

# Trench warfare

During the First World War, new and increasingly powerful weapons were tested: cannons, rifles, machine guns and hand grenades.

Compared to the past, the way armies fought changed completely: kilometres and kilometres of trenches were dug into the earth or rock; had loopholes from which to shoot and were sometimes protected by bags of earth, concrete walls or steel shielding.

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

In front of the "first line" dense networks of barbed wire were installed.

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

The moment of attack was the most dangerous: men were exposed to the shots of rifles, machine guns and in particular artillery, which fired incessantly from the **rear**. In this war numerous casualties were recorded, more than ever before. The soldiers opened a passage through the barbed wire with wire cutters. Cans and bells were hung on the barbed wire to sound the alarm.



Verdun. In the trenches



Austro-Hungarian soldiers in a trench  
on the Eastern Front

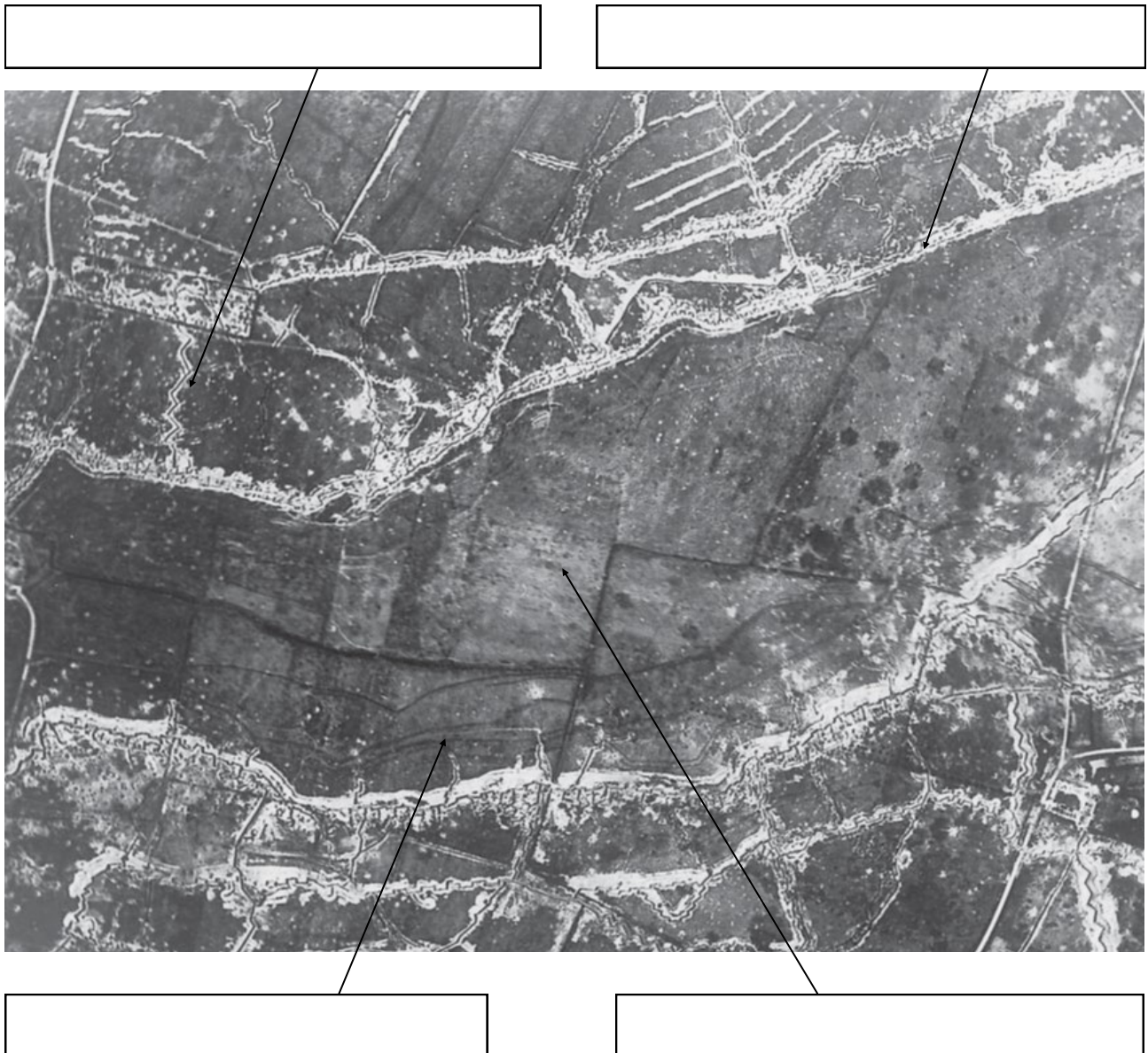
# The Assault

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

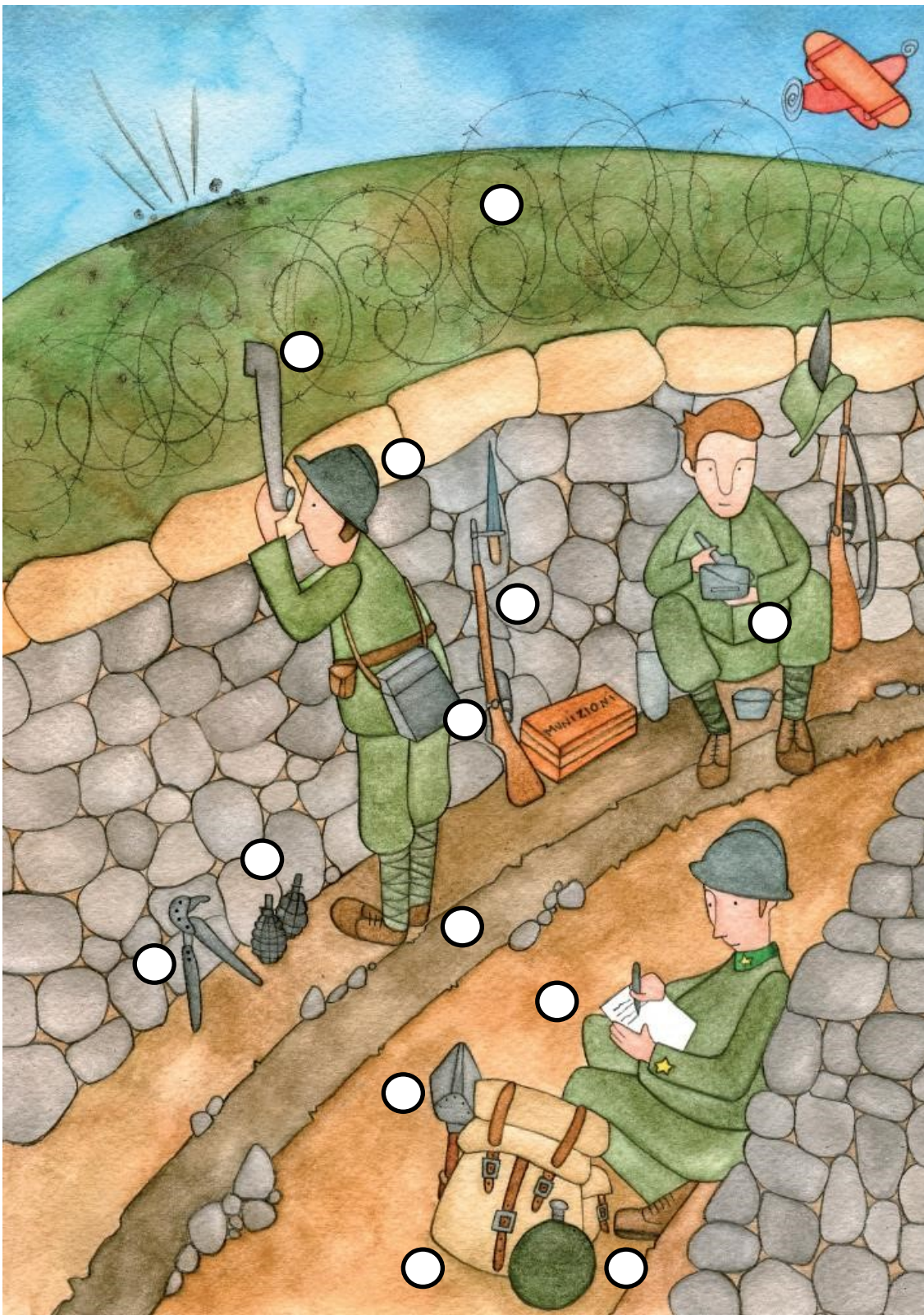
Soldiers were equipped with helmets and gas masks, bayonet-fitted rifles, wire cutters, shovels and hand grenades.

The armies adopted camouflage uniforms coloured to blend into the earth.

Life was tough in the trenches: it was constantly exposed to enemy fire; soldiers suffered from the heat in summer and cold in the winter; you could not wash or change; soldiers often lived in the mud together with rats, lice and other insects. They had to live in mud and dirt, enduring hunger and thirst, the cold or heat. In quieter moments they tried to rest, eat or write to loved ones.







1. BARBED WIRE
2. PERISCOPE
3. MESS KIT
4. HELMET
5. RIFLE WITH BAYONET
6. CONTAINER FOR GAS MASK
7. HAND GRANADE

8. BOOTS
9. WIRE CUTTERS
10. LETTER
11. BACKPACK
12. SPADE
13. CANTEEN



# The White War

For the first time soldiers also fought in the high mountains, the highest peaks of Trentino: between the **glaciers** and snow of Ortles, Cevedale, Adamello and Marmolada.

The soldiers found themselves fighting in the snow or on ice. In this "**White War**" the biggest enemies were the cold and avalanches.

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

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

To bring the necessities for survival up to high altitude, the soldiers made roads and paths; long cableways made it possible to quickly reach difficult places.

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

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

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



Adamello. Italian barracks

## Glossary

Avamposto	Outpost
Camminamento	Communication Trench
Cartuccia (proiettile+bossolo)	Cartridge (bullet + cartridge case)
Corpo a corpo	Hand to hand
Equipaggiamento	Kit
Filo spinato	Barbed wire
Gavetta	Mess tin
Ferita / ferito agg.	Wound / wounded
Parapetto	Parapet
Profugo	Refugee
Proietto	Shell (projectile)
Artiglieria	Artillery
Fucile	Rifle
Mitragliatrice	Machine Gun
Retrovie	The Rear
Shock da bombardamento	Shell Shock
Terra di nessuno	No man's land
TRINCEE Prima linea Seconda linea Terza linea	Front-line trench Support trench Reserve trench