VII: CHAMPAGNE TO DIE FOR: 1914-1915

My view of 'The Great War,' like most English today is one of muddy trenches, hard-fought victories, poppies and rememberance day services, celebrating those veterans who fell arresting German wartime aggression.

General rejoicing at the outbreak of war
Source: Staatsbibliothek PreußicherKulturbesitz, Bildarchiv, Berlin

Upon the outbreak of the war in 1914, its declaration was greeted with enthusiasm in every German quarter. When the Kaiser told the nation: *"I no longer recognize parties; I only recognize Germans,"* a political truce was agreed and the nation united in its support of a just war of 'self-defence.'[1]

Because of its relevance to our family's history, within this chapter I shall concentrate on Germany's 'frontline' until approximately October 1915. For those interested, details on the remainder of the conflict can be found in Wikipedia[2], although elements are also related later. Meanwhile the 'home front,' that place where the Tÿrallas and the Hinsch families remained while their husbands (bar Friedrich) went off to support them in the frontline, shall be documented within Chapter VIII.

At the start of the war, young men volunteered their services, anticipating a glorious and short conflict similar to that which occurred in the Franco-Prussian war forty years earlier. Women, especially those in bourgeois movements, played a key role in mobilising German society for war, and supported wholeheartedly its entrance.[3] Never before, noted one man, had the anthem, "*Deutschland Deutschland über alles*" been sung so passionately before. It is estimated that 1.5 million patriotic war poems were penned in 1914 alone. Bands played. Women wept. Rifles were studded with flowers. It was "on to Paris" and "á Berlin."

The soldiers of the war were initially volunteers, according to Wikipedia,[4] and official estimates put the figure among young Germans at 308,000.[5] They all sought adventure and action, and an escape from the dreariness of every day life. According to Paul Göhre, a Chemnitz-based reporter, workers were especially joyed to be seen in colourful uniform and to experience military glamour and pageantry. It lent opportunity for a "fresh, free, happy, carefree life" and was a break from the desolate monotony of factory existence."[6] According to Dieter Kürschner, Leipzig's

[1] O&O. Pg. 253. Overy
[2] http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erster_Weltkrieg
[3] Domansky. More detailed reference unavailable.
[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I
[5] Domansky again I think.
[6] Dobson. Authority and Upheavel in Leipzig, 1910-1920 Pg. 83.

military historian, it was even "no wonder" that young men were seized by a frenzy to go willingly and participate in the enthusiastic first killings of the war.[7] This was also because "The war had temporarily deflected proletarian anger onto the foreign, especially Russian, enemy," as Dobson notes (pg. 129).

For many, the war was seen as an opportunity to prove manliness. The nobility and those in bourgeois circles were proud to serve the king within the army. Prior to the war it had been fashionable to be a member of the Reserve Infantry Regiments and now the middle upper classes would no longer would have to listen within military clubs and associations or local beer halls and wine taverns to worn-out tales of the glorious deeds of their fathers and grandfathers in the wars of 1866 and 1870-1 (Austro/Franco-Prussian). As I imagine Fritz Hinsch and Paul Tÿralla heard from the lips of Friedrich Hinsch. Instead they would create their own legends and myths.

This euphoria was widespread. Students and volunteers welcomed the war as an act of national integration, and a chance to overcome the pluralistic, modern world of self-interest and self-indulgence, and to create a new harmonious community or *Volksgemeinschaft*. Take for instance Jews, many of whom volunteered with an enthusiasm equal to that of any other German, if not more so. In fact, writes Otte, many German Jews perceived the war as a welcome opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to make personal and material sacrifices for the homeland.[8]

Others saw the call to war differently. Some accepted it as 'inevitable,' while farming households, probably much like Paul Tÿralla's, launched petitions to excuse their menfolk from military service and keep them at home. August was harvest time and men were needed to work the fields. There were those too who shuddered at the thought of paying higher taxes to cover military expenditure.

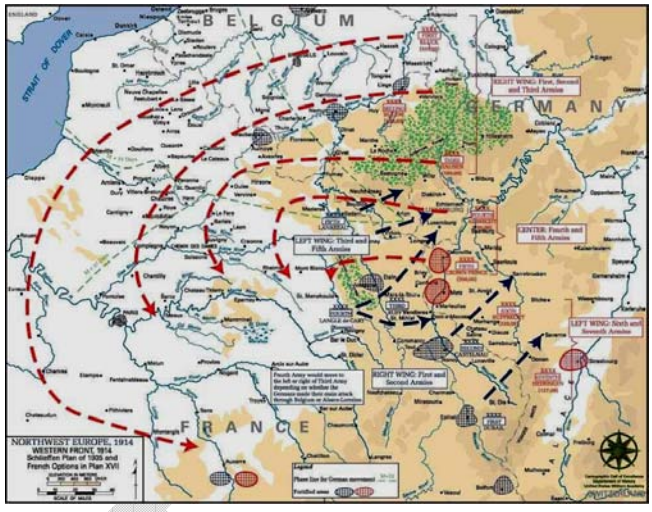
German soldiers leave for the front in August 1914. Some are with flowers, others wave or raise clenched fists. Messages on the railroad car say: *"Excursion to Paris", "See you later on the Boulevard", "Into battle, my sword tip is itching".* *Source: wiki/World_War_I*

Those early volunteers were not enough and so men were also conscripted into service. In fact, the war confronted the German state with unprecedented demands for mobilization and organization.[9] Thus a chain reaction of militarisation orders thundered across Europe early in August 1914. Reservists were called up and complex train schedules were implemented with some 3.8 million men and 120,000 officers mobilised and transported by 11,000 trains within 312 hours to the front. They crossed the Rhein River at Köln in 10 minute intervals between August 2nd and 18th.

The western army consisted of 1.6 million men organised into seven field armies within 23 active and 11 reserve corps, while in the east one field army defended East Prussia.

[7] http://www.leipzig-gohlis.de/historie/militaer.html
[8] Jewish identities in German popular entertainment, 1890-1933. M. Otte. Cambrige Univ. Press. Pg.92
[9] O&O. Pg. 253. Overy.

The campaign got underway when a modified version of the *Schlieffen Plan* was executed (see schematic diagram on the right). This was designed to quickly attack France through Belgium before turning southwards to encircle the French army on the German border.

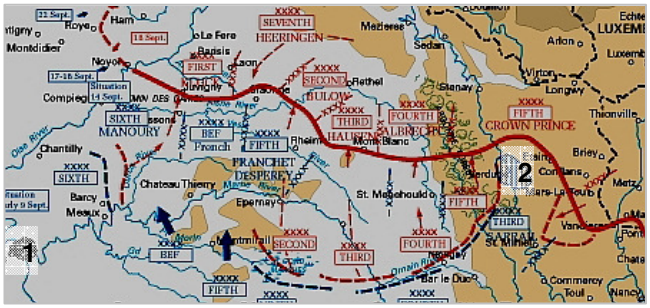


Initially, it was very successful, particularly in the 'Battle of Frontiers' (14–24 August). But en route, German troops, massacred various townspeople and on 25 August, set fire to the town of Leuven, burned its library, killed civilians and forced 42,000 to evacuate. These actions not surprisingly brought worldwide condemnation.[10]

The rapid advance was halted just over a month later at the battle of the Marne, (between 5 and 12 September 1914) when an Allied victory effectively ended the German army's month long offensive that had reached as far as the outskirts of Paris (shown as '1' on the map below right).[11]

The army's defeat between 9th and 13th September and subsequent retreat (see map right) marked the abandonment of the *Schlieffen Plan* and ended any hopes of a quick victory in the West. Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke is said to have reported to the Kaiser: "*Your Majesty, we have lost the war.*"

Above: Germany's *Schlieffen Plan*
Centre: Leipzig's Reserve Infantry Regiment 107 marches through Flanders, Belgium, Aug. 19, 1914
Below: Map showing the German (red) and French (blue) positions during (dashed lines) and after (solid line) the battle of the Marne



The German army retreated to the Aisne River and regrouped. They were pursued by the French and British, although the pace of the Allied advance was slow—a mere 19 km (12 miles) a day. After 65 km (40 miles), the German armies ceased their retreat at a point north of the river, from which they sought to defend the occupied territories – and stage a battle of attrition. The latter is a military strategy in which one attempts to win the war by wearing down the enemy to the point of collapse, through continuous losses in personnel and *matériel*.[12] The German army thus dug into trenches that would come to represent a miserable four years' stalemate for the Allies, which in turn cost the lives of millions of soldiers.

[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I
[11] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_the_Marne
[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_attrition

Within his contribution to the history of Leipzig's Gohlis, posted online at the town's website, Dieter Kürschner reports Leipzig's military garrison became a major source of military personnel during world war one.[13] The first soldiers and units moved to the front as early as the 2nd and 3rd August, while they were followed in mid-August by the Reserve Infantry Regiment 107 and Leipzig's contribution to the Landwehr Infantry Regiment 106. [14] According to Martina Güldemann, Leipzig's still rather new *Kraftomnibus* was appropriated for ferrying soldiers about by mid-August.[15]

Many of Leipzig's troops were involved at the Marne and later entrenched around Verdun, having captured Saint-Mihiel to its southeast on 24th September (see '2' on the lower map on the previous page and also that opposite). However, the first 290 seriously wounded soldiers were back in Leipzig by 29th September. They were interned at the St. Georg's hospital in Delitszcher Straße just north of Gohlis in Eutritzsch. It became a base hospital with 400 beds. Already Leipzigers' August 2nd excitement had evapourated, having realised after the battle of the Marne that the *Schlieffen Plan* had failed.

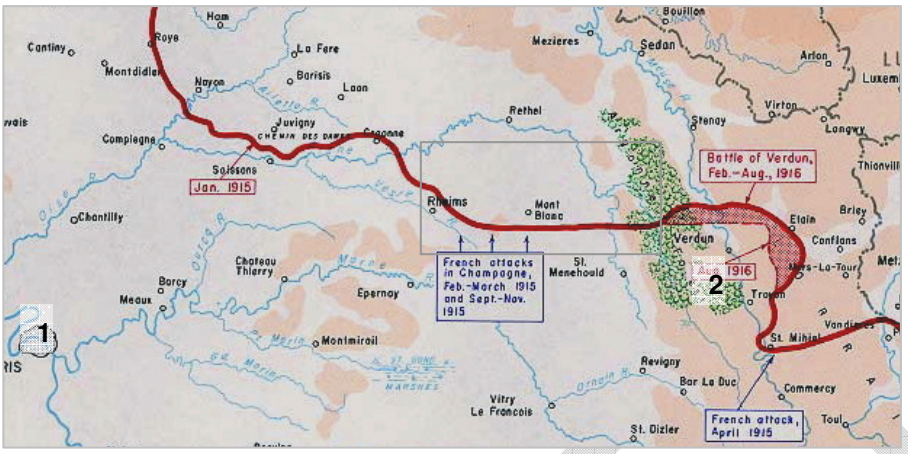
Between October and November, Leipzig became a soldier camp, the likes of which the city had not seen since the Battle of 1813.[16] In October, another Infantry Regiment (known as the 245th) went to the front, while by November the city hosted more than 40 divisions[17] of staff, troop and militia. They were accommodated not only in the barracks, but within as many as 25 inns and numerous schools across the city. Such was the case with the 420-man *8. Kompagnie*, part of the Reserve (*Ersatz*) Battalion of the 106th Infantry Regiment which was based at Gohlis New Inn, besides the 5th, 12th, 22nd and 23rd District schools (a list which doesn't include that presumed to be Little Nannÿ's)! Other schools were converted into hospitals.

In the coming months, additional reserve hospitals were established within barracks in Möckern and Gohlis, masonic lodges and private hospitals. By January 1915, 14 convalescent homes were also set up in private houses, sister homes, and fraternity houses (Ibid). Whichever way Leipzigers' turned, there was no escaping the fact that Germany was at war. For the time being, Paul Tÿralla and Fritz Hinsch continued with 'business as usual,' but before long their lives would change irrevocably. There would be no return to the 'pre-war' milieu, neither for themselves, nor their families.

In many Leipzigers' eyes, it was the elites who had failed to produce the anticipated quick military victory. Rather than witnessing Germany's armies march through the Arc de Triomphe in January, New Year's Day in 1915 found it dug into trenches in the west and locked in combat with a battered but resilient foe in the east. Casualties continued to climb while hardship on the homefront intensified.

[13] http://www.leipzig-gohlis.de/historie/militaer.html
[14] Including the 106 and 107th Infantry Regiments, the 18th Lancers of the 77th Artillery Regiment, the 19th Train Batallion as well as the 8th Machine Gun Division, according to www.leipzig-gohlis.de/historie/militaer.html
[15] Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in LEIPZIG. Martina Güldemann, 1999
[16] http://www.leipzig-gohlis.de/historie/militaer.html
[17] A German division signifies between 10 and 20,000 soldiers: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truppenteil#Division

The first few months of 1915 brought several French attempts to dispel the German army from the lands it occupied east of Paris, as is indicated on the schematic map below. This included the First Battle of Champagne, which took place between 20th December 1914 and 17th March 1915.[18]



The map shows the frontline between Jan.1915 and Dec. 1916, while the blue box in the centre remarks: "French attacks in Champagne, Feb-Mar 1915 and Sept-Nov.1915" i.e. the First and Second Battles of Champagne.
NB: The grey box is detailed on pg. 150.

In reality, the fighting on the western front began to take on a deadly regularity: French attackers stormed enemy trenches in waves, only to be mowed down by hostile machine-gun fire and artillery, as they tried to cut the wire entanglements that protected the earthworks. But deep within those earthworks Captain Werner von Blomberg of the 19th Infantry Division already feared for the future. He described the French attacks as "storms of steel" and the mood of his men as "very pessimistic." "We cannot continue like this!" he remarked. "The soldiers are finished… And the losses!"

Col. Hugo von dem Bergh, Blomberg's commander, painted a similar picture of the fighting north of Verdun, where 95,000 artillery shells had rained down on the division in three days and some of its battalions had been reduced to barely 100 men. "The most fantastic imagination cannot comprehend this cauldron of [steel] rain" he noted. The German word for battle and butchery, '*Schlacht*' was "terrible but suitable."

Above: Barbed wire, a last line of defence
Below: Reserve infantry regiment soldiers positioned at St. Souplet, Champagne, March 1915 (see map on pg. 152).
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

[18] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_Champagne

Following limited gains, the Allied forces were successfully counter-attacked. Although the French claimed "to be nibbling at the Germans," they suffered heavy losses, with their casualties reaching 400,000 during the winter of 1914-5. With little progress on either side of the battlefield, the war became deadlocked.

Paul Tÿralla? A Leipzig soldier on his way to the front , 1914.
Source: C.Foerster

Paul Tÿralla became a part of this deadlock, when he was called up to the front on Friday 16th April. His mobilisation was hardly unexpected – he'd been a reservist for Reserve Infantry Regiment 107 since 1904 according to his *Einwohnermeldekarte* (see Chapter V). So does this mean he turned up for work at Gohlis' barracks on *Heerstrasse* (shown below left) on Monday April 19th, a good ten minutes or so walk from the family home in *Roon Straße*? It had been ten years since he was last here, but my guess is he was quickly transferred to *Königsbrück*, 25km north of Dresden since he was assigned to Saxony's *Reserve Infanterie Regiment 241*, which was 'raised' in Dresden.

Regiment 241 belonged to the Imperial German Army's 53rd Reserve Division. In principle, being in the *Reserve* implied Paul was in the second 'category' of the army, which meant a position behind the regular army – that unit which undertook the heavy combat. To their rear usually stood a third army, the *Landwehr Regiment*, which was made up of reservists over the age of 40 and which primarily performed occupational and security duties. Text box 7.1 explains Paul's position within the Imperial Germany Army.

The barracks of Saxony's 8th Infantry Regiment, "Prinz Johann Georg" No.107
Source: D.Kürschner

Over the course of the next ten days or so Paul will have been put through his paces, completing military manouvers and exercises, learning how to use the latest ammunition and equipment, and understanding what to do in case of a poison gas attack.

As he prepared for the frontline, I can't help but wonder what thoughts crossed his mind? How long would it be before he saw his girls, Nannÿ and Margot and son, Theo again? Would he meet his mother, now 74, on earth or in heaven? Then there were his many siblings and of course his wife Nannÿ, whom he had spent the last seven years caring for. Or had he had enough? Was she going to be missed? Was he?

Don't get me wrong, I hardly suspect Paul delighted to be called up. The 'victims' of Bismarck's '*KulturKampf*' had conscientiously objected to the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 and he was as much Polish as he was German. As the following folk tune and drinking song sung in Leipzig at the outbreak of the war shows, there was many a citizen who had no desire to fight at all.[19] [20]

I'm a soldier, but not gladly
When they dragooned me, they didn't ask
They took me away, into the garrison
I was held like a prisoner, hunted like an animal.
I had to leave my hometown, my sweetheart
And my circle of friends.

I think about them, feel melancholy's pain
And in my breast the hot glow of anger.
Brothers! Whether German or French
Or Hungarian, Danish, Russian or Dutch;
Whether trousers be green, red, blue or white
Offer each other a fraternal hand, not bullets.

There were some who went as far as to seek a military exemption in exchange for a place on the home front – even after having publicy demonstrated their loyalty to the king, notes Marline Otte in her survey entitled: *Jewish identities in German popular entertainment, 1890-1933*. But such exemptions were typically given only to high-brow entertainers and those close to the *Kaiser*.

Take for instance Friedrich Hollaender, son of a Jewish Berlin-based theatre artist. When the war broke out, his father sought to spare him service at the front. Thanks to the crown prince's intervention, Hollaender was able to fulfill his military duties, serving as the conductor at a small military theatre in the French town of Montmedy. As the picture right shows, entertaining the troops represented an important contribution in keeping spirits up.

Circus Sidorelli visiting
Reserve Infantry Regiment 107 in May 1915
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

Destined for the western front, Slavic Paul left the kingdom he'd adopted as his home too soon to see Leipzig's new *Hauptbahnhof* fully inaugurated (in December 1915), the very spot through which he had passed almost 15 years earlier. I wonder whether he was given the chance to bid his family or close friends farewell from Leipzig's *Freilade Bahnhof* (closer to home on *Eutritzscher Straße*) like all its other soldiers heading for the front,[21] or he left instead from Dresden's *Neustädter Bahnhof* alone, under the colour of the *Kaiser*?

[19] In fact, on 9th May 1915 an overwhelming majority of Leipzig's social democratic party, 590 among 600, voted against war credits, and thus to cease sending more soldiers to the front, according to Martina Güldemann in 1999 in *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in LEIPZIG*.
[20] Dobson. Authority and Upheavel in Leipzig, 1910-1920 Pg. 83.
[21] Siegfried Anspach & Dr. Erhard Flach, Das Königliches Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 107, Dresden, 1927, pg. 6.

7.1: A Quick Guide to Paul Tÿralla's place within the Imperial German Army

The western army consisted of 1.6 million men organised into seven field armies within 23 active and 11 reserve corps.[1] But at the outset of the war, Germany formed a wave of new divisions; the 43rd - 54th Reserve Divisions.

According to Wikipedia, the Imperial German Army's 53rd Reserve Division was recruited in the Kingdom of Saxony[2] and together with the 54. Reserve-Division formed the *XXVII. Reserve-Korps*.[3] The 53rd was organized as a 'square' division, which meant its main body was composed of four *Regimental* elements, where two regiments were naturally bound together as a 'brigade.' On an organizational chart and if the entire division were formed up in the field, the two brigades of two regiments (one behind the other) would typically form a square, hence the name.[4] In all, the 53rd division constituted between 10 and 20,000 soldiers.[5]

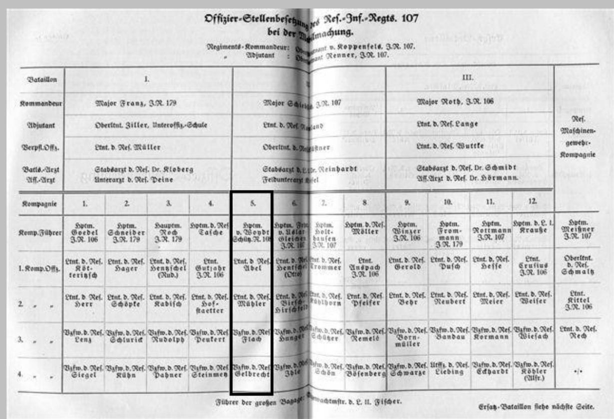
Paul's own regiment, *Reserve Infanterie Regiment 241* was bound with *Nr. 242,* forming the so-called *105. Reserve Infanterie Brigade.* This lined up alongside an unnumbered second *Reserve Infanterie Brigade* (involving *Regiments Nr. 243* and *244*), thus constituting the 53rd Reserve Division.

Reserve Infanterie Regiment Nr. 241 (or RIR 241 for short) was 'raised' in Saxony's capital, Dresden, together with a machine gun platoon (or MGR for short in German).[3] Regiments usually consisted of between 2 and 3,000 soldiers,[6] and for tactical purposes could be split into separate battalions. Logically each battalion would then contain up to 1,000 soldiers.[7]

We know that on 22nd April 1915, Paul's *Regiment* consisted of III battalions, 11 companies (**Kompagnie**) and 2,263 soldiers.[8] This meant each company typically had around 200 soldiers. Yet it had begun the war with 2,789 soldiers (or 250 soldiers per company) which shows it had lost some 526 men in the first 8 months of war. No wonder Paul was called up and sent to Dresden!

Three independent sources attest that Paul Tÿralla belonged in the *5th Kompagnie*. Its order of battle was not dissimilar to Leipzig's *Reserve Infanterie Regiment Nr. 107.* Based on that example, the table below shows how Paul's company fitted into RIR 241's *IInd Battalion* (boxed).[9]

Sources:
[1] wiki/World_War_I
[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/53rd_Reserve_Division_(German_Empire)
[3] According to http://www.militaerpass.net/53rd.htm its three battalions succeeded those of the sächsisches Grenadier-Regiment Nr. 100, Nr. 101 and the sächsisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 177.
[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_division
[5] wiki/Truppenteil#Division
[6] http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truppenteil#Regiment
[7] http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truppenteil#Bataillon
[8] Paul Knoppe. Die Geschichte des Königlich Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 241, Dresden, 1936.
[9] Siegfried Anspach & Dr. Erhard Flach, Das Königliches Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 107, Dresden, 1927.



Offizier-Stellenbesetzung [illegible] Ref.-Inf.-Regts. 107 bei der [illegible]machung.

Regiments-Kommandeur: [illegible] v. Koppenfels, J.R. 107.
Adjutant : [illegible] Renner, J.R. 107.

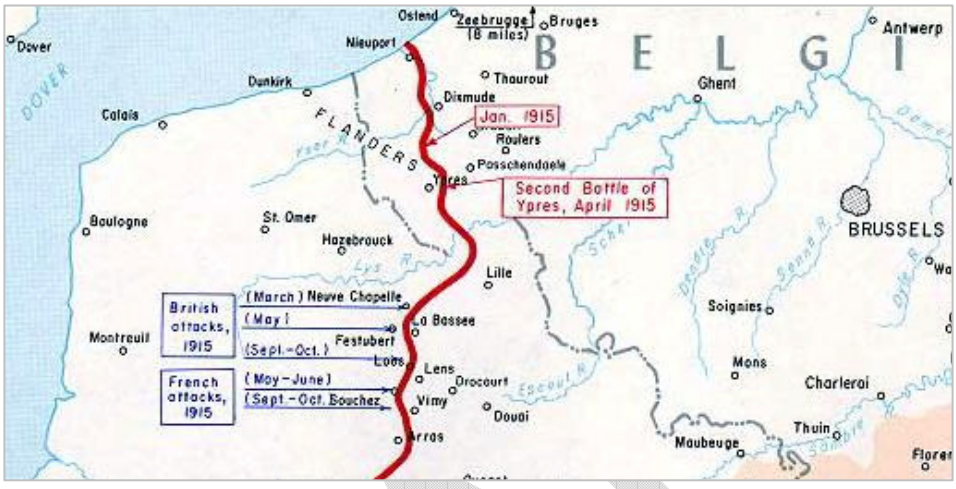
Bataillon	I.				[illegible]				III.				
Kommandeur	Major Franz, J.R. 179				Major Schie[illegible] J.R. 107				Major Roth, J.R. 106				Ref. Maschinengewehr-Kompagnie
Adjutant	Oberltnt. Ziller, Unteroffiz.-Schule				Ltnt. d. Ref. [illegible]land				Ltnt. d. Ref. Lange				
Verpfl.Offz.	Ltnt. d. Ref. Müller				Oberltnt. d. [illegible]ßner				Ltnt. d. Ref. Wuttke				
Batls.-Arzt Aff.-Arzt	Stabsarzt d. Ref. Dr. Kloberg Unterarzt d. Ref. Peine				Stabsarzt d. [illegible]r. Reinhardt Feldunterarzt [illegible]el				Stabsarzt d. Ref. Dr. Schmidt Aff.Arzt d. Ref. Dr. Hörmann				
Kompagnie	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	
Komp.Führer	Hptm. Goedel J.R. 106	Hptm. Schneider J.R. 179	Hauptm. Roch J.R. 179	Hptm. d. Ref. Tasche	Hptm. v. Woydt Schütz.R. 108	Hptm. Fr[illegible] v. Uslar Gleichen J.R. 1[illegible]	Hptm. Holt-hausen J.R. 107	Hptm. d. Ref. Möller	Hptm. Winzer J.R. 106	Hptm. From-mann J.R. 179	Hptm. Rottmann J.R. 107	Hptm. d. L. I. Krauße	Hptm. Meißner J.R. 107
1. Komp.Offz.	Ltnt. d. Ref. Köt-teritzsch	Ltnt. d. Ref. Hager	Ltnt. d. Ref. Hentzschel (Rud.)	Ltnt. Gutjahr J.R. 106	Ltnt. d. Ref. Abel	Ltnt. d. Ref. Hentschel (Otto)	[illegible]t. d. Ref. Trommer	Ltnt. Anspach J.R. 106	Ltnt. d. Ref. Gerold	Ltnt. d. Ref. Dusch	Ltnt. d. Ref. Hesse	Ltnt. Crusius J.R. 106	Oberltnt. d. Ref. Schmaltz
2. " "	Ltnt. d. Ref. Herr	Ltnt. d. Ref. Schöpke	Ltnt. d. Ref. Kabisch	Ltnt. d. Ref. Hof-staetter	Ltnt. d. Ref. Mühler	Ltnt. d. [illegible] Bi[illegible]sch-Hirschfeld	[illegible]t. d. Ref. Kühlhorn	Ltnt. d. Ref. Pfeifer	Ltnt. d. Ref. Behr	Ltnt. d. Ref. Neubert	Ltnt. d. Ref. Meier	Ltnt. d. Ref. Weiser	Ltnt. Kittel J.R. 106
3. " "	Vzfw. d. Ref. Lenz	Vzfw. d. Ref. Schlurick	Vzfw. d. Ref. Rudolph	Vzfw. d. Ref. Peukert	Vzfw. d. Ref. Flach	Vzfw. d. [illegible] Hunger	[illegible] d. Ref. Schützer	Vzfw. d. Ref. Remeis	Vzfw. d. Ref. Born-müller	Vzfw. d. Ref. Bandau	Vzfw. d. Ref. Kormann	Vzfw. d. Ref. Wiesach	Ltnt. d. Ref. Rech
4. " "	Vzfw. d. Ref. Siegel	Vzfw. d. Ref. Kühn	Vzfw. d. Ref. Pahner	Vzfw. d. Ref. Steinmetz	Vzfw. d. Ref. Gelbrecht	Vzfw. d. [illegible] Ihle	[illegible] d. Ref. Schön	Vzfw. d. Ref. Bösenberg	Vzfw. d. Ref. Schwarze	Uffz. d. Ref. Liebing	Vzfw. d. Ref. Eckhardt	Vzfw. d. Ref. Köhler (Uffz.)	-/-

Führer der großen Bagage: [illegible]wachtmstr. d. L. II. Fischer.

Ersatz-Bataillon siehe nächste Seite.

Nb: The photo of a soldier within RIR 241 comes kind courtesy of Drake Goodman's flickr webpage profile (see: http://www.flickr.com/photos/drakegoodman/5697903366/). This same page describes in detail what this soldier wears, including his headwear, tunic, buckle, ammunition pouches, armaments (e.g. Gew98 fitted with a Sg98 bayonet) besides the soldier's rank (Infantrist/Musketier). The leather headwear, known as the Pickelhaube, was incidentally replaced by a silicon/nickel steel helmet in 1916 owing to the number of casualties suffered from severe head wounds (more often caused by shrapnel than by gunfire). For more see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stahlhelm
Also Note: Wikipedia has a page on Reserve Infanterie Regiment 241. Check back here for updates:

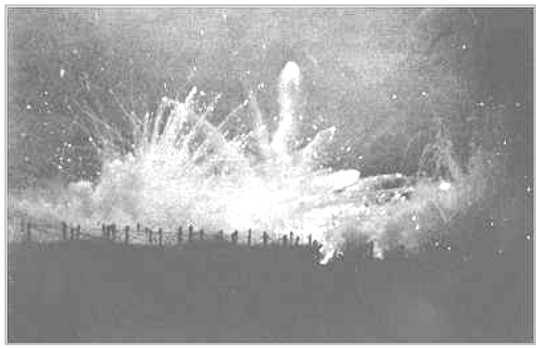
Little Nannÿ's father didn't have to wait long for a piece of the action – albeit as a common soldier. It's possible his first assignment (and the third of his 53rd Reserve Division since the outbreak of the war and its prior involvement in the Battle of the Marne – see pg. 147) was supporting the Imperial Germany 'Fourth' Army's offensive at the Second Battle of Ypres between 22nd April and 25th May 1915 (remember, Germany was composed of seven field armies).[22] I estimate he arrived around 10th May.



Wikipedia notes that the Second Battle of Ypres was the first time Germany used poison gas on a large scale on the western front. Not only this, but it was also the first time a former colonial force (Canadians) pushed back a major European power (Germans) albeit briefly and on a short stretch of European soil.

The battle consisted in fact of four separate engagements. On these occasions, the Allies pitched eight infantry divisions against the Germans seven. Yet it was the Allies who lost twice as many soldiers (70,000 dead, wounded, or missing) compared to Germany's 35,000.[23]

According to Knoppe, author of "The History of RIR 241," Paul Tÿralla's second battalion was engaged between 8-13th May in the third battle: Frezenberg and then the fourth: Bellewarde, between 24-25th May.[24]



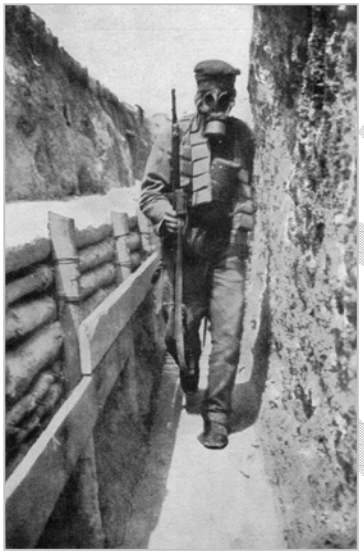
German barrage on Allied trenches, thought to be the Second Battle of Ypres, 1915
Source: wiki/Second_Battle_of_Ypres

The Allies huge losses were in no small part due to the use of poison gas (in violation of the so-called Hague Convention). According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, this caused devastation on a scale that had never been seen before.[25]

[22] http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/53._Reserve-Division_(3._Königlich_Sächsische)
[23] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Ypres
[24] Paul KNOPPE. Die Geschichte des Königlich Sächsischen Reserve-Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 241. Dresden, 1936. Vol. 76 of the sächsische Anteils der Erinnerungsblätter.
[25] http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/57jqgq.htm

The two principally used were chlorine and sulphur chloride. The former arrived as yellow-green clouds that drifted slowly towards the Allied trenches with a distinctive smell of pineapple and pepper. Being denser than air, it quickly filled the trenches, forcing the troops to climb out into heavy German fire. Soldiers initially coughed green froth and and spat blood while suffering 'a knife edge of pain' in the lungs and the chest and a burning sensation in their throats. The gas destroyed their respiratory organs which led to a slow death by asphyxiation – an equivalent death to drowning only on dry land. The dead were turned a greenish black and yellow at once. Approximately 6,000 French and colonial troops died within ten minutes at Ypres, on April 22, 1915. Yet a large number of German soldiers too were injured or killed in the process of carrying out the attack

The latter gas, sulphur chloride, appeared in the form of a thick yellow cloud and overcame all those who breathed in its poisonous fumes. Those who were enveloped by them were not able to see each other half a yard apart, allowing the German army to charge, driving the bewildered French back past their own trenches. "Hundreds ..fell and died;" wrote one Captain Hugh Pollard in *The Memoirs of a VC* in 1932; "others lay helpless, froth upon their agonized lips and their racked bodies powerfully sick, with tearing nausea at short intervals. They too would die later - a slow and lingering death of agony unspeakable. The whole air was tainted with the acrid smell of chlorine that caught at the back of men's throats and filled their mouths with its metallic taste."



Elsewhere along the frontline, Reserve Infantrie Regiments like Saxony's Nr. 107 had to learn to contend with Allied poison gas attacks from Sept. 1915 in the Champagne
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

The use of poison gas came as a tactical surprise to the Allies. But even moreso the Germans were caught off-guard by their success. With the survivors abandoning their positions en masse, gaps were left in the front line. However, the German high command, having not foreseen the effectiveness of their new weapon, had not put any reserves ready in the area. With a lack of follow up, its forces failed to exploit their success, especially in the first Ypres engagement (they were subsequently more successful).

Successful gas attacks depended on having the right sort of weather conditions. For example, when the British Army launched a gas attack on 25th September in 1915, the wind blew it back into the faces of the advancing troops and scuppered the attack.[26] After the Second Battle of Ypres, both sides developed more sophisticated gas weapons and counter-measures so that it was never especially effective again. Development of gas protection was instituted and by July 1915, Allied soldiers were given efficient gas masks and anti-asphyxiation respirators.

Yet there is a terrible irony in the research and development of poisoned gas, which is explained in the textbox overleaf.

[26] This problem was solved in 1916 when gas shells were produced for use with heavy artillery which increased the army's range of attack and helped to protect their own troops when weather conditions were not completely ideal.

7.2: The Irony in Conformity: The Story of Fritz Haber

Fritz Haber personifies the tragedy of a Jew desperate to be a patriotic German, whose life was destroyed after the Nazis came to power. In the cruellest of ironies, it was his work that the Nazis used to create the gas used to murder millions in the Holocaust - including his relatives.

But let's go back to the beginning. He was born in 1868 in Breslau, and like another famous German from Breslau, Dr. Martin A. Couny born just two years later (see text box at the beginning of Chapter VI), met with success in Berlin. There he studied chemistry - the ideal formula, he hoped, for transforming a provincial Jewish boy into a successful German. It was an exhilarating time, as Germany, newly unified under the Kaiser, powered ahead with scientific research at the forefront.

But anti-Semitism also grew as the century drew to a close, which preyed on Haber's mind despite his decision to convert to Christianity. The breakthrough that made his name answered one of the great challenges of the time - feeding growing populations. In 1909 Haber found a way of synthesising ammonia for fertilizer. Used on a large scale, it brought about a huge increase in crop yields – and practically banished the fear of famine in large parts of the world.

But the process was also highly useful for the military in making explosives. When World War I broke out, Haber - now working for the Kaiser's research institute in Berlin – like so many Jews, was desperate to prove his patriotism. He began experimenting with chlorine gas which, he said, would shorten the war. The first attack using his methods was at Ypres in 1915. Haber was promoted to captain in the German army, but his reputation remained uncertain. Awarded the Nobel Prize for his work on ammonia, he also feared arrest as a war criminal for his poison gas research.

After the war, iIn the new Germany of the Weimar Republic, Haber continued to strive patriotically. By the early 1930s he could see vicious anti-Semitism spreading around him, and his claim to be a German patriot was no protection. "In early 1933", his daughter Eva told Chris Bowlby of BBC Radio 4, "he went to his institute. There was the porter, who said: 'The Jew Haber is not allowed in here.'"

Haber resigned, devastated, went briefly into exile, and died of a heart attack in 1934. Despite the significance of his discoveries he remains much less well known than his friend and colleague Albert Einstein - perhaps because his reputation is so disputed. Because it is not just poison gas that mars his name. There was one other area of research in the 1920s in which Haber and his colleagues were successful: developing pesticide gases.

Of Haber's legacies, this was the bitterest. This research was later developed into the Zyklon process, used by the Nazis to murder millions in their death camps, including his own extended family. In an "excess of patriotism" he invented gas warfare, noted his godson, historian Fritz Stern, which "has come to define… the unspeakable horror of the First World War."

And as for his tortured relationship with Germany, Einstein concluded: "Haber's life was the tragedy of the German Jew - the tragedy of unrequited love."

Right: A drawing made by a fellow chemist *"The devil and Fritz Haber as gas warriors"* (KIT Archives).

Source: This text summarises an article by Chris Bowlby posted at www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13015210 on 11 April 2011. The photo above is courtesy of: Wikipedia: wiki/Fritz_Haber

Despite the human losses during the Second Battle of Ypres, its battlefields and cemetaries are also widely remembered for the profusion of poppies which grew across Flanders in the disturbed earth where war casualties were buried, their brilliant red colour an appropriate symbol for the blood spilt in the war. Through this, poppies became a symbol of what is known as Remembrance Day, a memorial day observed in Commonwealth countries on 11 November, to remember the members of their armed forces who have died on duty since World War I.[27]

7.3: In Flanders Fields

In Flanders Fields

IN Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae's poem, as printed in *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems* in 1919

Sources: wiki/In_Flanders_Fields and wiki/User: Jean-Pol_GRANDMONT

The popularity of the poppy is due in no small part to the poem entitled '*In Flanders Fields*,' which was written during the Second Battle of Ypres by Canadian physician and Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae after witnessing the death of a fellow soldier. The poem (see textbox left) was written in the voice of those who perished in the war and encouraged fellow soldiers not to 'break faith' but to carry 'the torch' in the quest to end the 'quarrel with the foe' so that those who lay dead in the fields may peacefully 'sleep.' Published in *Punch Magazine* on December 8, 1915, it is still recited today, especially on Remembrance Day and Memorial Day.[28]

By the time this poem had been written, Little Nanny's father was just six weeks shy of his 33rd birthday. Paul was not alone in being back 'under the colours.' In July, 1915 his brother-in-law, Fritz, got called up by Saxony's Infantry Regiment 107 too.

Since March of that year, the regiment had been absorbed within the Imperial German Army's 58th Infantry Division, which was formed as part of a wave of new infantry divisions in the spring of 1915 using troops sourced from the Kingdoms of Saxony and Württemberg (remember Germany only came into existence in 1871. Therefore its army was an assemblage of Prussian, Saxon and Bavarian armies and the Royal Württemberg Corps). The regiment was one of three (plus a *Radfahrer-Kompanie)* that made up the 116th Infanterie-Brigade. Together with the 58th Feldartillerie-Brigade, and three other units, it formed the 'triangular' 58th Infantry Division. [29]

To the best of our knowledge and according to his *Einwohnermeldekarte,* Fritz served within the regiment's 1st *Ersatz (Reserve) Batallion* and its *3rd Kompagnie*. Aged a little over 36, he appears to have gone off more or less immediately to the front too. Not, however, to the western front, but east where he faced the Russians.

[27] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remembrance_Day
[28] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Ypres
[29] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/58th_Infantry_Division_(German_Empire)

The division participated in the so-called Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive between May and October together with Austro-Hungarian troops under a unified command (something the Allies would miss until spring 1918). There it pushed the Russians back hundreds of kilometers from the borders of the Central Powers, removing the threat of invasion.[30]

After the Second Battle of Ypres, Paul Tÿralla's 53rd Reserve Division relocated about 40 kilometers to the north, at the Yser River, where it had two weeks break and then was involved in positional warfare and fighting until mid-September. Knoppe notes that rest period was spent integrating and strengthening those troops new to the regiment, including I imagine the likes of Paul. Between September 17th and October 1st, the division then enjoyed a further period of rest, during which time it travelled up to Oostende where for most it was the first time they saw the sea. "Nary a word fell from their lips," wrote Knoppe in his resume of RIR 241.

Some probably got to enjoy formal leave and after five months on the go, I imagine respite for Paul was probably well in order, noting also that brother-in-law Fritz travelled home after roughly the same period. I am sure he was delighted to head home to visit his girls and young Theo, though I wonder if they were as happy to see him?

Usually soldiers got relatively short periods of no more than a few days leave,[31] and on October 1st, 1915, the 53rd division was urgently transferred to supporting the German Army's defences against the French offensive in the Second Battle of Champagne. That had begun on September 22nd, when the French General Joffre had attacked the German frontline, in the hope of achieving a decisive breakthrough.

This was where many of Leipzig's soldiers were dug in, including *Reserve Infantry Regiment 107*. Within a matter of six days, Paul Tÿralla found himself in the thick of the action, positioned on the near side of Verdun – see the map on pg. 141 – some 75km from where his brother-in-law, Fritz (who himself had been posted in October to the trenchlines of Lorraine) lay on its far side. As the following pages will show, the next weeks were Paul Tÿralla's last.

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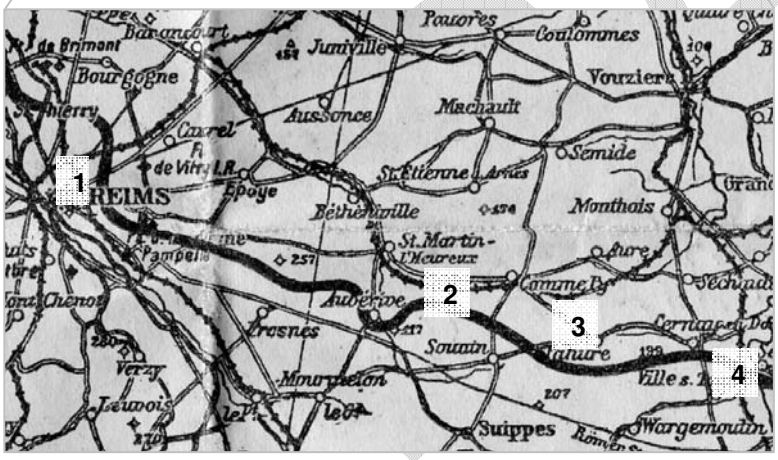
[30] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_I)
[31] Reference missing!

The Champagne is an historic province in the northeast of France, now best known for the sparkling white wine that bears its name. As the map below reveals (where it is shaded in pink), its western edge lies east of Paris, about 160 km. The cities of Troyes, Épernay and Reims (at the centre of the region and marked as '1' on the map below), are the commercial centers of the area. The name Champagne comes from the Latin *Campania,* and is said to refer to the similarities between the rolling hills of the province and the Italian countryside of Campania located south of Rome.[32]

Pretty in pink: France's Champagne region today showing Paris to its southwest, Verdun to its east and Reims at its centre

The region contains immense undulating plains, whose surface is broken by occasional low hills and ridges, none of them much over two hundred metrres in height. In 1916, the country here was very sparsely settled; the few villages that dotted the plain were wretchedly poor; the trees on the slopes of the ridges were stunted and scraggly; the soil was chalky marl, which when scratched left a staring scar. The grass which tried to grow upon it seemed to wither and die of a broken heart, according to English war correspondent E. Alexander Powell in his reflections from the French front in his book: '*Vive La France,*' from which many of the following pages are summarized. [33]

The map below shows the German frontline in 1915 and 1916. [34] The bold line that runs from Reims ('1') to Massiges ('4') signified a stretch of about 50 kilometers (Massiges in turn lay about 45km west of Verdun).



Many of Leipzig's troops were involved in the battles that took place in the Champagne region.[35] The soldiers of the *Reserve Infantry Regiment 107* for instance had been stationed at St. Souplet ('2' on the map left and pictured opposite at top) since early March 1915, after the so-called first battle of the Champagne. Paul's position was just to the north of Tahure (see '3'), southeast of the railway line at Comme Py (also known as Sommepy).

[32] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Champagne_(province)
[33] Extracts from E. Alexander Powell, Vive La France. 1916. Retrieved from: www.worldwar1.com/tgws/
[34] S.Anspach & Dr. E.Flach, Das Königliches Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 107, Dresden, 1927.
[35] Leben in Leipzig. Christel Foerster, 1997

Before we continue with his engagement, let's review the period leading up to the 'great French offensive.' At St. Souplet, German soldiers had enjoyed relative peace since March. This allowed them time to reinforce their position, construct fortifications and build defences of a virtually impregnable nature.

Above top: View of St. Souplet ('2') en route to the trenches
Below: Soldier dugout, "Ripsdorf"
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

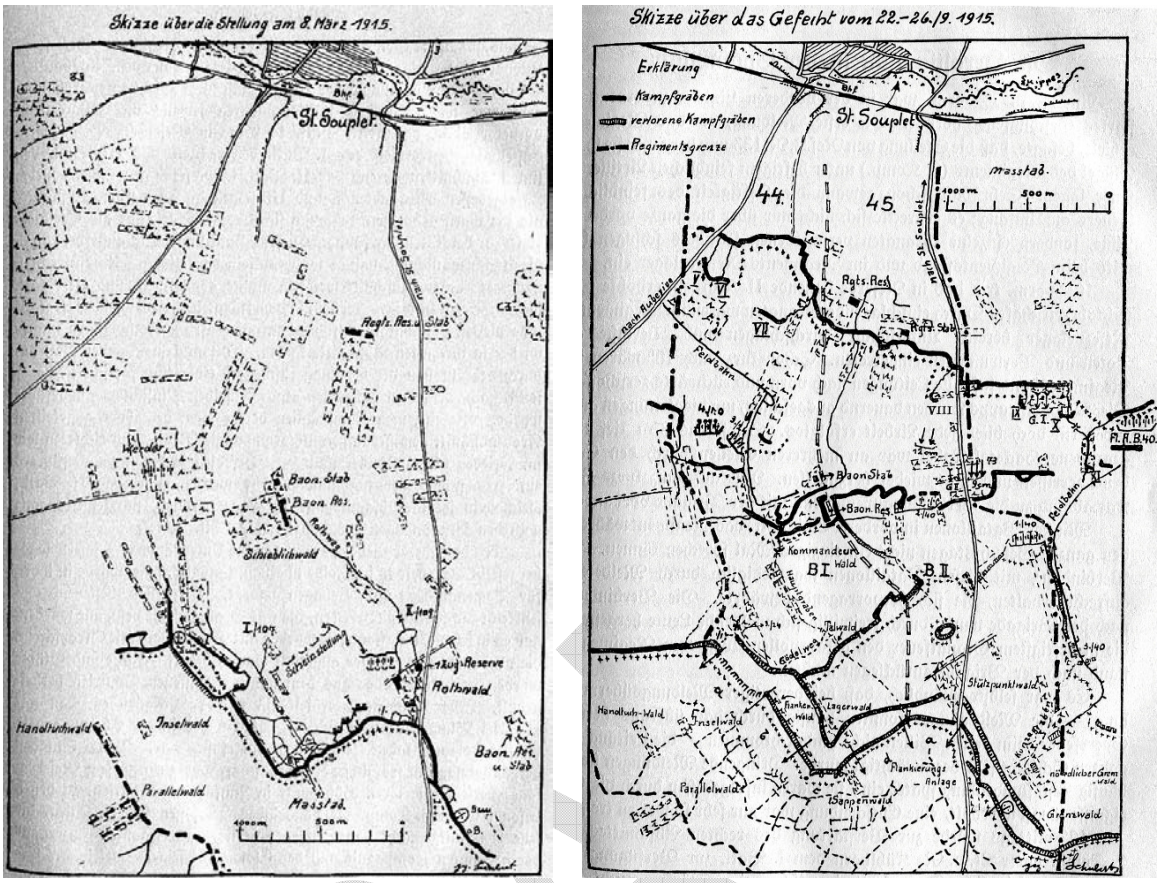
The trenches those soldiers constructed formed a veritable maze, with traps, blind passageways and cul-de-sacs, so that attackers could be wiped out by skilfully concealed machine guns (see for instance the maps opposite). At some points there were five lines of trenches, one behind the other, the ground behind them being divided into sections and supplied with an extraordinary number of communication trenches, protected by barbed wire entanglements on both sides. Thus in case the first line gave way, the assailants would find themselves confronted by a series of small forts, heavily armed and communicating one with the other, which enabled the Germans to rally and organize flank attacks without delay.

This elaborate system of subterranean passages, trenches and parallels formed only the first German line of defence, behind it there was a second line, the artillery being stationed between the two. There was, moreover, an elaborate system of light railways (marked '*Feldbahn*' in the right hand side map opposite), some of which came right up to the front, that there might be no delay in getting up ammunition and fresh troops from the bases in the rear.

The trenches were topped with sand-bags and in many cases had walls of concrete. They were protected by barbed wire entanglements, some of which were as many as 55 metres deep (see the photos on pg.149 for instance). The ground in front of the entanglements was strewn with sharpened stakes, chevaux-de-frise,[36] land mines and bombs which exploded upon contact.

The men manning the trenches were stationed behind shields of armour-plate and every fifteen yards was a machine gun. Mounted on the trench walls were revolving steel turrets, miniature editions of those on battleships, all save the top of the turret and the muzzle of the quick-firing gun within it being embedded in the ground.

[36] Defensive obstacles consisting of a portable frame covered with many long iron or wooden spikes or even actual spears, principally intended as an anti-cavalry obstacle. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chevaux-de-frise



St. Souplet's trenches, constructed remember by a collective of artisans, volunteers, farmers and the bourgeoisie largely between March 8th and Sept. 22nd-26th, 1915. Note too the 1000 metres scale.
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

Above: Peace and enough time to write home
Source: Anspach &Flach, 1927

In the days leading up to September 22nd, German soldiers listened with amused complacence to the reports brought in by their aviators of the great preparations being made behind the French lines. As far as they were concerned, they had constructed a fortress! One Leipzig canonier wrote home:

> *"Der deutsche Soldat braucht dreierlei: gute Waffen, gute Nahrung und gute Bücher, oder Kurz: Krupp, die Landwirtschaft und Reclam."*

That is to say; "German soldiers need three things: good arms, good food and good books. Or in short: Krupp, land and Reclam."
37 38

[37] Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in LEIPZIG. Martina Güldemann, 1999
[38] Reclam was the publisher to whom the soldier sent a thank you note for their books. Krupps was a prominent 400-year-old German dynasty from Essen famous for its steel production and manufacture of ammunition and armaments. It was the largest company in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. See: wiki/Krupp for more

Warm dinners were brought out to the men in the evening from the field kitchens, along with drinks in the morning. Each soldier received a pot half-filled with water for drinking, bathing and washing (including clothes). Even brothels were made available to cater for soldiers' sexual needs.

Feldpost managed the mail and delivered letters to and from home. When this occurred, there was a surge of excitement and anticipation for sweet words from loved ones. How many letters had Paul ever sent or received from his wife and children? If so, he might have used the RIR 241 card shown below left, which reads: "Hearty best wishes for today."

Above: The long awaited replies
Below: RIR 241 greeting card
Bottom: Awaiting French attacks
Source: Anspach &Flach, 1927 & Drake Goodman's flickr webpage (see pg. 147)

On the south side of the German trenches lay the French, between 600 and 1000 metres away. Virtually, the entire summer of 1915 they had spent preparing for an offensive which was intended to reclaim their 'eastern front.' New French units were formed, while an extraordinary quantity of ammunition was made available by the factories. Artillery of every pattern and calibre, from light mountain guns to monster weapons christened '*Les Vainqueurs*,' nearly three thousand guns in total, had been concentrated on a front of only 25 kilometres.

"Had the guns been placed side by side they would have extended far beyond the fifteen-mile battle-front" writes Powell. Each battery had a designated spot to fire at while a score of captive balloons with telephonic connections were intended to direct their fire. Behind *each* of the French guns were stacked two thousand shells. Forty miles of reserve and commu-nication trenches, were dug ten miles of which were wide enough for four men to walk abreast. Hospitals all over France were emptied and put in readiness for the river of wounded which would soon flood in.

Yet in August, German Chief of Staff, Falkenhayn pondered why the long-expected attacks failed to materialize. He doubted whether the offensive would be undertaken at all. Koppenfels, the Reserve Regiment's commander took his holidays, the soldiers played football, batallions were rotated in the trenches while preparatory work continued, with more trenches and telegraph lines installed. (A&F, pg. 78).

However, the French airmen had photographed and mapped every twist and turn in the enemy's trenches and from the beginning of September, more and more frequent intelligence reports suggested an early attack was to be expected in Lille, with a simultaneous offensive by the French alone in Champagne.[39] Holidaying staff were recalled and on 8th September a heavy grenade reached the Pioneer's dugout and exploded the store of hand and artillery grenades. Ten men were lost, three seriously wounded. A similar incident occurred on 19th September. (A&F, pg. 88).

On the morning of 22nd September, the great bombardment "the greatest that the world had ever known," claims Powell, began. The air was immediately crowded with French shells that burst at the rate of twenty a second, forming one wave of black smoke, one unbroken line of exploding shells, as far as the horizon. The objective was to level the parapets and trenches so that the infantry could advance.

While the big guns were shelling the German cantonments, their staff headquarters, and the railways (through which reinforcements were supposed to be brought up), the field-batteries turned their attention on the communication trenches, dropping such a hail of projectiles that all telephone communication between the first and second frontlines was interrupted. In effect, the second line did not know what was happening in the first.

So terrific was the torrent of high explosive and unending detonation that it was indeed impossible for food or water to be brought to the men in the bombarded trenches. That same curtain of shell-fire made it equally impossible for them to retreat. Hundreds of soldiers, whole companies, who had taken refuge in their underground shelters, were buried alive when exploding shells sent the earthen walls crashing in upon them. Whole forests of trees were mown down by the blast of steel from the French guns like a harvester that mows down a field of grain. The wire entanglements before the German trenches were thus swept away.

Powell writes that trenches which had taken months of painstaking toil to build were utterly demolished in an hour. The sand-bags which lined the parapets were set on fire by the French high explosive and the soldiers behind them were suffocated by the fumes. The bursts of the big shells were like volcanoes above the German lines, vomiting skyward huge geysers of earth and smoke which hung for a time against the horizon and were then gradually dissipated by the wind. Amidst these fountains of earth and smoke, arms and legs flew in the air. For three days and two nights the bombardment never ceased or slackened.

An American aviator who flew over the lines when the bombardment was at its height said: "The noise was like a machine gun made of cannon." 'Drum fire' or *Trommelfeuer* the Germans called it.

"There are no words between the covers of the dictionary" writes Powell, "to describe what it must have been like within the German lines under that rain of death." Yet letters and diaries found on soldiers' bodies, written 'in the very shadow of death' and rendered partially illegible because they were spattered with the blood of the men who wrote them, give us a graphic glimpse:

[39] http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/champagne1915_falkenhayn.htm

"A hail of shells is falling upon us. No food can be brought to us. When will the end come?" 'Peace!' is what every one is saying. Little is left of the trench. It will soon be on a level with the ground."

"The noise is awful. It is like a collapse of the world. Sixty men out of a company of two hundred and fifty were killed last night. The force of the French shells is frightful. A dug-out fifteen feet deep, with seven feet of earth and two layers of timber on top, was smashed up like so much matchwood"

"The railway has been shelled so heavily that all trains are stopped. We have been in the first line for three days, and during that time the French have kept up such a fire that our trenches cannot be seen at all."

"The artillery are firing almost as fast as the infantry. The whole front is covered with smoke and we can see nothing. Men are dying like flies."

No wonder that scores of German prisoners were found to be insane.

The bombardment raged with almost undiminished fury in the Champagne until 24th September. Suddenly the French batteries went quiet. On the morning of Saturday 25th September, the whole world seemed grey; lead-coloured clouds hung low overhead, and a drizzling rain was falling.

Falkenhayn reported after those three days that "although the terrible gunfire had caused hitherto unheard-of destruction both in and far behind our positions, in addition to very heavy losses in men, the French were unable to gain any vital advantages on the 24th in Champagne."[40]

Reinforcements from the scanty general reserve had already been sent to the threatened armies, and were now sent in greater numbers. The Third Army received heavy batteries and one infantry division and a brigade of infantry in addition. But not yet Paul's 53rd Division who was still in reserve for the Fourth Army, remember.

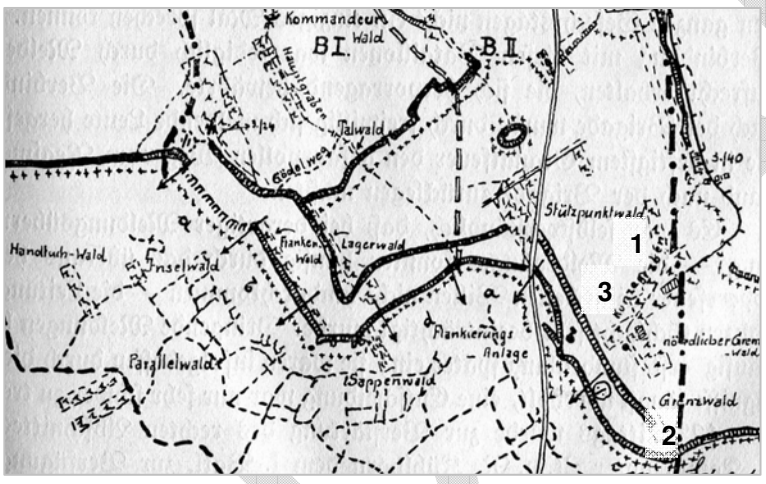
There was to be no weekend break from the day job, neither for the French nor the Germans. French drummers and buglers took up their positions on Saturday morning at 0915 and played their troops into action. Over the tops of the trenches surged strange fighting figures in their invisible pale-blue uniforms, a fifteen mile-long human wave tipped with glistening steel. The infantry attacks thus began across a frontline that ran midway between Rheims and Verdun.

[40] http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/champagne1915_falkenhayn.htm

As the French infantry ran towards the German frontline they broke out from columns of two (advancing in twos with fifty paces between each pair) into columns of squad (each man alone, twenty-five paces from his neighbour) as prettily and perfectly as though on a parade-ground. Three minutes after the first of the Colonials had scrambled over the top of their trenches, they reached the German first line.

Stretches of wire entanglements still remained in front of portions of the German trenches and the attacking columns soon found themselves abruptly halted by steel chevaux-de-frise. The German artillery was prepared, and the ranks of the advancing French were swept by a hurricane of fire. At frequent intervals German machine guns poured in a deadly fire from their sunken positions behind the French.

Yet, the position in Champagne on the 25th September was serious, wrote von Falkenhayn, not least because seventeen French divisions drove the remnants of two German divisions, on a front of 15 miles (25 kilometres), with a depth of 2 miles (3 kilometres), back into their rear positions, which as he conceded "unfortunately had also been shot to pieces."



The St.Souplet's front and second line trenches: Sept. 26th, 1915.
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

At St. Souplet, according to Anspach and Flach, the French penetrated the flanks at *Stutzpunktwald* (see '1' in the map left) and at *Grenzwald* ('2').[41] In massive numbers they stormed the trenches, as far up as *'Kunzgraben'* (see '3'). Their advance was so rapid that the reserve companies at *Stutzpunktwald* were caught by surprise and could not mount a timely reaction. The extent of French success is shown by those trenches which are shaded (i.e. not solid).

The majority of the soldiers in these trenches were either captured (a number of officers were noted by Powell to be even in their beds), while the rest of the entire battalion (cca. 1000 soldiers) was lost in close combat or severely wounded running back to the second line. Most of them had had no food for several days, and were suffering acutely from thirst.

"All of them seemed completely unstrung and depressed by the terrible nature of the French bombardment" reported Powell. Even five days after these frontline trenches were taken (ie. by the end of the month), occasional Germans were found hiding in the labyrinth of underground shelters.

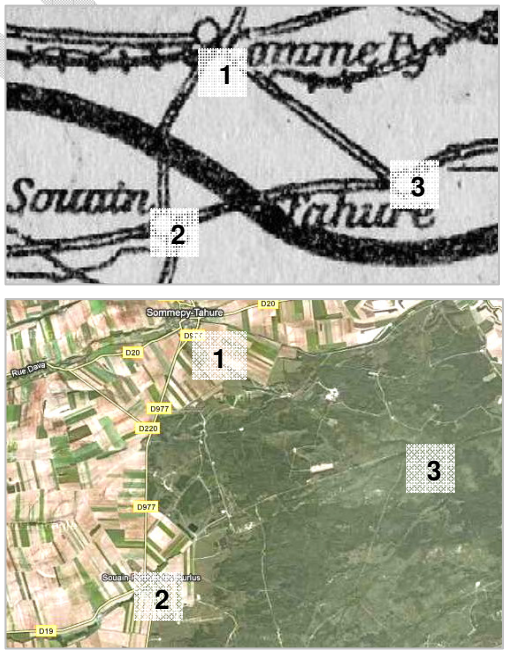
[41] S.Anspach & Dr. E. Flach, Das Königliches Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 107, Dresden, 1927. pg.95

Falkenhayn recognized them as "Islands and islets in the sea of destruction created by the enemy artillery."But, he continues in the official German statement on the offensive, a serious crisis arose, leading von Hausen to consider the Third Army's complete withdrawal from the front. But such a step would have led to very serious consequences. Firstly in the moral effect, which would have been general, secondly in the tactical results on the neighbouring fronts, and finally by giving space to the enemy masses.

The proposed withdrawal was never carried out, on the urgent advice of the Chief of Staff of the neighbouring Fifth Army. Rather than retreat, the Germans adopted a new 'defense-in-depth' scheme that consisted of a series of defensive zones and positions with a depth of up to 5 miles/8 kilometres.[42] [43]

During the course of September 25th, reserves arrived from the eastern front and were at once thrown into the Champagne. This additional strength sufficed to some extent to break the weight of the French enemy's attacks on the fighting fronts, but it was insufficient to repel the whole offensive, which lasted for many days. The heavy fighting wore down the strength even of formations freshly thrown in, all the more quickly because heavy rain had set in by the evening, turning the shell-torn battlefield into a marsh. But by that time, the 5th and 12th companies of RIR 107 had stabilised the front and were holding the enemy at the second line, reported Anspach and Flach.[44]

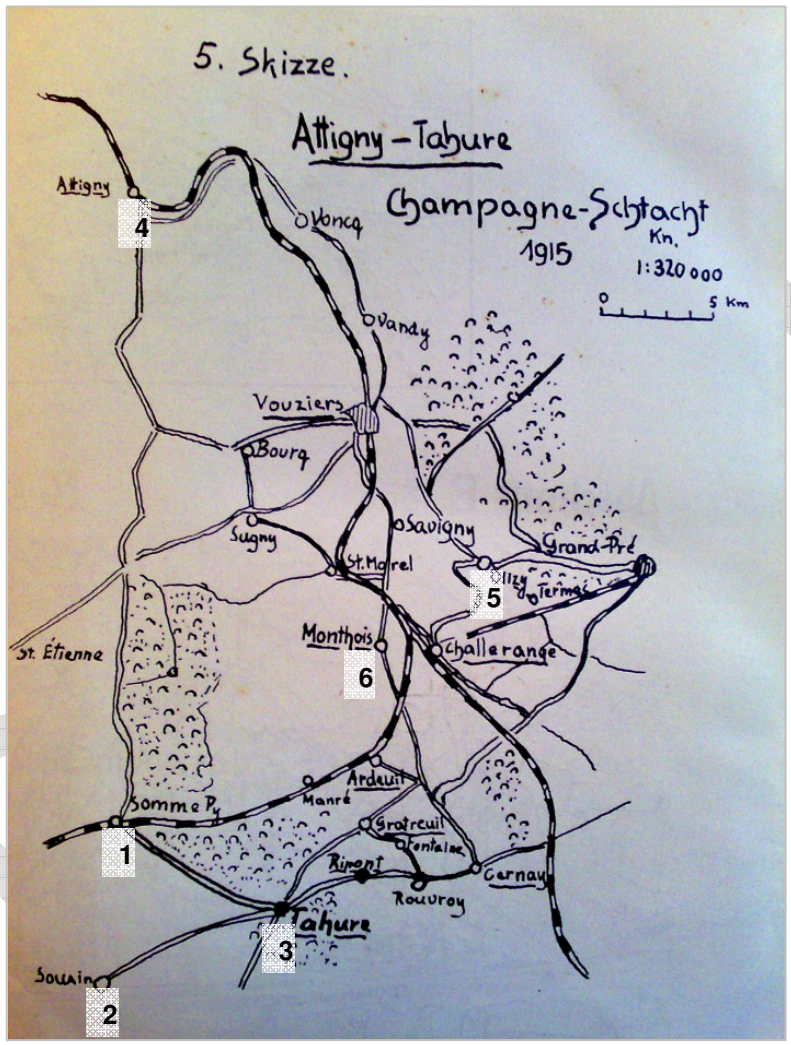
Elsewhere, however, the French were still advancing. According to the French government statement on the Battle of Champagne, on September 26th and 27th its army succeeded north of Souain in occupying a front facing north (see the map extract right).[45] There it was in contact with the Germans' second line, along a stretch of seven and a half miles. French Generals and Colonels had taken up their posts of command in the shelter of the German officers' former huts, where notices such as "*Stab Bataillons*" and "*Kompagnie Führer*" still hung. According to the German government statement, since September 25th their advance included a stretch "on and to the east of the Souain-Somme-Py road" (i.e. facing Tahure).



Fields and Forest: The German frontline west of Tahure, summer 1915 (above top) and in 2011 (above) NB: figures correspond
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927 and GoogleMaps

[42] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_(World_War_I)
[43] Defence in depth (also known as deep or elastic defence) is a military strategy which seeks to delay rather than prevent the advance of an attacker, buying time but causing additional casualties by yielding space.
See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense-in-depth
[44] S.Anspach & Dr. E.Flach, Das Königliches Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 107, Dresden, 1927. pg.96
[45] http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/champagne1915_frenchgovt.htm

In the first half of October, German Headquarters (*Große Hauptquartier*), in anticipation of French attempts to restart their offensive, replaced many of those troops worn out by the trench fighting with fresh divisions drawn from quieter sectors of the front. That included Paul Tÿralla's 53rd Reserve Division, which arrived via train to Attigny ('4' on the map below), 30km north of Tahure ('3'), halting there at 0610 on Saturday October 2nd. From there the division marched forth under clear blue skies and warm autumn colours before being accomodated at various locales near Olizy ('5'), where the *II. Bataillon* itself paused until Tuesday 5th October.



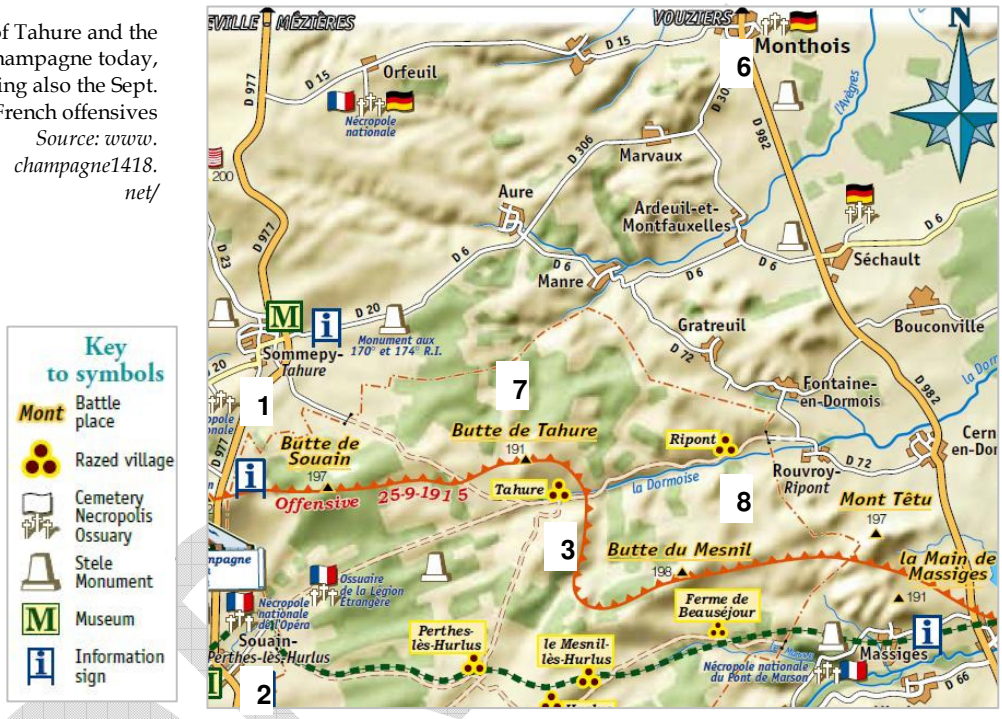
Attigny-Tahure: Champagne Battle, 1915 NB: numbers correspond to the map on the previous page as well as that overleaf
Source: Paul Knoppe. Die Geschichte des Königlich Sächsische Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 241, Dresden, 1936

Knoppe's account (from which many of the following pages are extracted) offers fascinating insight into soldiers' perspectives. En route to Olizy they savoured coffee, ripe apples straight from the trees, good food and were in high spirits. At night, because the moon lay almost in the line of sight with the sun (it was not new until 8th October) "Jupiter alone shone brightly in the mysteriously dark sky, which meant we saw only a beautiful autumn land before us" he wrote.

Yet alongside beauty, the soldiers caught a glimpse of what was to come. From their position, away to the southwest and across toward Tahure ('3'), beyond the hills and through the Argonne forest, canons of light shot up into the sky. "There" wrote Knoppe "lay the hell of Tahure, into which we soon would be placed," But to this he added, "for now we lived here in deepest peace."

On the morning of October 6th, the alarm woke all three battalions and at 9 o'clock, ten of its companies marched toward their base at Monthois (see '6' below and on the map on the previous page also), were they prepared for action.

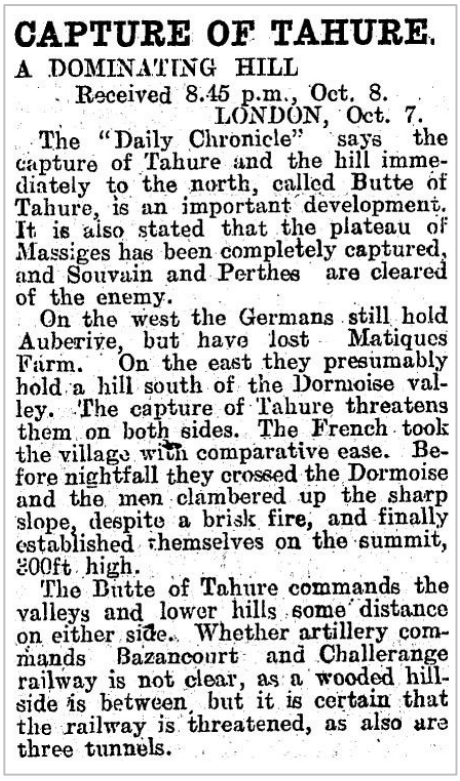
Map of Tahure and the Champagne today, showing also the Sept. 1915 French offensives
Source: www.champagne1418.net/



For ten days now their opponents had been camped out facing the Butte of Tahure on the summit of a node called 'Hill 201,' where the Germans had previously dug a second line named the 'Trench of the Vistula.'[46] The French view of the battlefield from Perthes or thereabouts, looking northeast towards the German frontline is shown below.

The French frontline facing the Butte of Tahure (left, '7') until 'Ferme de Beauséjour' (right, '8'). Note also the planes locked in combat
Source: vestiges.1914.1918.free.fr/Champagne_2.htm

[46] http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/champagne1915_frenchgovt.htm



CAPTURE OF TAHURE.

A DOMINATING HILL

Received 8.45 p.m., Oct. 8.

LONDON, Oct. 7.

The "Daily Chronicle" says the capture of Tahure and the hill immediately to the north, called Butte of Tahure, is an important development. It is also stated that the plateau of Massiges has been completely captured, and Souvain and Perthes are cleared of the enemy.

On the west the Germans still hold Auberive, but have lost Matiques Farm. On the east they presumably hold a hill south of the Dormoise valley. The capture of Tahure threatens them on both sides. The French took the village with comparative ease. Before nightfall they crossed the Dormoise and the men clambered up the sharp slope, despite a brisk fire, and finally established themselves on the summit, 200ft high.

The Butte of Tahure commands the valleys and lower hills some distance on either side. Whether artillery commands Bazancourt and Challerange railway is not clear, as a wooded hillside is between, but it is certain that the railway is threatened, as also are three tunnels.

New Zealand's Wanganui Chronicle, 9 October 1915.
Source: National Library of New Zealand

During that same day, however, the French advanced and took the village and Butte of Tahure.[47] This was not an insignificant development, as newspapers from as far away as New York and New Zealand reported, and as the clipping left reveals.[48]

By October 7th, the first and second battalions of RIR 241 had lost 12 men to heavy artillery fire and another 11 wounded. With no time to lose, the command to the 53rd division was to take back Tahure and its southern exit, thereby eradicating the frontline foothold the French had secured. However, the objective was postponed a day, when the responsible commanders reported: "An attack from the wasteland northeast of Tahure can only be accomplished with great losses."

After waking at 0300 on 9th October, at 0430 RIR 241's first battalion was marching toward a position just south of the road that ran between Tahure and Ripont, while the second (Paul's) moved into the basin northeast of Tahure, along the road from Gratreuil. By 0630, they stood 500m in front of the German trenches armed with an assault pack, hand granades, rifles and large shovels. Dawn was just breaking.[49] The air was cold with fog.

A prerequisite for taking back Tahure was the protection of the left and right flanks from enemy fire. For this reason, the 50th Infantry Division covered them from the French on the Butte of Tahure, while RIR 243's first batallion was positioned in the gorge (also known as *Todesschlucht* or Death's gorge, for there were dead strewn everywhere) northwest of Ripont.

However, within moments, both battalions of RIR 241 were caught offguard by the French. So surprising was their attack that the units had not time to set up their own artillery. In addition, the French had managed to create a dense network of trenches northeast of Tahure, reinforced with myriad obstacles which prevented the Germans' advance. Their manouver thus came to a standstill, 200m before the French frontline.

The following extracts are commands exchanged up and down the line, made possible only through relay stations, because the telephone lines had already been destroyed.

[47] www.freefictionbooks.org/books/n/23825-the-new-gresham-encyclopedia-volume-4-part-3-estremoz-to-felspar?start=68

[48] New Zealand's Wanganui Chronicle, Volume LX, Issue 20482, 9 October 1915, Page 5, sourced from: http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=WC19151009.2.31.2

[49] Daylight saving was not likely yet introduced. According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Willett, Britain introduced this when the clocks were advanced by an hour on Sunday, 21 May, 1916 as a wartime production-boosting device. It was subsequently adopted in many other countries, although Germany had already introduced the scheme. Because the Germans were in conflict with the French, and the war was not won, I suspect they remained on French time. Sunrise according to: http://www.gaisma.com/en/location/paris.html on 9th October was 0801, while dawn was at 0730 (sunset was at: 1945, dusk was at: 1914).

> **0830:** The battalions report heavy losses and request a physician.
> **0855:** *Oberst-leutnant* v. Uslar-Gleichen (Lieutenant Colonel) of RIR 241/*II.Bataillon* reports their attack now stands 200m before well-defended French trenches at Tahure's north east exit where the 5th [Paul Tyralla's], 6th and 7th company maintained the front line and the 8th the second line are digging in. The battalion lies outside the protection of our artillery fire and in the line of fire of infantry and machine guns, which probably comes from point 192 north of Tahure and point 170 south of Tahure.
> **0915:** According to reports, Tahure has not been taken, but RIR 241 lies on the ridges northeast of Tahure. Under any circumstances we must put ourselves into possession of the village. It is most likely to be successful when advancing the reserves and especially the machine gunners beyond the currently favorable positions to the forested plots north of the [Tahure-Ripont] road where height is [still] an advantage.
> **1045:** RIR 241/*II.Bataillon* reports that it and the reserve (243) batallion lie under heavy artillery fire, as does the land behind them. The battalion believes an eventual, vigorous push will render the French unavailable to attack. Losses are yet to be determined.

Despite bloodied hands and heavy losses, the battalions dug in under the 'murderous' artillery fire which raged on October 9th from dawn and through the following night.[50] In order to stem RIR 241's rising losses before heavily occupied Tahure, two companies from the first battalion of RIR 243 were moved up behind them. Come the evening of the following day, at 2000hrs the *II. Bataillon* reported:

> *"After successfully pentrating the French front line, the enemy were thrown back. There nine prisoners were taken. The front line is in our hands."*

But on that same evening, both battalions issued a request to be replaced. They'd fought two days without food and water. Knoppe, who himself served within Paul's 5th company, described its troops as "nervous and exhausted." It was far worse than in 1870, noted one 65 year-old company commander, a volunteer veteran of the Franco-Prussian war. This after he had enthused the young soldiers with the battle cry *"Kindersch! Wie in 1870!"* (Kids, just like in 1870)! He must've been close in age to Paul's father-in-law, Friedrich Hinsch.

However, when the regimental order came through from *Oberst-leutnant* Reusner, the hopes of RIR 241 were dashed. Although he expressed his fullest appreciation for their brave conduct, he noted the *I.* and *II. Batallions* could not be replaced as there were no reserves available. Knoppe adds their replacement would not have been timely because of the hazards connected with changing batallions whose losses are huge and/or whose troops are injured and need to be tended to.

Recognizing the risk of being overrun and of losing an important passage, early on Monday 11th October the French attempted a rapid counter-attack of the *II. Bataillon's* position. Their assault pummeled the German lines with grenades of every calibre before storming their positions. It failed, writes von Uslar-Gleichen, thanks to the brave attitude of those soldiers entrenched and their spirit of sacrifice and loyalty. "Even upon the seal of death, they did not wish to be inferior" he noted. One of the *II.Bataillon's* soldiers aptly demonstrates this, relating how his company mate left his own father dying in the trenches as he surged forth as part of the German response – for the Fatherland. "Heroism across two generations!" he claimed.

[50] Actual losses from 9th-10th Oct. were 35 dead, 3 wounded and 5 captured. See Knoppe, pp.468-525

In the early morning hours of October 12th, at 0300 to be precise, the French renewed their artillery fire, now toward the *I. Bataillon*. This position too could only be defended through the shedding of more blood. Yet despite these attacks, the state of its troops it reported as good, albeit their replacement was urgently needed. Yet it wasn't until later that Tuesday that the two batallions were relieved, once the French were 'defeated.' They returned to camp IV, southwest of Gratreuil to recouperate.

That four days continuous fighting, *sans* food and water and under enemy fire from the air also brought heavy losses. "So many had fallen" wrote Knoppe "that the commanders could not believe what remained of their companies. This included my beloved company commander, Hauptmann d. R. Freytag, from 5/241. Incredibly, he paused for just a moment – too long and he met his destiny. Even at that very last moment, he died a heroic death. We were very fond of him."

Another fatality of the *5. Kompagnie* on October 11th was the furrier, Paul Tÿralla. He was one of those troops from Leipzig who had to defend the ground they had secured without the requested relief. Twenty more of his company mates lost their lives on that day, besides a further 26 within his batallion and 27 others from his regiment. Another 37 lay wounded while on the 12th, two more men were lost alongside 4 that were captured.[51] The average age of those soldiers lost was a little less than 25, the youngest was 19, the oldest was 37.

The following commentary appears under the heading "*Treue Kamaradschaft*" (True Comradeship), a piece which credits the efforts of RIR 241:

> *"On the morning of October 9th, the '241er' stormed the French positions and beyond. At 0400 in the morning our artillery began a cannonade that shook heaven and earth, and grew throughout the morning until 0630 [52]. Then the 241er went forwards. Wave after wave went over the top before the enemy, surrounded by no less than a barrage of fire. The wounded returned to our trenches and fled to our dug-outs. Like the comrades of our sister regiment, supported by our first battalion we thrived and did not desert. A beautiful and perfect testimony to the exploits of our regiment!"*[53]

It sounds almost like a game of heroes and villains. Yet this was 'defending the homeland.' Von Uslar-Gleichen summarised their victory in Knoppe's book in a way which contrasts starkly with the picture portrayed by Powell (overleaf) on the initial French successes:

> *"Even if some brave soldier was lacking in the depleted ranks and had found an early grave in the chalky soil of the Champagne, the grief was outweighed by the uplifting consciousness that he was lost maintaining the position to protect the homeland. Some awards were immediately made, others later on behalf of the Kaiser and king, which made the wearer a proud participant in the fighting in the Butte of Tahure."*

[51] According to Knoppe (Pg.171), 1057 troops of RIR 241 (including 30 officers) lost their lives in the Champagne. That's equivelent to one battalion of men. However, personal assessment of the numbers of men lost across those four days (see pgs. 468-525) reveals ‚just' 160 with 111 dead, 40 injured and 9 captured. From 13-19th Oct., a further 9 died (from 4. 9., 10., 11., and 12. Komp.) with 11 captured (2.,3.,4.,5.,7.,9.,10.,11. Komp.).

[52] It's interesting how different sources within the same regiment recount the event differently. Knoppe recalls RIR 241 was ambushed, while the above author reports the 241er kicked off the cannonade.

[53] Paul KNOPPE. Die Geschichte des Königlich Sächsischen Reserve-Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 241. Dresden, 1936. Vol. 76 of the sächsische Anteils der Erinnerungsblätter. Pg. 153

7.4: The Champagne Battlefield ...*'Ex-post-analysis'*

According to English war correspondent Alexander Powell, the Champagne battlefield looked and smelled like a garbage-heap. The whole front of fifteen miles was littered with dented helmets, bayonets bent double, knapsacks, bottles, blood-soaked bandages, pots of jam and marmalade, note-books, shaving bowls, shreds of clothing, and portions of what had once been human bodies.

Within one abandoned German trench, a mass of grey rags fell apart to disclose a headless, armless, legless torso already partially devoured by insects. Elsewhere, a rotting foot fell from a hobnailed German boot while a hand with awful, outspread fingers thrust itself from the earth as though appealing to the passer-by to give decent burial to its dead owner. Dug-outs were rendered inaccessible not only by their destruction but also their overpowering stench.

Clasped in the dead fingers of one German was a postcard dated from a little town in Bavaria. It began: "My dearest Heinrich: You went away from us just a year ago to-day. I miss you terribly, as do the children, and we all pray hourly for your safe return.." The rest we could not decipher; it had been blotted out by a horrid crimson stain.

Source: *Vive la France* by E. Alexander Powell.
Retrieved from: www.firstworldwar.com/battles/champagne1.htm

Despite the regiment's success in taking back the French front line, it wasn't until over a week later, on October 20th that the Germans fully recovered the Butte de Tahure.[54] But this was not the achievement of RIR 241. Later on Friday that week, the *II. Bataillon* marched on to Séchault and by October 18th, it was back in Monthois. From October 28th, the 53rd Reserve Division went back into reserve.[55]

Nevertheless, during this time the Germans reclaimed all the trenches they had lost in those September attacks, according to war correspondent, Powell. The French offensives in the Champagne were finally abandoned on November 6th. The Imperial German Army's counter-attacks had successfully prevented the French from developing their first initial advance into the greater victory which Joffre had hoped for.[56]

Tahure had had 185 inhabitants in 1914. The church and much of the village sat on a small hill - the Butte de Tahure. As a columnist in the October 8th, 1915 edition of the *New York Times* then reported, "The village…has no importance itself, save that…ruined villages make better fortifications than...concrete and steel forts. The possession of the [lonely] crossroads is also something in this desolate countryside..."

Tahure was all but destroyed during those battles, even the soldiers' graves, writes Frau Smolka of the *Deutsche Dienstelle* (WASt) in January 2012. Today the town is largely forgotten, except for the tour operaters who offer sightseeing "In the footsteps of the armies of the Champagne region."[57]

[54] freefictionbooks.org/books/n/23825-the-new-gresham-encyclopedia-volume-4-part-3-estremoz-to-felspar?start=68
[55] http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/53._Reserve-Division_(3._Königlich_Sächsische)
[56] freefictionbooks.org/books/n/23825-the-new-gresham-encyclopedia-volume-4-part-3-estremoz-to-felspar?start=68
[57] Online at: www.champagne1418.net/ and includes a full version of the map on pg. 161.

This is partly thanks to the fact that in 1980, the bases of its church walls were rediscovered and excavated. Remarkably the original altar was found, and behind the church were the remains of a German cemetery, from which two headstones survived, reported one online newspiece.[58]

This begs the question, what became of Paul Tÿralla? Knoppe wrote that the injured were brought back to Monthois, but the question I sought to answer was whether the dead were laid to rest too?

According to his death certificate,[59] Paul was found north of Tahure. His death was reported (without a precise date) on November 21st by soldiers of RIR 243s *I. Bataillon.*[60] His loss was accounted for in a *Kompagnie Brief* (letter) of 6th December 1915 and was certified on 7th January 1916. His resident's card adds that he fell on October 11th, 1915 (was *'vermisst'*) and that later that month his corpse was recovered. On pg. 522 of Knoppe's historical account, Paul Tÿralla is mentioned too, namely his position, dates of birth and death, alongside the thousands of RIR 241 soldiers, officers and lieutenants, who lost their lives during the first world war.[61]

Tyralla, Paul . . . . . Soldat 5. K. geb. 4. 6. 82 † 11. 10. 15

In a bid to clarify whether Paul's corpse might have been formally buried or even repatriated, in April 2000, I wrote (perhaps somewhat naively) to the *Militargeschichtliches Forschungsamt* in Potsdam. Jan Luckszat told me this was unheard of during World War I: "The majority of dead soldiers have not been 'buried,' 'cremated' or taken to any special graveyard" he wrote in typical Teutonic fashion. "Most of them were left in the mud…the biggest graveyards are the battlefields in northern France."[62]

Till death do us part:
Wandervögel Paul laid to rest 1500 km away from home in his 'adopted' third country
Source: Anspach & Flach, 1927

Some soldiers, however, were buried slightly more ceremoniously. As Powell wrote, shortly after the second battle of Champagne, the field was dotted with thousands of wooden crosses planted upon newly made mounds. But for many of the graves there was no time to erect crosses or headboards. So into the soft soil a bottle was thrust, neck downward with a slip of paper inside giving the name and regiment of the soldier who lay beneath. Somewhere there I guess lies Paul, although I harbour the hope his comrades did their best to give him an honourable farewell in Tahure at least, if not Séchault or Monthois perhaps. But as if in response to this question, Frau Smolka added: "reviews of the grave records for soldiers buried in France unfortunately do not contain your great-grandfather's name."

[58] http://www.hellfirecorner.co.uk/cfair/charles40.htm
[59] Leipzig death certificate No.37 of January 11, 1916
[60] One of the four that made up his 53rd 'square' division.
[61] Paul KNOPPE. Die Geschichte des Königlich Sächsischen Reserve-Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 241. Pg. 522
[62] Personal correspondence with Jan Luckszat. Hauptmann, Militär-geschichtliches Forschungsamt, Zeppelinstr. 127/128, 14471 Potsdam. 11/04/2000

I wondered too how and when Paul's wife, Nannÿ Tÿralla was notified of his loss. At the very latest it should have been around the time his death certificate was issued, which would mean January 11th, 1916. However, it is possible she already received notice in December, considering the various dates reported above.[63] She may then have also received a personal acknowledgment from *Kaiser Wilhelm II* himself, like the one shown right, given to the wife of a soldier called *Georg Thiel,* who perished in the 1916 Battle of Verdun.[64]

Above: A matter of pride: Soldiers dying on the altar of the Fatherland always entered a peaceful and glorious afterlife in heaven. *Source: wiki/Erster_Weltkrieg*

How ever Nannÿ was informed, it will have made for an unforgettable Christmas and New Year. Sadly, neither Paul's military pass, a diary or last minute note from him to his family was ever passed on to either of his daughters (like so few of his pictures). Oddly, it appears almost as if his memory was erased.

According to Powell, nearly a million and a half Frenchmen and Germans were engaged in the second battle of Champagne. It was a battle in which Europe lost more men (killed and wounded) than at Gettysburg, that famous – and in terms of life most costly – battle of the American civil war in July 1863. The Germans lost 72,500 men with a further 25,000 captured as prisoners of war, while the French lost 145,000 men. In other words, despite a 5:3 ratio of strength and lavish artillery build-up, the Allies suffered dreadful loss.[65]

Militär Paß: an identity document for German conscripts, issued by the district's military recruitment authorities and which included data on the course of their duty. *Source: wiki/Wehrpass*

According to Falkenhayn, it was determined German opposition that saw the French offensive lose momentum. According to Powell, the distance gained by the French was so small that it cannot be seen on the ordinary map.

Falkenhayn goes on to praise the conduct of German troops on the ground, who helped minimise Allied gains in the face of superior German defences. "The 'greatest battle of all time' he said "became a terrible defeat for the attackers. Tremendous sacrifices in men and material were made for a result which was nothing in comparison to the objectives aimed at...the defensive system remained absolutely unshaken."

"They had not driven the Germans out of France, not a single one of their countrymen had been freed from his twelve months' 'slavery.' The only effect one must admit is that, not the attack, but the anticipation of it, and the preparation to meet it, had an influence on the German operations against Russia.

[63] On Nov. 20, 1915 issue 10276 of the *Deutsche Verlunstungslisten* referenced Paul Tyralla (of Radstein, Neustadt, Schlesien) on pg. 227. Issue 10830 of 24 Dec. 1915 confirmed his death on pg. 239.
[64] http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erster_Weltkrieg
[65] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Champagne

No language could be too strong to describe the achievements of the German troops in the Champagne battlefield in those days" he concluded. Every great deed hitherto done in war paled beside their heroism.[66]

In Dankbarkeit Ihren gefallenen Kriegern.
Vergiss o Volks der teuren Toten nicht!
In Memory of the fallen warriors.
Forget not the human cost of death!
Paul Tÿralla one among many Silesians
still remembered to this day

Paul Tÿralla had no choice when he was conscripted into the conflict in 1915. Together with 16,000 other soldiers from Saxony (and an eventual total of 2,600 from RIR 241), he gave his life to the war effort.[67] Yet I know of no one place in the kingdom where he is personally recognized.

However, back in his home village of Radstein, he is remembered to this day, close to the parish church. There on a war memorial alongside the countless other Silesian Prussians who lost their lives appears his name, together with three other Tÿrallas; Karl, Jakob and Anton. The latter is believed to be Paul's nephew; brother Anton's son. There too one can find countless *Schendzielarz*, *Ernst's* and *Przyklenk's* (the names of those – Polish Silesians – whom Paul's siblings married).

Curiously, Paul Tÿralla is listed as having fallen in 1916, although the specific date is correct, implying this was mere oversight. It is also worth noting that if ever there was any lingering doubt over Paul's ethnicity, the many more Polish than German names on the memorial would appear to evidence he was more Slav, indeed Polish, than German. Another Silesian émigré, Martina Wermes today of the *Sächsische Staatsarchiv* confirmed her feeling that Tÿralla was more Polish than German.

In my mind I can see Paul's mother, Marianna, now 74, together with his older brothers (who were too old to serve in the war), and his four sisters, gathered in *Ellguth's* church remembering and saying farewell to their brother and son who perished almost 19 years to the day after he had left.

Goethe's '*Faust*' is a tragic play. In Chapters V and VI, I drew analogies with that tale, where Paul plays the main protagonist, *Faust*. Leipzig is the devil and Nannÿ, his wife, is Gretchen. The story is based around a deal that Faust makes with the devil, in which he is free to claim Faust's life, if he is so pleased with anything given to him that he wants to stay in that moment forever.

It would be folly to suggest Paul Tÿralla felt so emancipated by the drudgery of World War I combat or so liberated from the Leipzig homefront a thousand kilometers away, that the devil gave him eternal freedom. In truth it would be an irony if those occasions were among his few moments of real happiness. But in reality it was that moment he got to stay in, forever.

[66] http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/champagne1915_falkenhayn.htm
[67] Hartwig Busche. *Formationsgeschichte der deutschen Infanterie im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1918*. 1998

7.5: Fritz Hinsch: ***Mitt Gott für König und Vaterland***

Paul Tÿralla's brother-in-law survived the trenchlines to return home in 1919 (although his 'after party' was not much better – more on that in Chapter IX). We left him and his 58th Infantry division – rated second class by Allied intelligence, after its victories on the eastern front in Lorraine, on the 'far side' of Verdun, some 75km away from Paul.

According to Wikipedia, in 1916, his division fought in the Battles of Verdun (21st February-18th December 1916) and Somme (1st July-18th November 1916). In 1917, it fought in the Second Battle of the Aisne (April 1917), also called the Third Battle of Champagne. In late April 1917, the division went back to the Eastern Front, where it remained until October. After returning to the Western Front, it saw action in the late phases of the Battle of Passchendaele, also called the Third Battle of Ypres (July-November 1917). The division remained in the Flanders region until August 1918, when it went to the Somme region, fighting at Monchy-Bapaume and later resisting the Allied offensive between Cambrai and St. Quentin.

Acording to Hermann Cron's seminal work: *Imperial Germany Army 1914-18: Organisation, Structure, Orders of Battle*, published in June 2006; "the German Army was able to assert itself, often victoriously, for a full four years, in all theatres of war." For his role in those 'victories,' Fritz was awarded a number of military decorations. For sure he had stories to tell his children and grandchildren about life at the front, inevitably far more than his own father had from the Franco-Prussian war of 1871! How his family passed the time while he contributed to those victories, we shall come to in the next chapter. But from the above photograph, we could determine he was recognized with the following military awards…

The *Eisernes Kreuz* or Iron Cross (pictured below left) is a Prussian medal that was awarded across three classes: The Grand Cross, First Class and Second Class. It was awarded without regard for nationality or social class to combatants and non-combatants for acts of heroism, bravery or leadership skills. Although the three medals were identical, the manner in which each was worn differed. Look carefully and one can see Fritz has in fact two on the left side of his uniform. The upper left one is a Second Class cross, while the one just over the left breast pocket, barely visible, is a First Class cross. In total, 218,000 First Class crosses were awarded (alongside just 5 Grand Crosses and 5,200,000 Second Class crosses).

Fritz also picked up the Friedrich August Medal (pictured below right and second in the medal row). It was awarded in Saxony to acknowledge notable service by enlisted men in either war or peace. A third medal is also evident and this is the *Frontkämpferehrenkreuz* or the Cross of Honor (or more popularly the Hindenburg Cross). It was a commemorative medal inaugurated on July 13, 1934 by *Reichspräsident* Paul von Hindenburg for those Imperial German soldiers who fought in World War I. It came in three versions: the Honor Cross for Combatants (for soldiers who fought on the front); the Honor Cross for War Participants (for non-combatant soldiers) and the Honor Cross for the next-of-kin of fallen soldiers. The combatants' cross included a pair of swords fitted between the arms. It was introduced as a way to reinforce pride in the veterans, and current armed forces and was the only military commemorative award to be introduced during the Third Reich era.

The small badge above the other medals is called the *"National-sozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund/Stahlhelm"* which recognizes World War I participants. It was initially awarded to members of the *Bund der Frontsoldaten* or League of Frontline Soldiers in 1915, but from 1918 it became a fascist organization, both anti-Semitic and anti-democratic, wrote Gunnar Korm, Army Captain at the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* in Potsdam, Germany during personal correspondence on June 28th, 2011 when he helped identify Fritz' medals.

Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/58th_Infantry_Division_(German_Empire) and www.theaerodrome.com/medals/germany/prussia_ic.php besides the members of its 'medals-decorations' Forum in June 2011; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_of_Honor and de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich-August-Medaille

While I know a lot more about my great grandfather, Paul Tÿralla, today than I did in 1987, all this doesn't replace of course the anecdotes that might have been shared by his daughter had he survived.

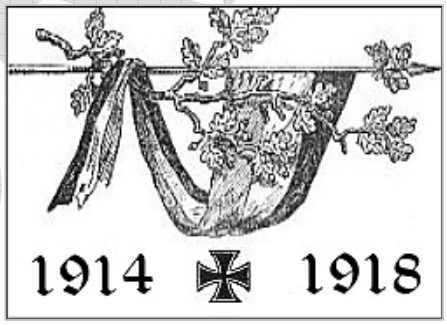
I wonder what passing words or thoughts crossed his mind, if any, as he fell. Did he have time to scribble anything in a diary or his military pass, most likely buried with him under those ploughed Champagne fields, or was his passing instant? Was he a proud German when he fell, or did he realize the 'irony in conformity'? Had he longed not to be there all along, or did he no longer care?

I only hope he took fond memories of his family and friends. I can't but help think of the middle lines of Colonel John McCrae's 1915 poem, 'In Flander's Fields,' especially if we would substitute the word 'Flanders' for 'Champagne':

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Champagne's fields.

This is how I would prefer to remember him – that he was a Wandervogel who loved and was loved – and I hope he would be remembered in this way by his family too. It's ironic that the acronym RIR is almost identical to RIP.

More than nine million combatants were killed in that war of 'attrition' where not only the Allies were ground down but Germany's own men and wage earners were sacrificed, those who helped build its strong economy come 1913. Yet it left a generation of maimed soldiers, war widows and families bereft of their father figures – one of whom will be the focus of the next chapter.



In Erinnerung an die Gefallenen und Vermissten
In Memory of those killed and lost.
The tribute insignia to members of
Reserve Infanterie Regiment 241
Source: www.weltkriegsopfer.de/Information-Anzeige-DENKMAL-Verlustliste-RIR-241_Friedhofdetails_0_17581.html

7.6: The Resurrection of Paul Tyralla?

In 1992, while searching the Leipzig *Adreßbücher* I made a rather startling discovery. The entries from 1936 listed an *Unteroffizier* named Paul Tyralla. Come 1940 he was a *Feldwebel* or sergeant and remained listed until 1949 (when East Germany stopped publishing address books). With thousands of soldiers having been lost during World War I and many not properly identified, could Little Nanny's father have been more *vermisst* than *gefallen*? That his children awaited him in 1919 when the soldiers returned to Leipzig, only to find he never re-appeared, led me to speculate, what really became of him? Was he perhaps one of the soldiers captured by the French in the Battle of the Champagne and subsequently taken prisoner of war – only to never return? Perhaps he had chanced upon a romantic engagement? Or maybe he staged his own death and had his death certificate forged, with a view to beginning a new life away from Leipzig in another foreign land? And had he then returned twenty years later to find his family had all but gone? Was it purely a coincidence that this newly discovered Paul Tyralla was military man too?

According to Daniel Palmieri, Historical Research Officer of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), "some prisoners of war didn't return home after their release... for various reasons." But viewed from the perspective of the ICRC, an organization that helps reunite families separated by conflict, the challenge is always identifying them in their new environs after liberation. "For instance, did these persons stay in the "host" country or did they emigrate onto a third country?" he posits.

Paul's 'death' (by virtue of his corpse's discovery) played around in my mind for almost a decade until May 2000, when I followed up this line of inquiry with the *Deutsche Dienstelle* (WASt) in Berlin. The *Dienstelle* deals with notifications of the next-of-kin of members of Germans killed in action or that were taken prisoners of war. The hope of course was that just maybe they had information about my great grandfather – in other words, that he had survived – and that this particular Paul Tyralla who appeared in Leipzig in the 1930s was the same person. A scrap of paper given to me in 1992 that mapped all the Leipzig-based Tyrallas up to 1955, including one 'Paul,' only heightened my expectations.

In an odd twist, WASt informed me they had no record of my great grandfather, yet were able to convey more details about the 'mystery' Paul Tyralla. Yes, he originated from Upper Silesia, yes he was a *Stabsfeldwebel* in 1944 (and was captured). Furthermore, this Paul Tyralla had a wife called Dora. None of this ruled out it was not the same chap. Except that he was born 26 years later, in 1908, and not 1882.

For another ten years or so a lingering doubt remained. The sort where you long to uncover a startling family secret and find you've the storyline for a bestselling novel. However, a visit to the Leipzig *StadtsArchiv* in Leipzig in May 2011 yielded another 'nail in the coffin' for my great grandfather. Made curious by the unusual nature of his name, *Referentin* Martina Wermes investigated other Tyrallas that lived in Leipzig around the time of Little Nanny's father. She stumbled on the *Einwohnermeldekarte* of Paul Wilhelm Tyralla, who had been born in Krappitz, Upper Silesia. His date of birth was given to be 26th June, 1908. He too was Prussian and Roman Catholic. He was a police officer and had arrived in Leipzig in October 1930. His wife Dora came from Dresden whom he married in 1935 and not long afterwards, had a son called Joachim and a daughter called Edeltraud. Their home had been in *Stünze Straße 10* since the mid-30s, just as the *Adreßbücher* had shown.

To be on the safe side, I decided to talk to Daniel Palmieri once more and confirm there was no room for misinterpretation over the various declarations regarding Paul Tÿralla's death. Vol. 840 of the *sächsische Verlustliste Nr. 239* of 24th December, 1915 for instance had noted he was *bisher* '*vermisst*' (to that point lost) and '*gefallen*' (killed in action)**.** His death certificate meanwhile had given no specific date of death, despite being issued in January 1916. On 20th June, 2011, I received the following reply:

"Your assumption that your great grandfather was not killed during the battle could be right." But "the death certificate of 1916...was certainly based on true information (for instance an identity mark) to affirm...the corpse found." WASt then affirmed in January 2012 that he would have been identified via his identification tag or papers and that if he were taken prisoner of war, these would have been removed.

Paul Tÿralla died a young man. He was just 33 years old. I guess hoping he 'rose from the dead' (like that better-known Christian figure who died at the same age) would have been asking too much, despite the thrilling conclusion it would have made. On the other hand, had he been one of the 25,000 captured Germans, he might well have remained in France or even have ended up in the UK (where at least one other member of RIR 241 was known to have been interned, at Leigh, Lancashire). Had that occurred, the perfect script for a classic period drama would be all but set. Or do we already have one?

Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Champagne,
The German Prisoner of War Camp at Leigh, 1914-1919, Leslie Smith (1986), online at: www.leighlife.com,
the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Deutsche Dienstelle (WASt)

