

Alexey Glazyrin



**EMPIRE ON FIRE.  
FIRST YEAR  
OF WAR 1914**

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**Empire on fire. First**  
**year of war 1914**

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**Аннотация**

World War I. The image of the main character of the book is collective. Many young people from peaceful life voluntarily stepped into the trenches of the First World War, guided by a love of the Fatherland.

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# **Empire on fire. First year of war 1914**

**Alexey Glazyrin**

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# Prologue

The image of the main character of the book is collective, many young people from peaceful life voluntarily stepped into the trenches of the First World War, guided by a love of the Fatherland. Including future world-famous scientists.

In honor of Sergei Vavilov, a crater on the moon was named, several scientific vessels, postage stamps were issued, monuments and plaques were erected...

But the best monument to him was a small photo album "I Look at the War", released on his 120th birthday and immediately became a bibliographic rarity due to the tiny circulation. The album contains diary entries, poems, drawings and photographs of Ensign Vavilov, made on the fronts of the First World War.

And no matter what they say about Russian military officers of those dashing years, but three objects on the map of the Moon are named after the junior officers of the Russian army – ensigns Sergei Vavilov, Vladimir Zvorykin and Yuri Kondratyuk.

In total, during the First World War, in Russia, about 220 thousand people were promoted to officers, including 78,581 people from military schools and 108970 from ensign schools, that is, more than three years more than in the entire history of the Russian army before the first world war.



Considering that immediately after the mobilization, before the start of the release of wartime officers, the number of officers was approximately 80 thousand, the total number of officers will be 300 thousand.

From this number, the losses incurred during the war years should be subtracted. The direct combat losses of those killed, died from wounds on the battlefield, wounded, captured and missing amounted to more than 70 thousand people, 71,298, including 208 generals, 3368 headquarters officers and 67772 chief officers, out of the last 37,392 warrant officers.

In many cases, wartime officers commanded companies and, in many cases, battalions, these were often boys who had been

high school students and students yesterday, many of whom had become lieutenants and staff captains, and even captains, as lieutenant colonels by the time of the February coup. officers issued in wartime, as not having received a complete military education could not be made. Over the entire period of the war, the officer corps was almost completely replaced, from 300 to 500% of officers were replaced in infantry units, that is, from three to five times the officers changed in different combat units, from 15 to 40% in cavalry and artillery

Such data are given in the statistical directory “Russia in the World War of 1914—1918 in Figures”, published already in Soviet Russia in 1925. By February 1917, the officer corps included the majority of educated people in Russia, since almost all people who had education in the volume of a gymnasium, a real school and equal educational institutions and who were fit for health reasons were promoted to officers.



Since the traditions of military education in military schools have not been interrupted, it cannot be said that officers will radically change in morale and attitude to their duties. The vast majority of wartime officers performed their duty no less sacrificingly than regular officers, and were proud of their belonging to the officer corps. As one of them recalled: “Just

think that most of us were national teachers, small servants, poor merchants, wealthy peasants... became” your nobility “... So, it happened. Now we are officers... No, no, and squint your eyes on the epaulette. We see the soldiers coming towards us from afar and jealously watch how they salute.”

# Petersburg – Peterhof August 1914



still peaceful city

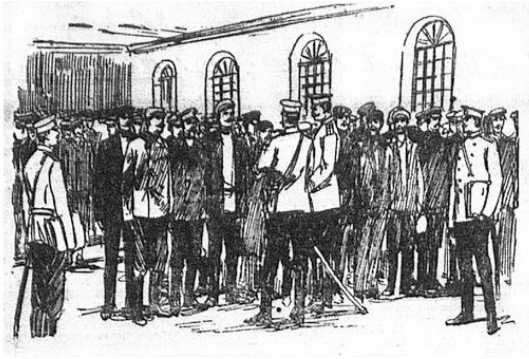
On the morning of Friday, July 31, in the still peaceful capital of the Russian Empire, announcements of general mobilization were posted all over St. Petersburg. People gathered at these ads. The population of a great power gradually began to come to understand that the war had already knocked on their house.

Sometimes there were sorrowful sobs of women who found out that their husbands and sons would most likely go to war. Sometimes, some recently praying mantis often began to be baptized, often whispering with white lips: “God save your people!”

By evening, drinking establishments were crowded. Starting

from early morning, the people gradually filled the rooms, which from their doors threw streams into the street with increasing intensity, drunken peasants bawling sometimes rollicking, then sad songs, laughter rang out in mocking with drunk tears spreading across their faces.

On this day, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov dined and decided to work more. The last papers should be put in order, so that future historians could lay the whole burden of blame for unleashing a terrible war on the Germans. The fact that the war would be terrible did not raise any doubts among the Minister.



“Will William be frightened of England’s participation in the war and at the last minute refuse his challenge? The minister thought intensely. – How then to provoke him, like a bull: on a bullfight, and put him in the role of an arrogant to universal

peace? After all, it is very important for all systems of unions... On whose side will Italy, for example, take the floor? The Italians will be extremely indignant that their allies did not ask about such an important matter as the beginning of the war... And if now the alliance of Italy with Austria-Hungary and Germany is cracking and slowly falling apart, then William's tactlessness will completely undermine him. Moreover, Italy's own interests in the Mediterranean Sea and in the Balkans are diametrically opposed to the Austrian ...”

The old mahogany grandfather clock in the corner of the ministerial cabinet melodiously rang eleven. Sazonov got up from his chair to put the dispatches in the safe, but the secretary came in and reported that the German ambassador Count Purtales was asking for a meeting.

“Here it is, the presentation of an ultimatum! The minister thought with satisfaction. “Hooray, William decided to become the culprit of the war!”

– Invite the ambassador! – ordered Sazonov.

Count Purtales appeared immediately, as if standing outside the door. He nearly ran to the minister's desk. Usually taut and handsome, with whitish meek eyes, a sweet smile, a half-hidden wedge in a gray beard and a neatly trimmed mustache, about a nimbus of gray hair on a half-elongated oblong head, the count now wants to portray the anger and indignation that relies on him according to the script sent from Berlin along with text of an ultimatum. But he does not succeed badly in this, because he has

always sincerely and cordially been friends with Sazonov, with the St. Petersburg light, where he was loved and respected.

His “formidable” look is more like confusion, there are tears in the eyes of the ambassador, but he tries to speak in a firm voice.

– Mr. Minister! – he declares. – I am authorized by my government to demand from Russia to stop all its mobilization measures both on the German and on the Austro-Hungarian border!.. If the Russian mobilization is not interrupted, then the whole German army will mobilize!..

The ambassador looks pointedly at his watch. On them – half past eleven.

“The deadline expires in exactly twelve hours!”

As if dumping a heavy burden, the ambassador is being transformed. From the pompous, hard-core messenger of the German Empire, he turns into a bewildered and miserable old man.

– Agree to demobilization! Agree to demobilization! You must agree to demobilization!.. – he mutters in a rattling voice from excitement and looks imploringly at Sazonov.

Sazonov, who was almost overcome by trembling before the ambassador arrived, has now completely calmed down. He firmly answers Count Purtales:

– Mr. Minister! I can only confirm what His Majesty Emperor Nicholas II told you today. As long as there is at least one chance to prevent a war, while negotiations with Austria can continue,

Russia will not attack. However, it is technically impossible for us to demobilize the army without upsetting the entire military organization. Even your general staff cannot dispute the legality of this consideration!..

Purtales makes a gesture of despair.

– Agree to demobilization! – as he says the spell.

Sazonov stares coldly at the ambassador. Purtales turns and the shuffling gait of a weak person leaves.

August 1

Saturday's official day of official St. Petersburg was already ending, but there was no German note drawing a line under the ultimatum presented yesterday. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, rumors spread that Wilhelm had changed his mind that there could still be a pacification of Austria and negotiations with Berlin. Many of the officials of the diplomatic department went to their summer cottages with this.



Only in the evening Sazonov was informed that Count Purtales again required a meeting. The Minister realized that the decisive hour had come. Sergey Dmitrievich crossed himself into a small picture before moving from the apartment to the official office.

Having removed the glove, the ambassador takes out an envelope from thick white paper with seals decorated with the German emblem from the inside pocket of his gold-embroidered uniform, and solemnly, as if making a salute with a sword, hands it to Sazonov.

Both understand that the moment of transfer of the envelope with the declaration of war in itself will not open the river of blood. It will begin to pour only when two military vehicles collide, when the troops come into contact. Two old people understand that a lot of them connected personally and will continue to connect, no matter what, on any fronts that will lie between them. But the symbolism of the act is such that both startle, as if from an electric shock, when a white envelope passes from the ambassador's hand to the minister's.

Sazonov – this is necessary for the story – utters his phrase again:

“You are committing a criminal case!”

– We defend our honor! – the ambassador speaks with trembling voice. He is extremely upset and barely standing on his feet.

Sazonov opens the envelope and reads the text of the

declaration of war. The note is short. The last, most significant phrase strikes him first:

“His Majesty the German Emperor, my august monarch, on behalf of the empire accepts the challenge and considers himself at war with Russia!”

Turning to the introductory part, Sazonov suddenly sees in brackets two versions of the wording. To the amazement of the minister there is no limit. Indeed, the negligence of the scribes makes the note not a document creating history, but a laughing stock, at the same time, of embassy officials who issued it in this form.

Sazonov read aloud these two options.

Then the minister stares at the ambassador point-blank and raises one eyebrow in surprise.

Purtales himself is amazed and cannot say a word. He blushes, then turns pale, tears begin to shine in his eyes.

Sazonov finishes reading and solemnly utters:

“The curse of the nations will fall upon you!”

“We only defend our honor!” – Again, but already in a whisper, repeats Count Purtales.

“Your honor was not affected,” Sazonov continues with pathos. “You could have averted war in one word, but you do not want it!” Remember that divine providence exists and it will punish you!

“It is true, there is divine justice!.. And it will punish you!.. Divine justice!” – mutters the confused and depressed

ambassador.

With almost no control over himself, poor Purtales heads for the open window and stops, buried in the curtain. The old weak man cries quietly, hiding his face from the minister.

– Could I know that this will end my stay in Russia?! – heard through sobs.

Sazonov walks up to him, puts a little hug on his shoulders and tries to calm an old friend who has now become an enemy.

“Dear Count, I will never forget you... Let us now say goodbye as good friends...” Sazonov offers.

“Goodbye, goodbye!..” Purtales hugs him.

No one in Petersburg knows that from now on Russia is at war with the German Empire.



August 2

On the eve of Saturday night, all of Petersburg already knew that Germany had declared war on Russia. By three o'clock on

Sunday afternoon, officers of the St. Petersburg Military District Guard and senior dignitaries of the empire were convened at the Winter Palace for a solemn prayer service and the declaration of war on Germany. It is ordered to appear in marching uniforms, to statesmen – in ceremonial uniforms.

The morning began with a bell ringing in all the churches, crowds of purely dressed people gathered from all parts of the city to Nevsky, Millionnaya, Palace Square and the Neva embankments.

On the morning of August 2, 1914, the king issued a decree on the outbreak of hostilities. It was a sparkling, hot summer day. The Palace Square, one of the largest in Europe, was crowded with thousands of onlookers languishing from the heat, crowds of excited people carrying flags, icons, awaiting the appearance of the monarch in order to express his patriotic feelings in his presence. On the other side of the Neva where the king was supposed to arrive from Peterhof, thousands of people crowded on bridges and river embankments, singing and shouting greetings. Neva was covered with yachts, steamboats, sailboats, fishing boats, boats with raised flags and with many spectators on board.

When the emperor and the empress descended to the Neva embankment, waves of welcoming cries swept: “Father, father, lead us to victory!” Nikolai was dressed in the full uniform of the infantry regiment, Alexandra Fedorovna in a white dress. She raised the brim of her elegant hat so that people could

see her face. Four great princesses followed the king and the empress. Tsarevich, still not recovering from the accident at the “Standard”, remained in Peterhof.

Entering the palace, the king and the empress slowly proceeded along the large stairs and wide corridors of the palace, filled with people. Nikolai Alexandrovich walked through the crowd, bowing and nodding. Men and women fell to their knees and enthusiastically tried to kiss his hand. The service took place in the huge white marble hall of Nikolaev, where 5 thousand people gathered in the flickering of candles. The altar erected in the center of the hall was decorated with a significant shrine – the icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir...

After the ceremony, the king and the empress went to the people gathered outside the walls of the palace. When they appeared on the high balcony draped with red cloths, a huge crowd knelt. Nikolai raised his hand and tried to speak. The front ranks were quiet, but in the latter the excitement and movement of people were too great, and the king’s words were drowned in noise. Shocked Nikolai bowed his head. In response, people, under the influence of their overwhelming feelings, sang a national anthem, the melody of which was used by Tchaikovsky in the finale of the “Solemn Overture of 1812” – “God Save the Tsar.”

Clutching each other’s hands, a man in uniform Emperor Autocrat, and a woman in a white dress, the Russian Empress stood on the balcony and cried with the people. “For those

who were on their knees then,” said Paleolog, “the tsar was a real autocrat – military, political and religious dictator, the absolute master of the soul and body of the people.” And so it was throughout the empire: an explosion of inspiration, crowds of people on the streets, laughter, tears, singing, exclamations, kisses. A wave of patriotism swept Russia. Workers left red revolutionary flags and took up icons and portraits of the king. Students left universities and voluntarily left the army. The officers who met on the streets were enthusiastically shaking in their arms.



In St. Petersburg, demonstrations were held every day in support of the tsar and allies. From the window of the French Embassy, Paleolog observed a mass procession of people with flags, icons and exclamations “Long live France!” Noting the

growing anti-German union, the Paleologist, with his inherent Gallic attention to external details, notes that “the flags of the three nations merged into one. Consisting of the same colors – blue, red and white – they are a picturesque and impressive evidence of the allied coalition”.

An enormous granite building crowned by two mighty horse sculptures burst into the German embassy, as Count Purtales predicted, an angry mob. However, contrary to what the ambassador had foreseen, the anger of the crowd was not directed against his own government, but against Germany and the German ambassador himself. Having captured the building, the crowd knocked out the windows, torn the carpets and, breaking and breaking, threw out not only furniture, porcelain, antique glass, but also the invaluable collection of Renaissance marble and bronze that belonged to Purtales himself. Equestrian statues on the roof were tied with ropes, hundreds of hands grabbed and pulled them. The Kaiser’s reared horses fell with a roar onto the pavement.

In these early days of the war, the patriotism of the population was closely linked to the already deep-rooted hatred of the Germans. “For faith, the tsar and the Fatherland” and “For the defense of Holy Russia” – these appeals reached the barracks, factories, villages.

The war was declared, but so far remained in Russia a concept abstracted. Only huge crowds mobilized from the military presences, unarmed columns of future soldiers inconsistently

marching into the barracks and railway stations, the endless prayers of the clergy in all the churches constantly reminded of the victory. The tsar's family was going to Moscow to, as the newspapers wrote, "according to the custom of the sovereign ancestors, to seek strengthening of the spirit in prayer at the Orthodox shrines of Moscow".

A bald-headed little pouty man representing republican France at the court of the Russian autocrat did not know peace from the day Germany declared war on Russia. The war in his country was not yet legally accomplished, but the Paleologist has already developed vigorous activity in Petersburg salons and with his informants.

In the morning he had breakfast in Tsarskoye Selo with Grand Duke Pavel Alexandrovich and hismorganatic wife Countess Hohenfelsen in the presence of State Councilor Mikhail Stakhovich, thoroughly saturated with ideas of touching friendship with France. Gentlemen, the French sympathizers, without the slightest concealment, answered the questions of the inquisitive ambassador, characterizing him the views of the right and left in the State Duma and in the State Council, and among their friends and among acquaintances...

At four o'clock the ambassador went on a date with his staff informant Mr. B. from "progressive circles" and questioned him about how the mobilization was going on in the country, whether there were incidents in the military presence, how the people reacted to the war. He was pleased to learn that there

was no unrest, that only in rare factories and factories did strikes continue. True, for this the police had to transplant all the Bolsheviks she knew and exile them to Siberia. True, the Bolsheviks who have not yet been arrested continue to maintain that the war will lead to the triumph of the proletariat. But at the moment the ambassador did not care at all... But all the liberals, radicals, progressives and even such extreme democrats as the Mensheviks all united under patriotic banners and prepared to fight for the interests of great France to the last drop of blood of a Russian peasant...

Today, heading to the Alexandria villa for an audience that Sazonov arranged for him, and then in the Znamenka Palace, where the Supreme Commander was while, the ambassador wanted to summarize his observations and inform Paris and his friend Poincar how brilliantly he carries out his commission in Petersburg.



Accompanied by the master's ceremonies, Mr. Ambassador arrived on the Strela court yacht at the Peterhof pier. He was already awaited by a carriage with an adjutant of the emperor and a walker in the magnificent clothes of the 18th century. Tired of pitching, the ambassador squeezed into the carriage, and frisky horses carried him to the Alexandria.

The summer palace of the Russian Tsar was buried in flowers. In front of him was the expanse of the Gulf of Finland.

After a few minutes, which seemed to the Paleologist for hours – so he wanted to see the emperor sooner – the ambassador was invited to the king's office.

Nikolai Romanov was in marching uniform. He stood by the window, rubbing his temple, as if tormented by a migraine.

The ambassador respectfully bowed to the monarch and expected to be invited to sit down. But the king seemed to have forgotten about the leather chairs in the study, and continued to stand. The ambassador also had to stand.

“I wanted,” Nikolay said quietly, “to express to you my satisfaction with the position of France.” By showing yourself so faithful as an ally, your country has given the world an unforgettable example of patriotism and loyalty. I ask you, Mr. Ambassador, to convey to the Government of France and especially my friend the President heartfelt gratitude...

“Is this really all I sank on the yacht and waited in the waiting room?..” the ambassador thinks displeasedly, but with a tender emotion, the old diplomat made a flattering voice.

“The government of the republic will be very touched by the gratitude of your Majesty,” begins the Paleologist, knowingly knowing that the Russian autocrat cannot even tolerate the word “republic”. But the ambassador emphasizes it and continues, skillfully giving his voice a thrill that it does not feel at all. “My government deserved it by the speed and decisiveness with which it fulfilled its allied duty when it became convinced that the cause of peace was destroyed...

The paleologist knows well that he pronounces false and empty words, since France has not yet fulfilled any of her allied duty, but, on the contrary, has done and is doing everything to force Russia to implement the plan of military operations that will be beneficial to France and not at all beneficial to Russia.



“On the fateful day, when the unscrupulous enemy declared war on Russia,” the ambassador exclaims pathetically, “my

government did not hesitate for a single moment..."

"I know, I know... I always believed the word of France..." Nikolai interrupted the ambassador. In choosing words, the king slowly and pensively expresses the hope that with the combined power of the Entente in three to four months the Middle Empires will be defeated.

The paleologist agrees with the sovereign, but skillfully translates the conversation to the dangers that threaten France. The Germans have not yet launched an attack on Paris, they are marching around in Luxembourg and are stuck at the Liège forts in Belgium, but the ambassador spares no effort to push the not mobilized Russian army to the fortresses of East Prussia and Thorn in order to pull the German corps to the east.

"My dear ambassador, do not worry so much," Nikolai responds to the panic tirade of the Paleologist. – As soon as the mobilization is over, I will give the order to go forward. My troops are eager for battle. The offensive will be conducted with all possible force. You, however, know that the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich has extraordinary energy...

The ambassador is pleased. He received the assurances of the autocrat, about which today he will report with an encrypted telegram to Paris. In addition, he has reason to talk about it in all salons. The result is not bad, and the Paleologist is happy to chat about this and that. The conversation didn't bring much pleasure to Nicholas, but he supported her by demonstrating his knowledge of military equipment, the available strength of the

German and Austro-Hungarian armies, the positions of Turkey and Italy...

Suddenly, Nikolai falls silent, hesitates hesitantly and suddenly wraps the ambassador in his arms.

“Mr. Ambassador, let me embrace my dear and glorious France in your face.”

Also, suddenly the king releases the ambassador, and it becomes clear to the paleologist that the audience is over.

## August frontline reports

*August 4, 1914 The East Prussian operation began.*

*August 5, 1914 The Battle of Galicia began.*

*August 7, 1914 Counter battle between the Russian and German armies near the city of Gumbinnen.*

*On August 8, 1914, the battle at Charleroi begins – the English and French waxes retreat.*

*August 9, 1914 Battles at Namur and Mons*

*August 10, 1914 Russian victory at Frankenau in East Prussia. The Lublin-Kholm operation began, the offensive of the 4th and 5th Russian armies of the South-Western Front against the 1st and 4th Austro-Hungarian*

*August 11, 1914 British and Belgian troops begin a retreat from Mons*

*August 13, 1914 Germany defeats Russia at the Battle of Tannenberg in East Prussia*

*August 17, 1914 Germany captures Amiens.*

*August 24, 1914 Battle of the Masurian Marshes, East Prussia. German units were repelled by Russian troops.*

*August 26, 1914 Lviv battle. Russian troops occupy Lviv, the fourth largest city in Austria-Hungary.*

*On August 31, 1914, the offensive of the French and English armies continued on the River Enes in northern France.*

# Moscow September 1914

Student Golovin Alexei Mikhailovich externally passed the final exam for the full course of applied mathematics at Moscow University and the other day received a diploma from this very institution. Actually, this was nothing out of the ordinary, except for one circumstance, the young man who graduated from the University was nineteen years old and this promising student managed to finish his studies in three years instead of the prescribed five. Its teachers, associate professors and professors could not help but rejoice at a promising student who grasps any educational material on the fly, and predicted a brilliant scientific career in the future.

Yesterday, the young child prodigy himself was full of plans for his scientific career, and really hurt his scientific work was quite impressive, and most importantly promising.

And just half an hour ago, everything collapsed. No, nothing has changed in his scientific career, his desire to do something at all has changed, the young man wandered the streets of a noisy city in a depressed state, not noticing anything around him. Despair settled in his soul.

He was unceremoniously expelled from the house of a professor, his beloved teacher, and for that because he dared to speak negatively about the war. No, he was not a pacifist, and wholeheartedly wished victory for Russian weapons, but

he intuitively felt that this war would end for Russia in great disaster, which he expressed in public. As a result, he was accused of cowardice and almost of betrayal of the Fatherland. And most importantly, his first and so far only love, Verochka, the daughter of a professor, scornfully expressed to him that while Russian people pour blood for him, he dares to talk about the defeat in the Russian war. And made a contemptuous remark whether the German spy, Mr. Golovin, was really German.



His despair knew no bounds, shame and resentment prevented him from concentrating and pulling himself together, he wanted to scream, you people just didn't understand me...

In the pocket of the student's frock coat, a hand groped some kind of letter, it popped up in my head as an assistant professor Kislitsyn at the exit from the house slipped an envelope to him. Alex recalled the words of support of the associate professor, in the heat of the ears, that they say he believes in him and that they say Alex will prove that he is not a coward and not a traitor, but that he, his good friend, will do him a favor. Here is a letter of recommendation on the address envelope, upon presentation of this letter he will be helped to join the ranks of the defenders of the Fatherland.

So stop, all of a sudden, unexpectedly, as it always happened to him, insight and understanding came that he became a victim of intrigue. The whole picture has developed, well, what a fool he is. This associate professor has long and hopelessly courted Verochka. And today he actually provoked him into frankness about the war. From the very beginning, Alexei did not like the patriotic hat-making fervor permeating Russian society. And not once among his acquaintances he spoke critically about this, but today he was caught as a boy.

Well, the decision is made, I'm going to join the ranks of the defenders of the Fatherland, everything is better than being known as a coward. As the saying goes, I'll put on the uniform of the imperial army. I'll go to the professor's house, then we'll see what Verochka will say. But my answer will be unequivocal, I'm going to lay my head for Russia, let this patriot cheer...

Alexei did not think what would be said and made yesterday

by his love, it became easier for him from the decision, and he somehow unexpectedly briskly walked to the specified address. Parting on the go with all his dreams, plans, thoughts, and his civil life yesterday, he even felt a kind of exciting feeling of imminent change.

The address indicated on the envelope turned out to be a public office on Kutuzovsky, where the draft commission was located on the ground floor. Captain Kovalchuk, who should have turned, turned out to be a short fat man, with a magnificent mustache and inexhaustible energy. The cabinet, on the door of which hung the sign “Authorized Staff Captain Kovalchuk”, was littered with folders in the corners and walls, which greatly reduced the living space for the cabinet owner. Not having time to close the door to the office, Alex almost at the threshold, faced headquarters captain, who surprisingly for his complexion dexterously jumped from the table and literally in a few rapid steps was next to the visitor.

“Well, sir, what have you come up with?”

Alex silently handed the envelope. Zhivchik energetically opened the envelope and delved into the contents of the letter.

– M-yes, and so darling, do you want to become a volunteer and defend the Fatherland with breastfeel? Well then, well, meritorious, meritorious. Let me take a look at your documents.

Alexei silently pulled out his passport and diploma from the inside pocket of his coat and handed it to the captain.

He took what was stretched out and slowly returned to the

table and began to carefully study the submitted documents.

– You are kind, still too early in the army. You are nineteen, and they have been drafting into the army since twenty-one years old, and so, sir, dear Alexei Mikhailovich.

Finally, the head-captain gave a voice, while drumming his fingers thoughtfully on the table, and looking somewhere on the top of the visitor's head.

– But on the other hand, if you can't, but really want to, then why not, do you really want to?

Alexei, not giving a voice, nodded his head.

“I see, I see, my dear, it reads on your young face...”

What the master of the office read on the visitor's face remained a mystery, as the staff captain was writing something energetically.

– well, sir, my young friend.

Having finished writing, he turned to Alexei.

– According to the decree of his Imperial Majesty of September 18 of this year, it is prescribed to organize a school of ensigns to replenish the junior officers and now they are enrolling in this school. Here is the direction for you, go to the specified address and become a conker of this wonderful school, and do not thank my young hero.

At these words, he slipped Alexei his documents and another envelope, patted his shoulder, turned around and sat down at the table, paying no attention to the visitor.

Alexei could not even hear the retreat. Leaving the office, he

was a little dumbfounded by the reception of the head-captain, turned the envelope, read the address and moved in the given direction.

In the evening of the same day, fatally tired, from all the events that had taken place, drastically changing the fate of Alexei, he finally reached the house. At school, giving instructions to the staff, leaving the passport in the same place, in return having received a document confirming that he is a cadet of the ensign school, signed in the journal, notifying that he should appear on the first of October at the indicated address, as well as passing The interview with staff captain Rotmistrov finally left for home, as it turned out he still had a week of peaceful life.

He was met at home by his aunts, excited by his long absence. He was an orphan, his parents were replaced by his two aunts, the younger sisters of his father and mother, who from his birth were engaged in his upbringing and did not cherish souls in his Aleshenka. Actually, they were his family.

Ironically, the two aunts had the same name, Maria Alekseevna, he was named after their fathers, and his grandfathers, and both were widows without their children, for this reason both gave their motherly love to him.

But on this their similarity ended, they were two opposites, both purely externally and in character. The eldest, the father's sister, was of impressive size, strict and domineering. The widow of a merchant, with business acumen, but at the same time a devout one who established strict Orthodox orders in the house.

She led all economic affairs in the family. The younger, the mother's sister, was a classic Russian beauty, but she looked miniature against the background of the older one. The widow of a professor, an intellectual and a noblewoman who despised any boorish peasant, as she put it, in the heat of disputes with her elder aunt. With each other, they were constantly in no way disagree, but reconciled them, and even united tireless concern for their beloved boy. Moreover, this treasure of theirs constantly fell into any kind of trouble, due to its restlessness and curiosity.

And indeed, from early childhood, adventures constantly happened on the verge of life and death with Alexei. It's not clear how it will fall out of the cradle, it will fall off the roof of the house, it will start to sink in the village pond, it will strike with lightning, then it will knock down a horse with a branch, or something extraordinary will happen.

From early childhood, his father was assigned an uncle, an old soldier and a former batman of his father, from the Cossacks, to look after and preserve the child, as well as to educate the male character in his son. Here old Mikhalych constantly got him out of nowhere, either from a pond or from under a horse, and at the same time, all military Cossack sciences taught the young man how his father punished his uncle. At first, the aunts were outraged by this approach to raising a child on the part of the father, but over time, everything was settled, because they saw that the old soldier protects the little one and treats him with all care, so Mikhalych became an integral part of the family.

It was in such a sincere and loving triangle of aunts and uncles that he was brought up, absorbing everything that these three extraordinary people gave in their own way, emotional care, a craving for science and love.

Maria Alekseevna the elder instilled faith in the Orthodox and business acumen, Maria Alekseevna the younger revealed her abilities for languages and physical and mathematical sciences, as well as a general interest in scientific work, Mikhalych, brought up a physically strong body and taught the Plastun Cossack combat skills, which are an integral part and included the ability to survive in critical conditions, on the verge of life and death.

From the news that they heard their beloved child entered the school of ensigns, at first they fell into a stupor. Maria Alekseevna the eldest was the first to come to her senses, crying a little, she immediately rushed to prepare the boy, as she put it, for war. Maria Alekseevna, the youngest, first clutching his hand, demanded that these stupid things be thrown out of her head, otherwise Russia would lose the great scientist, but then, realizing that everything was useless, she went into the living room, perched on the couch, sobbed into the voice, lamenting: “to whom you are leaving us, “like an ordinary Russian woman. Alexei, standing in the middle of the living room, was simply at a loss from such a reaction from his younger aunt, who had never seen a single tear in her life. Old Mikhalych helped out as always. Slightly gaining by the shoulders, saying: “Let Lexei go, let Marya Lexevna go out, it’s such a woman’s

business to escort the Cossack to the war,” he led him to his room.

## September frontline reports

*September 1, 1914 The Allies liberate Reims.*

*September 2, 1914 In the Pacific, in German New Guinea, German units surrender to British troops. The battle on En. Allies attack the German position. The infantry begins to dig trenches.*

*September 4, 1914 "Running to the sea" was called the operation, when the Allied and German troops tried to get around each other from the flank. As a result, the Western Front stretched from the North Sea through Belgium and France to Switzerland.*

*September 5, 1914 The August operation (first) began – an offensive operation in the area of the Polish city of Augustow of the Russian armies against the German army.*

*September 14, 1914 Russian troops cross the Carpathians and invade Hungary. The city of Douala in Cameroon, Germany, is captured by British and French troops.*

*September 15, 1914 The first battle for Warsaw – Warsaw-Ivangorod operation. German and Austrian troops attack Russian positions from the south, but are forced to retreat.*

*September 18, 1914 Turkey closes the Dardanelles for passage of ships.*

*September 26, 1914 Antwerp captured by German troops.*

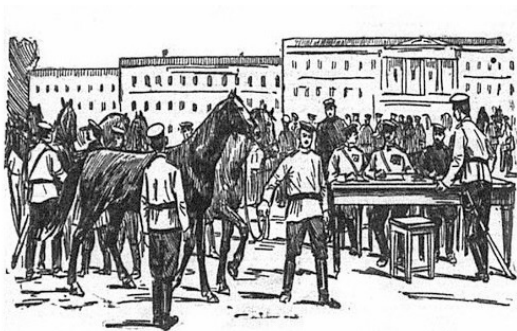
*September 29, 1914 On the Western Front, the first battle begins at Ypres, Belgium, during which the German units try to break through the defenses of the Allied forces.*

# Moscow Ensign School October 1914

The first days of study seemed to Alexei vain and stupid.

The future junior commanders of the army were taught the basics of military science in accordance with the realities of modern warfare: small arms, tactics, trenches, machine guns, topography, and communications services.

They also studied military regulations, the foundations of army law and administrative law, and underwent combat training and field training.



The usual daily routine at the ensign school was as follows:  
at 6 in the morning the rise, given by a trumpeter or a bugler;  
from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. time for putting oneself in order,  
examination and morning prayer;

at 7 o'clock morning tea;

from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. scheduled classes;

at 12 o'clock breakfast;

from 12.30 to 16.30 drill on schedule;

at 16.30 lunch;

from 17 to 18.30 personal time;

from 6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. preparation of assignments and lectures given by the next day;

at 20.00 evening tea;

at 20.30 the evening summons and roll call;

at 21.00 evening dawn and lights out.

No classes were held on Sundays and during Orthodox holidays; these days, cadets from ensign schools could get fired in the city.

The school was located in the barracks of the 5th grenadier Kiev regiment. Nearby, in the barracks of the 6th Grenadier Tauride Regiment, stood the 56th and 55th reserve battalions, which replenished the Grenadier Corps.

The barracks were old, still Catherine's times. But there was no tightness. There were bedrooms, separate classes for classes. On the basement floor there was a dining room, kitchen, warehouses and a restroom.

The heating was an "Amos stove". In the basement were four huge stoves. From them, pipes were laid in the walls along which hot air came from these stoves. In each room there were one, and sometimes more, depending on the size of the room,

the so-called “stranglers”, through which hot air penetrated into the room. These stoves devoured a lot of firewood, but in the barracks it was always very warm. The stoves were downstairs in the basement, in a long corridor. It was always dark there, day and night.

The officers were from military officers. Most of them were disabled. There were St. George cavaliers. But the disability of the officers was such that they did not prevent them from engaging in the formation in the rear. For example, Captain Sergeev was wounded in the heel of his right foot and could not step on this heel. Staff captain Manchurov was wounded in the left hand, but could do anything with one right hand. Lieutenant Lviv. the left arm did not bend from being wounded in the elbow, etc., all in the same spirit.

Upon leaving the bedroom, as usual unexpectedly, Alexei was rather sensitively slapped on the back. – What are you thinking about, comrade Golovin? Did you remember Vera again? Look, I’ll report to my superiors that the gunker Golovin has a heart wound and you will be expelled from school to be injured and given disability.

Well, who could it be, of course, Sashka Boguslavsky, dunce and joker, Alexei’s friend at the University. Alexey encountered him on the first day of school. Their studies at the university connected, or rather, several studies, how many exams. Sasha also passed exams outside the plan, or rather, constantly, retook something, which Alexey constantly helped him with.

As it turned out, this restless adventurer, having knocked himself out of the school of ensigns, turned up at the university, and in the wake of universal patriotism, managed to pass all his debts and get a diploma in a few days, which was completely unlikely, but not for this junkie.

And now he was smiling pretty, slyly squinting, obviously plotting another adventure.

– But will not my kind friend on Sunday agree to keep company with me and two charming young ladies? So to speak, my young ladies are your finances. I guarantee we will pull out your heart splinter, and the future officer of the imperial army will be completely healed of heart wounds, which means that he is ready to defend the homeland.

Alexey did not have time to answer how the trumpet for the morning building sounded, bustle started in the school corridors, the cadets in a hurry put on their overcoats, belted their belts and ran out into the yard for construction, Alexei was seized by general movement, he only waved his hand and ran into the yard.

A new day of school began.

After the construction of the half-platoon, the cadet Golovin went to the topography class, where various scales and sizes of maps were hung on the walls, several dozen cadets at the tables, listened to the introductory course on topography, sketching and memorizing various topographic notations.

At noon after breakfast, when building on combat training,

Sashka, again appearing like a devil from a snuff-box, once again slapping on the back, asked what would be the solution to his wonderful proposal. And again, the whistles of the fathers-commanders interrupted the conversation.

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