

# Free term paper on history

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## **World War 1**

World War 1

### **Introduction**

The First World War became a severe test for the whole world in the twentieth century. It was a turning point in European civilization that marked the end of the 19th century - the century of conservatism, education and stability, and the beginning of the 20th century - the century of the great revolutions and world wars, mass terror and rapid technological development.

According to Dowling, more than sixty million people entered the armed services in 1914-1918. Around ten million men gave their lives in the conflict known as Great War, along with twenty million others. The soldiers fought under different conditions, from the established trenches on both European fronts to the more mobile warfare of Africa, from the beaches of Gallipoli to the frozen marshes of eastern Galicia (Dowling, 2006, introduction).

Despite the fact that World War I was conducted in a civilized manner, it dealt a severe blow to the European civilization and statehood. The fact that the First World War was not an ordinary event was reflected by the politics, economics and art of the postwar period. The First World War (1914-1918) was one of the largest military conflicts in the history of mankind. This title was confirmed in historiography only after the Second World War in 1939. Historians of the participating countries tried to deflect the blame from their government for unleashing this inhuman conflict. Over the years appeared a lot of myths about the First World War. It means that the subject is relevant, despite an enormous number of studies in the field of military affairs, history, political science, sociology and international politics.

Dowling says that it was the First World War that introduced the term "home front", where women, children and people who were not enrolled in the armed services "fought" for their country by providing armaments, food and moral support (Dowling, 2006, introduction).

## **Discussion**

The first objective of France was the banishment of the German forces from the country. Moreover, the government of France planned to return the province of Alsace-Lorraine that belonged to Germany after the war of 1870-71. France wanted reduce the power of Germany, thereby to strengthen the security of the country (Stone, 2009, p. 10).

Britain entered the war due to the possible threat of a German victory that would violate safety of Britain itself. For centuries, Britain tried to keep the balance of power in order to prevent other countries from becoming same powerful. The arms race between Britain and Germany, especially in the

Navy pushed France towards an alliance with England. Thus two military blocs were formed: the Triple Entente (the Allied Forces, or Allies) and the Triple Alliance (the Central Powers).

It is easy to specify the direct organizers of the war, but it is very difficult to describe its long-term base. It is rooted primarily in the industrial rivalry of nations. The rise of the national and liberation movement in the colonies and the countries of Central Europe was an important reason for the First World War.

However, the cause of the war was the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of Austria-Hungary by 19-years old Serb Gavrilo Principe in Sarajevo (Feldman, 2004, p. 7). Feldman claims, that the emperor of Austria and prime minister of Hungary were cautious. After the assassination they did not want to act against the Serbia without the support of Germany. Their concerns were caused by the fact that Serbia was under the protection of Russia, and Russia had military treaties with France and Britain. Austria-Hungary's unwillingness to act alone made a local problem larger (Feldman, 2004, p. 7).

Austria-Hungary took the opportunity to accuse the entire Serbian nation for terror and require the return of Austrian officials on the territory of Serbia. In response to this and to protect the Serbs, Russia started to mobilize.

Germany declared war to Russia and began military operations against France. Committed to defend Russia, France started to mobilize on July 31 (Feldman, 2004, p. 8). Everything was done by the German government with an unusual haste. According to Feldman, most Europeans thought the war would be over soon. All across the continent, trains brought hundreds of

thousands of soldiers and horses to the battle lines. Troop departures were treated like a holiday.

Occupation of Belgium by Germany caused a declaration of war by Britain. The war plan of Germans, apparently, was to defeat France and then to come down with all the forces on Russia. In a short time the whole Belgium was invaded, and the German army occupied northern France, moving to Paris. In the great battle on the Marne the French stopped the Germans, but the subsequent attempt to cast the Germans from the borders of France failed. From that time the war in the west was dragged on. The Germans built a huge line of fortifications, from the North Sea to the Swiss border. Opponents appealed to the same process of the artillery war.

First, the war was fought between Germany and Austria on the one hand and between Russia, France, England, Belgium and Serbia on the other.

Countries from the Triple Allied Forces established an agreement among themselves. They agreed to not make a separate peace with Germany.

However, the new allies joined both alliances and the theater of war has been extended. Japan, Italy, Portugal and Romania have joined the Allied Forces. Turkey and Bulgaria have joined the Central Powers (Feldman, 2004, p. 11).

The fights in the east began from the Baltic Sea to the mountains of the Carpathians. Actions of the Russian army against the Germans and Austrians were initially successful. They led to the occupation of the biggest part of Galicia. But in the summer of 1915, due to a lack of weapons, Russian had to retreat.

At the same time there were great battles at the sea. A strong British fleet

destroyed German fleet and locked the rest of it in the harbor. This helped to achieve the blockade of Germany and its cut off from supplies of weapons. At the same time Germany lost all overseas colonies. Germany responded with attacks of submarines that decimated both the military trucks and the commercial ships of rivals.

Until the end of 1916, Germany and its allies held the overall advantage on the ground, while the Allied Forces retained the consent on the seas.

Germany occupied the entire strip of land from the North and Baltic Seas through the eastern part of the Balkans and to Mesopotamia. The Central Powers had the possibility of excellent communication network, so they easily moved forces to the areas that were in threat of an enemy's attack.

On the other hand, its disadvantage was the limited supply of funds due to isolation from the rest of the world, whereas its rivals used the freedom of maritime movement.

## **The entry of the United States**

According to Feldman, the United States was struggling with social changes in 1914. Author says that U. S. industries were expanding, yet the economy suffered from its worst depression in about 20 years. When Britain declared the war on Germany on August 4, President Woodrow Wilson thought that Europe was stuck with greed and ancient ideas of empire. President wanted the young democracy of the United States to stay out of the fighting and show the neutrality. At that time, more than one-third of Americans came from another country. Most of them had at least one foreign-born parent (Feldman, 2004, p. 13). Americans agreed with President that the United States should stay out of the war in Europe. Meanwhile, European countries

realized how important American manpower and industry could be in deciding which side would win the war.

Use of U-boats by Germany pushed the United States to declare war. On May 7, 1915 a German U-boat attacked the British ocean liner, the Lusitania with nearly 2,000 people on board. About 1,200 passengers died, including 128 American men, women and children. The German chancellor managed to avoid a major diplomatic issue this time and President Wilson continued his policy of neutrality. An increasing number of Americans thought the country should prepare for war, so peace was hard to come by.

On November 7th, 1916, Woodrow Wilson won the presidential election. He was perceived as a man of peace, while his opponent, Charles Evans Hughes was seen as a warmonger. While Wilson weighed his options regarding the U-boat issue, he also had to address the question of Germany's attempts to establish a secret alliance with Mexico.

On January 19th, 1917 British naval intelligence caught a telegram sent by a German Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in Mexico City. This telegram promised to help Mexico recover the territory it had ceded to the United States during the Mexican-American war. For that assistance, Germany asked for Mexican support in the war. Despite the news from the telegram, Wilson still hesitated to declare the war. Still, this telegram had served to sway American public opinion towards the declaration of war.

The Germans by their actions had demonstrated that they had no interest in seeking for the peaceful conflict resolution. All these reasons contributed to President's decision to ask Congress for a declaration of the war against Germany. Wilson mentioned Germany's attempts to involve Mexico into an

alliance against the United States and incidents with the usage of U-boats, as his reasons for declaring the war. On April 4, 1917 the U. S. Senate supported the measure to declare the war against Germany. The United States declared the war on Austria-Hungary later, on December 7, 1917. Russia's withdrawal from the war and the U. S. entry into the war hastened the conflicts' resolution. Germany admitted defeat in the war, its allies surrendered before. The war that started in 1914, finally ended on November 11, 1918.

## **Conclusion**

The war that began in 1914, with its size and ferocity was far greater than all the wars that mankind had ever conducted. More than sixty million people entered the armed services in 1914-1918. Around ten million men gave their lives in the conflict known as Great War, along with twenty million of others. There were great losses in battle correspondingly. However, the most striking feature of the war was the dominance of technology. Rivals used cars, aircrafts, armored cars, machine guns and poison gases. The Great War was an engineering and artillery contest. It was a battle of the opponents who collected the best equipment. Germany won in front of the opponents by its military training, which took place over 3-4 decades.

Another feature of the Great War was its ruthless character. It had thrown the cultural Europe in the depths of barbarism. Previous wars of the 19 century did not touch the civil population. Back in 1870, Germany announced that it was fighting only with the French army, but not with the people. In the World War 1 Germany took all the stocks of the population in the occupied territories of Belgium and Poland. It reduced citizens to the position of

slaves, who were rounded up by the heaviest work for the winners. As a result of the First World War, the map of Europe was completely redrawn. There appeared new countries: Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland. The contradictions between new countries, industrial potential and disadvantaged state of Germany made a new world war inevitable. In 1918, the First World War finished, but the political confrontation did not disappear, leading to an even more devastating Second World War. Both wars were the links of one chain.

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