



BASED ON THE EPIC TRUE STORY OF THE
WW1 MOUNTAIN DEFENCE REGIMENTS

1915

THE BATTLE FOR THE ALPS

WILLIAM MOSELEY CLAUDIA CARDINALE



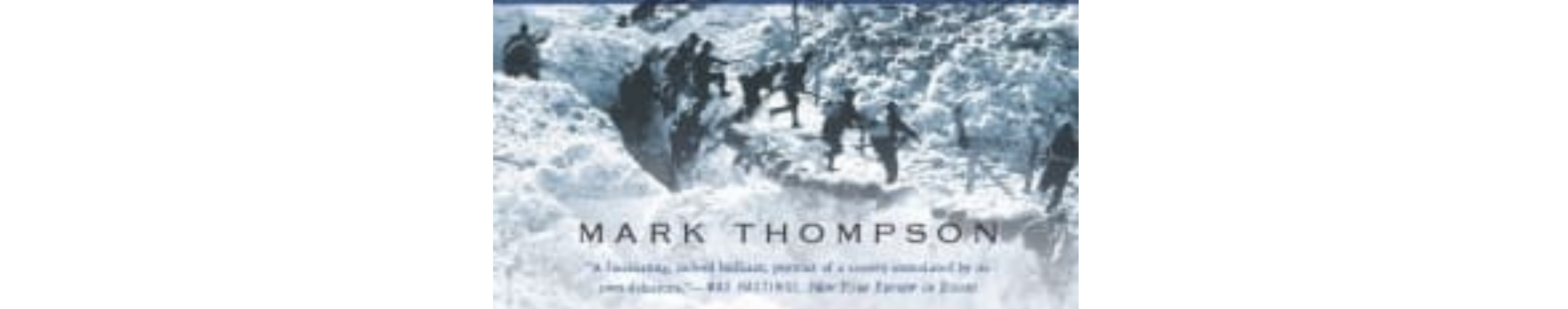
THEIR COURAGE WOULD CHANGE
THE COURSE OF HISTORY





THE WHITE WAR

LIFE AND DEATH ON THE
ITALIAN FRONT 1915-1919



MARK THOMPSON

"A fascinating, superbly brilliant portrait of a country unclouded by its own darkness."—*THE NATION*, *New York Times* Best in Show







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The guns are emplaced in ice caverns which can be reached only through tunnels cut through the drifts; here the men spend their days wrapped in shaggy furs, their faces smeared with grease as a protection from the stinging blasts.











Swiss soldier stands guard at their border.







Designed as a path for men and mules, the Road of 52 Tunnels was completed in 1917. Photo by Stefen Chow

ALONG THE ROAD OF THE 52 GALLERIES





An area of the Pasubios that holds tombstones and an arch was deemed sacred. Elsewhere, Pasubio Ossuary holds the remains of 5,000 dead. Photo by Stefen Chow



The stark mountains and valleys of the Tofano area of the Dolomites are lined with trenches and dotted with stone fortresses, remnants of war. Photo by Stefen Chow



A cross marks the Austrian line in the Pasubio mountains, a relic of their 1916 “Punishment Expedition.” Photo by Stefen Chow



An Italian trench in the Pasubio Mountains. Ultimately, the fighting served as a sideshow for other battles that determined the war's outcome. Photo by Stefen Chow

A powerful avalanche kills hundreds of Austrian soldiers in a barracks near Italy's Mount Marmolada on December 13, 1916. Over a period of several days, avalanches in the Italian Alps killed an estimated 10,000 Austrian and Italian soldiers in mid-December. The avalanches occurred as the Austrians and Italians were fighting WW1 and some witnesses claim that the avalanches were purposefully caused to use as a weapon. Though there is little evidence that this was the case with these avalanches, it is possible that avalanches were used as weapons at other times during the war.

The Italians entered World War I on the side of Britain, France and Russia against Germany and Austria-Hungary in late April 1915. Over the next three years, the Italian army engaged the Austrians in a series of bloody battles in the mountainous region along the Isonzo River near the Italian-Austrian border. The conditions in the mountains were often worse than the actual fighting. An Austrian officer once said "The mountains in winter are more dangerous than the Italians." This was certainly true in mid-December 1916 when heavy snowfall in the Alps created conditions ripe for avalanches.

Hundreds of Austrian troops stationed in a barracks near the Gran Poz summit of Mount Marmolada were in particular danger. Although the camp was well-placed to protect it from Italian attack, it was situated directly under a mountain of unstable snow. On December 13, approximately 200,000 tons of snow, rock and ice plunged down the mountain directly onto the barracks. About 200 troops were pulled to safety, but 300 others died. Only a few of the bodies were recovered. As the heavy snow and high winds continued over the next week, incidents like the one at Marmolada happened with disturbing frequency. Entire regiments were lost in an instant. The bodies of some victims weren't found until spring. The best estimate is that somewhere between 9,000 and 10,000 soldiers died by the end of December 1916 because of the avalanches.

An Avalanche in progress.

