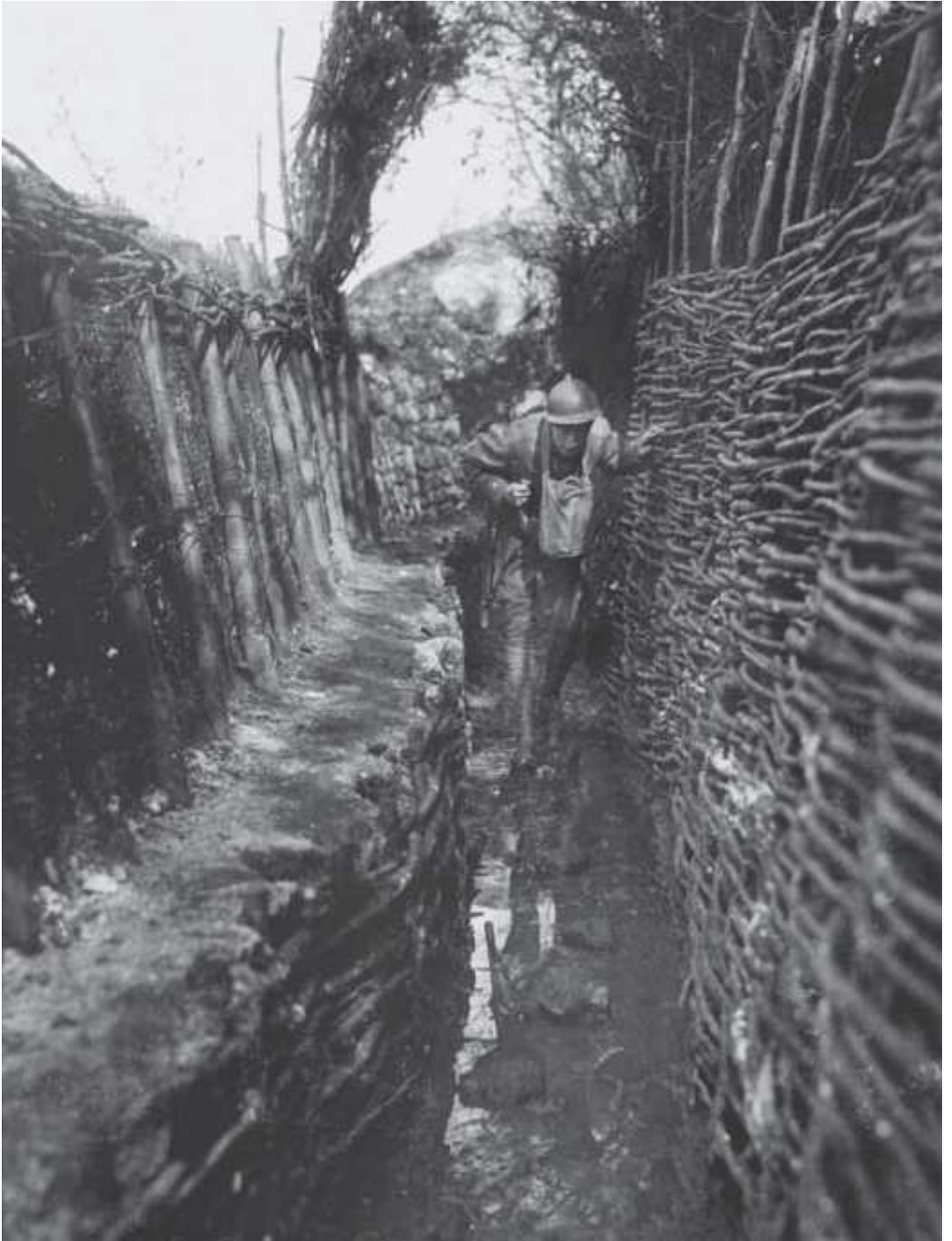


# THE FIRST WORLD WAR



# THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The First World War broke out in 1914 and ended in 1918.

It was an event which caused extraordinary and dramatic changes.

It was a "world war" because it involved, for the first time, many states. These were not only in Europe: France, Great Britain, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Italy, USA and Japan were involved.

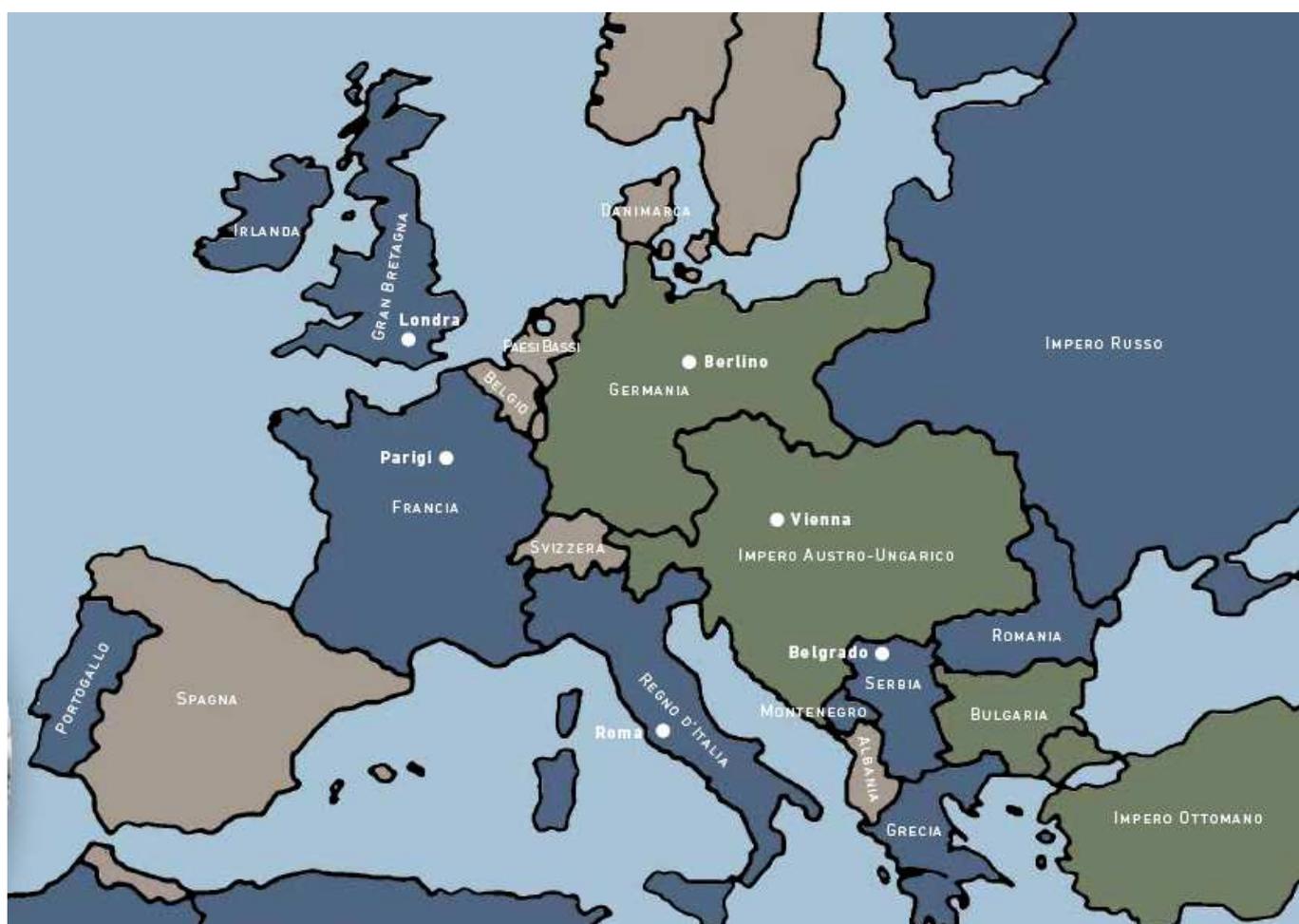
It was completely different from any other war fought up until then.

A large number of weapons were produced, large fortifications were built, a vast amount of soldiers fought, the lives of millions of women and children suffered great transformations, and great technological innovations were made.

The war had major consequences on society, economy, politics and culture.

Hundreds and thousands of women were made to work in manufacturing. The people suffered bombings, massacres and reprisals. Women, young and old were militarised, deported and evacuated into huts. The infrastructure of production was organised for the military, and society was rallied by a combination of propaganda and the suppression of all dissent.

That's why it has also been known as the "Great War".



# LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

During the war trenches were used: long excavations where soldiers fought and lived, even for weeks. Each army built numerous trenches; in front of the "first line" dense networks of barbed wire were installed.

The front covered a very wide area: it included the trenches and the rear where the kitchens, huts, warehouses, hospitals and command posts were located.

The trenches were dug into the earth or rock; had loopholes from which to shoot and were sometimes protected by concrete walls or steel shielding.

In the trenches metal helmets were used to protect the head from shrapnel. The armies adopted camouflage uniforms coloured to blend into the earth.

In the trenches the soldiers lived for weeks in harsh conditions, at risk from bombings and gas attacks.

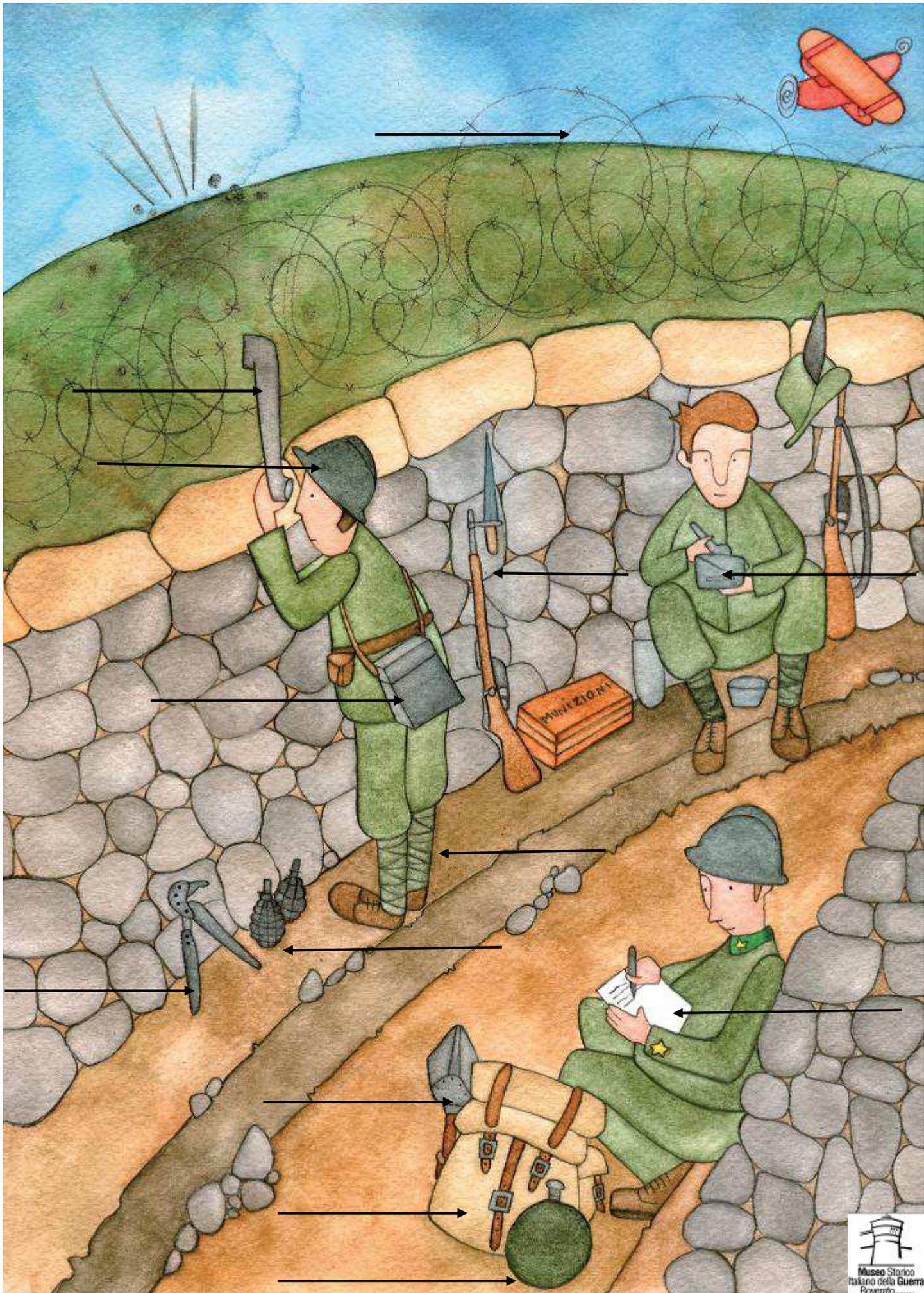
Life was tough in the trenches: it was constantly exposed to enemy fire; soldiers suffered from the heat in summer and cold in the winter; you could not wash or change; soldiers often lived in the mud together with rats, lice and other insects.

They had to live in mud and dirt, enduring hunger and thirst, the cold or heat. In quieter moments they tried to rest, eat or write to loved ones.

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DISCOVER THE NAMES of the items used by soldiers.

1. HELMET
2. MESS KIT
3. PLIERS
4. LETTER
5. BARBED WIRE
6. PERISCOPE
7. CONTAINER FOR GAS MASK
8. RIFLE WITH BAYONET
9. PUTTEE LEG BANDS
10. BOOTS
11. HAND GRENADE
12. BACKPACK
13. SPADE
14. CANTEEN



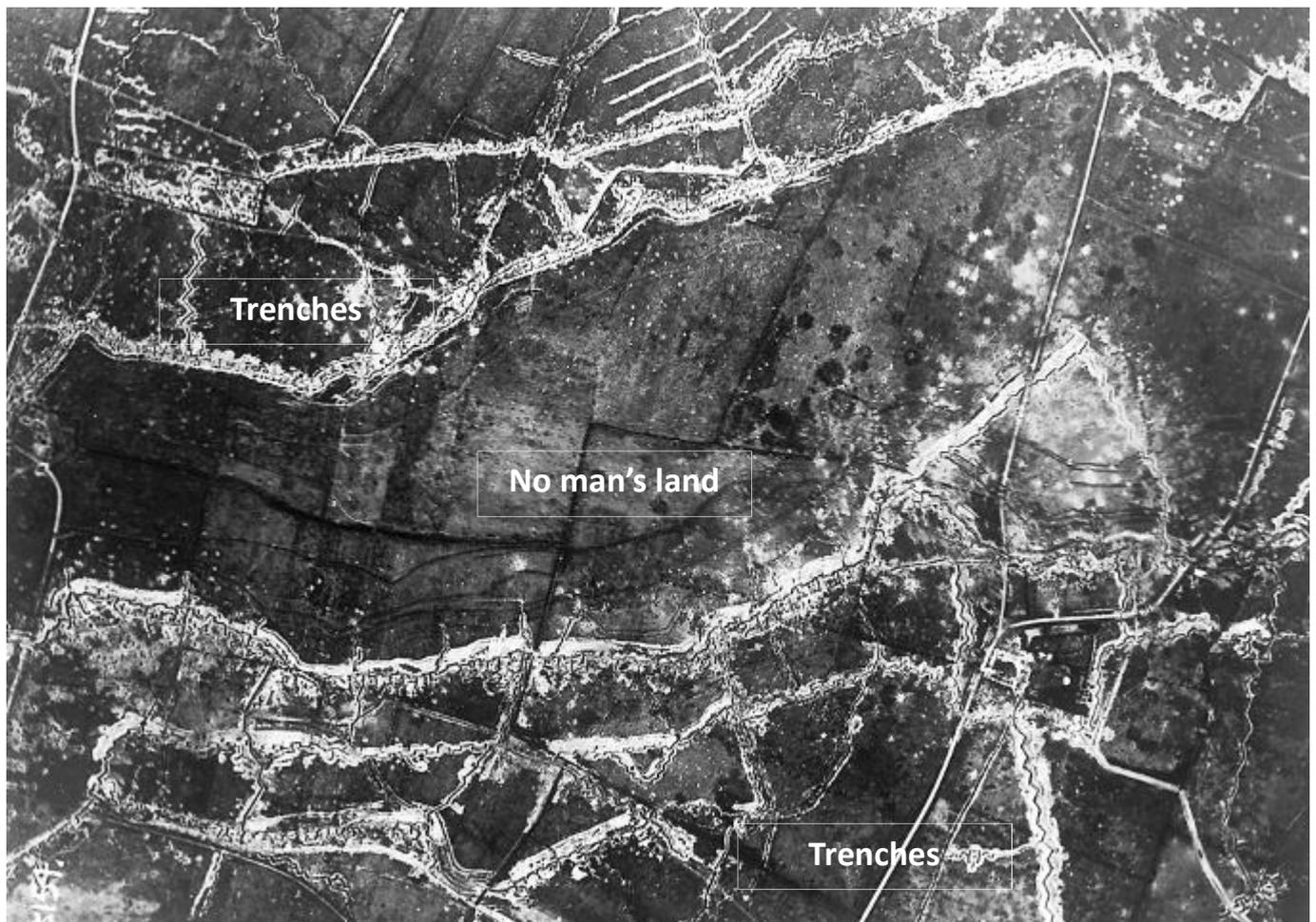


# THE ASSAULT

When the order arrived, the soldiers had to quickly leave their trenches for the assault. They crossed the "no man's land" - the space between their trenches and the enemy - to attack and conquer the enemy positions.

Soldiers were equipped with helmets and gas masks, bayonet-fitted rifles, wire cutters, shovels and hand grenades. The moment of attack was the most dangerous: men were exposed to the shots of rifles, machine guns and in particular artillery, which fired incessantly from the rear. In this war numerous casualties were recorded, more than ever before.

The soldiers opened a passage through the barbed wire with wire cutters. Cans and bells were hung on the barbed wire to sound the alarm.



## Piero Calamandrei

*Two huge bronze walls ... face one another for thousands of kilometres, two huge bloody trenches which, like the waves on the seashore, break human lives. If you withdraw more or less from one wall or the other, it matters little; if the trenches shift twenty miles further north or further south, it decides nothing...*

### **Rodolfo Bolner**

*How could I describe the scream of shrapnel when it arrives and the crash it produces when it bursts? And who is able to paint in words the whistle of shells and the roar of their explosion?*

### **Fioravante Gottardi**

*The shells were like a storm, whistling around my ears; we ran on. My companions of the unit, one wounded from one side, the second from the other, fell to the ground shouting, crying, sighing, demanding aid and they could not be helped. It was heartbreaking to see them suffer like that and not be able to help them ... Passing a hill, I see many dead bodies covering the ground, fallen the previous day. Through a thick forest I see here also the bodies of Russians who fell behind the trees where they had sought protection. At the end of the forest, the terrifying spectacle of the battle presents itself before our eyes! The thunder of cannons, the explosions of bombs, the agonizing cries of the wounded are confused with the final, wheezing gasps of the dying. My mind is like a mill, I am not able to think or form an idea.*

*Scritture di guerra*, n. 3, Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra e Museo storico in Trento, 1995



# THE WHITE WAR



For the first time soldiers also fought in the high mountains, the highest peaks of Trentino: between the glaciers and snow of Ortles, Cevedale, Adamello and Marmolada. The soldiers found themselves fighting in the snow or on ice. In this "White War" the biggest enemies were the cold and avalanches.

Both armies used soldiers trained to live and fight in such hostile environments: Alpini and *Landeschützen*.

Weapons and uniforms were modified to match these extreme conditions. On snow the soldiers used wooden skis or snowshoes, wore a white uniform and special goggles. Food and weapons were pulled on sleds.

Up there, everything was difficult: walking, talking, fighting.

For shelter the soldiers built wooden huts and tunnels in the rock or ice. To bring the necessities for survival up to high altitude, the soldiers made roads and paths; long cableways made it possible to quickly reach difficult places.

Soldiers and prisoners were involved in transportation, but also women and children, as well as mules and dogs.

For shelter, but also to approach the enemy without being seen, the soldiers built tunnels in the snow or rock. The "City of Ice" built by the Austro-Hungarians on Marmolada was made up of 12 km of tunnels!

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Discover the names of the items used by soldiers.

1. **MOUNTAIN UNIFORM**
2. **MULE**
3. **SNOWSHOES**
4. **SNOW GOGGLES**
5. **BINOCULARS**
6. **RIFLE**
7. **STRAW OVERSHOES**
8. **BACKPACK**
9. **CABLEWAY**
10. **SLED**
11. **ICE AXE**
12. **SKIS**



