

Rivalries in the Balkans

The Balkan states were the “powder keg” of Europe because they were ethnically diverse. Serbia was primarily a Slavic population; they enjoyed the support of Russia because of the common history between the two areas. Austria-Hungary opposed Serbia because they too wanted to control the Balkans.

An incident in Bosnia set off the spark that ignited war in Europe. On June 28, 1914, the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie paid a visit to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. While riding through the city they were assassinated by Gavrilo Princep, a member of the Black Hand. The Black Hand was a young organization devoted to the restoration of Bosnian self-rule. Austria, backed by Germany issued an ultimatum to Serbia to end all resistance. Although Serbia agreed to most provisions of the ultimatum, Austria still declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914.

In response to this, Russia began to mobilize its army to face the threat of the Austrians and the Germans. The Germans issued an ultimatum against Russia demanding that they stop mobilizing, when they refused Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914. The German’s then asked France what they would do in the event of a Russo-German War. The French replied, “That they would act in accordance with its interests.” Germany then declared war on the French on August 3, 1914.

1. Why were the Balkans known as a “powder keg?”
2. How did the assassination of the Archduke affect relations in the Balkans?

Beginning of the War

The chain reaction drew most of Europe into war. Germany wasted no time by declaring war of Russia and France in a three-day period. Germany had planned for a war that involved two-fronts, one against Russia in the east and France in the west. The Kaiser put the Schlieffen Plan into action, which called for a war against France before turning toward Russia. This plan involved crossing through Belgium which was a neutral country to get to France. This move forced Great Britain into the war and they declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914.

This war divided Europe into two camps. The Central Powers included Germany and Austria-Hungary, who would be joined later by the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. The Allied Powers or Allies included Great Britain, France, and Russia, who were later joined by Japan, Romania, Belgium, Greece, the United States in 1917, and Italy in 1915. Italy broke its alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary when Germany invaded Belgium.

1. What was the Schlieffen Plan?
2. What countries were parts of the Central Powers? The Allies?

The Great War Begins

At the Battle of Marne, the Germans tried to cross the Marne River. The Germans were not strong enough to push through the French defenses and France won a minor victory. The victory at Marne for the French ensured that the Germans would have to fight a two-front war. The conflict on the Western Front against the French was stalemated. This is where trench warfare became a major symbol of World War I. Armies dug parallel trenches and each side waited. Each side launched offensives but soldiers were mowed down by machine gun fire. The Germans also tried chlorine gas for the first time in warfare, but it too was unsuccessful. Trench warfare produced minimal gain and a tremendous loss of life.

Another major incident in the beginning of WWI was the Gallipoli Campaign. In November 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined the war on the side of the Central Powers. The Western Allies were

now unable to ship supplies and weapons to the Russians. The Allies pushed for a campaign to open the Turkish Straits, led by Winston Churchill. In February 1915, they launched an invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula. This was unsuccessful and the Russians were left to fend for themselves, which weakened the Russian front considerably.

1. What happened at the Battle of Marne?
2. What happened during the Gallipoli Campaign?

The United States Enters the War

From the beginning of the war the Germans had engaged in a new type of warfare, it was called submarine warfare. In May 1915 a German U-Boat sank the *Lusitania*, which was a British passenger liner. The Germans believed it was carrying ammunition but it was not. The sinking of the boat killed 1,198 people, 128 of them were American people. This caused protests and in the U.S; the Germans silenced the outcry in America by promising to stop the submarine warfare.

This peace only lasted for so long. The Germans wanted the British out of the war and claimed that they would sink any ship without warning. This policy was known as unrestricted submarine warfare, and the plan resulted in the sinking of three American ships.

A few weeks after the sinking of American ships, British intelligence intercepted a telegram from the German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmerman to the German ambassador in Mexico. The Zimmerman Telegram stated that if Mexico joined the war on the side of the Germans, that the Germans would help the Mexicans reacquire the lands and territories that it had lost to the U.S. Because of this the U.S decided to join the war on April 2, 1917. The entry of the U.S into the war shifted the balance of power to the Allies.

1. What is unrestricted submarine warfare?
2. How did the United States join WWI?

Russia Withdraws from the War

The problems for Russia caused in part by wartime shortages of food and supplies had seriously weakened the czar, Nicholas II. In March 1917, Czar Nicolas abdicated the throne and a provisional government took over. The provisional government was also unsuccessful. In November 1917, the Communist Party, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin took control of Russia. With Lenin at the head of the government Russia turned away from its allegiance with the Allies and in 1918 signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. This treaty ended the war with Germany and Russia. By the terms of the treaty, Russia was forced to cede to Germany the territories that include present-day Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine.

1. Why do you think Lenin turned away from the allegiance with the Allies?
2. What was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?

The Wars Final Days

Russia's withdrawal from the war allowed Germany to concentrate its forces on the Western Front. In 1918 they launched a massive attack on France and were almost victorious. The newly arriving U.S troops however turned the Allies into the aggressors. The Allies turned their attention on Germany

in 1918. Shortly after this the Bulgarians and Ottomans surrendered to the Allies. Austria-Hungary suffered a revolution that broke up its empire, and the Germans began to protest against their government. In November 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm was forced to abdicate, and the Germans formed a republic. Representatives on each side of the war met and signed an armistice or ceasefire on November 11, 1918 ending the First World War.

1. How did U.S involvement change the tide of the war?
2. How did the war end?

New Technology of World War I

World War I is considered a total war, because the nations devoted all their energies and resources on the battlefield and on the home front. The wartime governments of the European countries commanded the amount and types of goods produced by factories. Governments also put price and wage controls on goods and labor. They also rationed goods that were necessary for the war effort. Propaganda was also in widespread use by the governments, they produced pictures and messages to create further fear and distrust of the enemy.

The Great War as it was called at the time saw a number of firsts in combat. New weapons such as machine guns, artillery, gas grenades, new modes of transportation and communication were also created. The hand held weapons and technology did massive damage on both sides of the war. There were many other dangerous weapons created such as tanks, planes, and new naval units that also changed the war and the world forever.

1. How did propaganda affect the views of war and fighting countries?
2. How did these new weapons change war forever?

Building the Peace

Although the war had concluded, the terms of the peace had remained undetermined. In January 1918, the Allies held a conference at the Palace of Versailles near Paris to outline the plan for peace. Among the key delegates were Georges Clemenceau of France, David Lloyd George of Britain, Vittorio Orlando of Italy, and Woodrow Wilson of the U.S.

President Woodrow Wilson had outlined a plan for peace which he called the Fourteen Points. A few of the major provisions of the treaty were redrawing national borders and creating new nations along the principle of self-determination. The fourteenth and most important point called for an association of nations that could negotiate a peaceful resolution to future international affairs, called the League of Nations. There were additional peace treaties signed with the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, Austria and Hungary.

The main peace agreement was the Treaty of Versailles. Great Britain and France approached the peace conference a little different than Wilson. These two countries wanted to punish Germany and on June 28, 1919, they succeeded. The major provisions of the treaty were:

- a. The German territory Alsace-Lorraine was ceded to France
- b. Germany lost its colonies in Africa and the Pacific
- c. The limitation of Germany's army to 100,000 men with no conscription, no tanks, no heavy artillery, no poison-gas supplies, no aircraft and no airships
- d. Germany could not have submarines or and air force
- e. Germany could not manufacture weapons

- f. The “war guilt” clause that place sole responsibility for the war on Germany
 - g. Germany was forced to pay 33 billion dollars in reparations for 30 years
 - h. Formation of the League of Nations, Germany and Russia were excluded from membership.
1. What was the purpose of Wilson’s Fourteen Points?
 2. List the most important clauses of the Versailles Treaty?
 3. Do you think any of these provisions are unfair? Explain.

Impact of the Great War

Most of the original members of the new League of Nations were non-European nations, demonstrating the global effect of the war. The Treaty of Versailles was unsuccessful in forging a lasting peace. The U.S, fearing involvement in a global conflict refused to join the League; this weakened the league. The Treaty brought with it more problems than solutions.

Germany was angered and humiliated by the war guilt clause and the reparations they could barely afford to pay. Other European countries were outraged by their failure to win independence. Italy and Japan felt the treaty should have awarded them additional territory. The unfinished issues of the Treaty of Versailles laid the groundwork for a second world war.

The cost of the war was even greater on European countries. The war eliminated an entire generation of Europeans with deaths totaling around 9-10 million and 21 million more were injured. Genocide reduced the European population even further due to the massacre of thousands of Christian Armenians by the Ottomans from 1915-1919. Deaths were not the only problem, the economy was also suffering. Economic devastation plagued Europe after the war. The finances of the European nations were depleted and many farms and towns were destroyed.

1. Why didn’t the U.S join the League of Nations?
2. What were some major problems caused by the Treaty of Versailles?