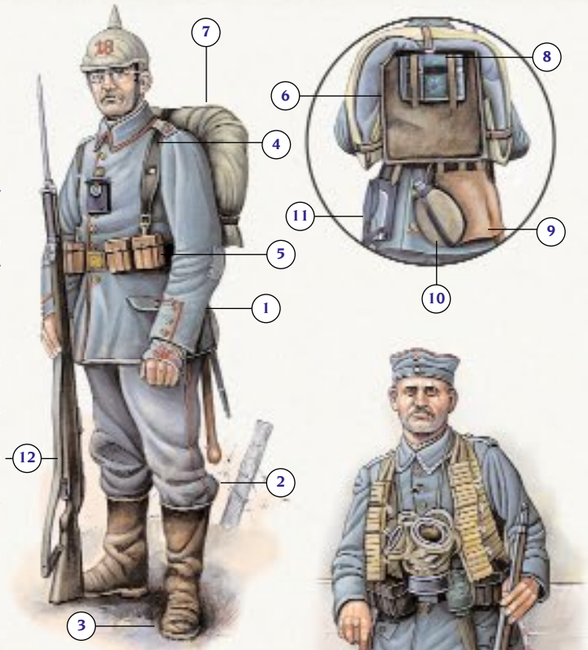
Attack of German assault troops on a French position.
The column of Uhlan cavalry lancers manoeuvring in 1914, and the German assault troops of both illustrations represent the profound changes in the manner of making war produced in this conflict, not exempt from philosophical and even aesthetic changes, these last perfectly reflected in the clear differences between their uniforms and weapons.
Artist: Georg Schöbel.

GERMANY

THE GERMAN SOLDIER OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY IN 1914.

The German uniform worn at the beginning of World War I was clearly inspired by the *Preußen Waffenrock* or Prussian uniform, similar to that used in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. Thus, the Kaiser's directive, or *Allerhöchste-Kabinetts-Order* (AKO), ensured the issuing of a the uniform known as M-1907/10 *Feldrock*, made of a thick wool fabric called *Tuch*. The most significant innovation was replacing the dark blue campaign uniform used during the earlier conflict (called *dunkelblau*, although still used for the full-dress uniform) for a 'field gray', or *feldgrau*, one. The prominent silhouette of one of the Kaiser's soldiers was due to the characteristic spiked helmet, or *Picklehaube*, but the tall leather boots are also clearly representative of the German military.

Although there was just one design, this could differ in small details according to the tradition of the different regiments, colors of the representative arm of service (infantry, artillery, etc) or even the army the wearer was attached to. These differences were the shape of, and the different coloured piping on the cuffs, collars, shoulder straps and rear skirts. The *feldgrau* color (greenish gray) was used for all ordinary units, however for the *Schützen* and *Jäger* (Light Infantry), machine guns units and field orderlies, a more greenish color was used.



The uniform of a German soldier during the first months of the conflict in 1914, *with a* M-1907/10 *Feldrock tunic.*

Uniform M-1907/10 'Feldrock'

1. Model 1907-10 tunic, in *feldgrau* fitted with a row of eight buttons. The colour of the piping on the shoulder straps identifies the arm of service and the regimental number is embroidered in red on the surface of the strap. The cuffs followed different patterns: 'Brandenburg kind' (the most common, and shown in the picture), the 'Swedish' and 'Saxon', depending on the regiment. On the back were flaps piped in red in the shape of false pockets, which could also vary according to the regiment. Rank or grade indicators are shown on both the collar and shoulder straps of the tunic.
2. Trousers, Model M1907/10, in *feldgrau* and piped with red down the outer seam.
3. Black leather marching boots.

A soldier from a Saxon unit in the trenches during 1915 (*note the blue-white sash on the collar, reminiscent of a chess-board*). *He wears the field cap and around his neck are two-Patronen Tragegurte, or extra ammunition holders in resistant fabric.*

German soldier's marching order uniform in the early 1915, *including the* (M1907) *coat or blanket.*

THE PICKLEHAUBE

The picklehaube is the German soldier's most peculiar, yet characteristic uniform item. The original model was implemented by Frederick William *of Prussia in* 1842 *and it became a foremost symbol of Prussian militarism. Although an* 1895 *design, it was still in use in* 1914. *The helmet displayed different details according to rank, including the different length of the characteristic spike or spitze; if it was replaced with a ball, it revealed the wearer as a member of the artillery; if by feathers, then the wearer was a member of the cavalry. Materials used in its manufacture varied, the most common being boiled, hardened leather, although some were made of sheet metal or other inexpensive materials when produced in large quantities. Whatever version was worn, they were pretty useless against any type of bullet or shrapnel. Numerous pictures show that the troops soon removed the annoying, uncomfortable spike. On campaign, they were covered with a canvas covering, or* Überzug (literally helmet cover), *originally found in different shades of light brown although, from* 1916, *they were all supplied with feldgrau ones. The regimental number was printed on the helmet cover in red (dark green from mid-*1914) *and a letter over the number only for some units: 'R' for Reserve units, 'L' for Landwehr units (men between* 27 *and* 37 *years old), or 'E' for 'Ersatz' battalions or replacement units. The Prussian Guard never wore a regimental number on the helmet cover and, from* 1916, *neither did any other unit.*

Straps and equipment

4. Brown leather strap (M1895). The belt buckle was different depending on where the regiment originated.
5. Brown leather cartridge clips (M1909). There were six and each held four 7.92 mm ammunition clips for the Mauser rifle.
6. Cowhide knapsack (M1895), for carrying underwear, a blanket, food and personal belongings.
7. Coat or *mantel* (M1907) in gray, rolled together with the beige tent (M1892).
8. Mess tin (M1910) made of painted aluminum.
9. Backpack (M1887), more commonly known as 'bread backpack' used for holding food and for other purposes.
10. Aluminum water bottle in felt cover.
11. Entrenching tool in leather cover (M1887) and bayonet (M1898). The color of the ribbon and the tassel hanging from the bayonet scabbard identified the company and sometimes the owner's rank.
12. 7.92 mm caliber Mauser Gew rifle 1898.

THE GERMAN SOLDIER FROM 1915 TO 1918

Due to the high demand for uniforms, at the beginning of the conflict, a number of simplifications were made to the M-1907/10 *Feldrock* uniforms and combat equipment, commonly called *Vereinfachte Feldrock* (literally, 'simplified', and according to some sources, erroneously called M1914). The more visible changes were the disappearance of the ornamental cuff designs and different piping (although, in some instances, not completely).

It was not until the publication of a new directive in 1915 (A.K.O. September 21) when a decision for the normalization of the uniform was taken.The most important changes included a new design for a combat tunic, named *Bluse*, with a better cut that allowed ease of movement and the ability to carry the combat equipment, as well as a new style of coat. Both items were produced in feldgrau.

M1910 FIELD CAP

The M1910 *Field Cap worn by troops in the rear, when on the march, or even in the trenches when there was no danger taking off the helmet. Around the base of the field cap was ribbon and was piped piped with the distinctive color of the arm of service arm* (i.e. *red for infantry*), *and two cockades, the top one in the colors of the German Empire, red, white and black, and the lower in the colors of the regiment's home state* (Prussia, Saxony, *etc.*).

The steel helmet, or *Stahlhelm*, and the required gas mask also became distinctive during this period.

Officially, the high, black leather boots still existed, although it was very common for the troops to wear calf-length brown boots with puttees. Despite the issuing of a new uniform, it is easy to find pictures showing soldiers wearing an assortment of different styles of uniform, right up to the end of the war.

A non-commissioned German officer of a Saxon Stortruppen unit wearing a Vereinfachtes Feldrock tunic. Note the appropriate equipment and armament for a trench assault, including a captured British revolver, combat mace, and hand grenade containers hanging down both sides. Also the high leather boots have been replaced with calf-length boots and puttees.

A 2*nd Lieutenant wearing the* M1915 *tunic or Bluse. On his chest he sports the* Iron Cross. *During the World War* I, *about* 4,000,000 Iron Cross 2*nd Class were awarded and around* 145,000 Iron Cross 1*st Class.*

A private of a machine gun unit wearing the combat tunic of the Bluse type and trousers with knee reinforcements as used by mountain troops. He is armed with a lightened version of the MG 08 *machine gun.*