

PART SIX

CATACLYSM

The Great War began in August 1914. Germany and Austria-Hungary fought Great Britain, France, and Russia. Although most statesmen, military leaders, and ordinary soldiers and civilians believed that the war would be over quickly, it raged on for more than four years. A military stalemate, bogged down in grisly trench warfare on the western front, took the lives of millions of soldiers. In the war's wake, four empires fell. In 1917, a revolution overthrew the tsar of Russia, and then the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government, withdrew from the world conflict, and imposed Communist rule. The German Empire collapsed in November 1918 upon the victory of Britain, France, and their allies (including the United States since 1917). The multinational Austro-Hungarian and Turkish Ottoman Empires (which had joined Germany on the losing side) also collapsed.

The Versailles Peace Treaty, signed by the new German Republic in 1919, carved up the fallen empires, creating successor states in Central Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The treaties signed between the victors and the vanquished left a legacy of nationalist hatred in Europe that poisoned international relations during the subsequent two decades. Out of the economic, social, and political turmoil of the 1920s and 1930s emerged authoritarian movements that were swept to power in many European countries, beginning with Mussolini's Italian fascists in 1922. In Germany, Hitler's National Socialist Party—the Nazis—grew in strength with the advent of the Great Depression in 1929. The Nazis drew on extreme right-wing nationalism that viewed the Treaty of Versailles as an unfair humiliation to Germany. In the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin became head of the Communist Party following Lenin's death in 1924; he purged rivals within the party, launched a

campaign of rapid industrialization, forced millions of peasants into collective farms, and ordered the slaughter or imprisonment of those who resisted. Britain and France retained their parliamentary forms of government, despite economic, social, and political tensions.

In this Europe of extremes, the search for political stability after World War I proved elusive. After coming to power in 1933, Hitler rearmed Germany and disdainfully violated the Treaty of Versailles by reoccupying the Rhineland in 1936 and forging a union with Austria. The same year, Hitler and Mussolini supported a right-wing nationalist insurrection in Spain against the Spanish Republic. They sent planes, advisers, and war materiel to aid General Francisco Franco's military forces, which were victorious three years later. After Hitler's initial aggressive moves against Czechoslovakia were unopposed by Britain and France, the German dictator brazenly sent German troops to occupy all of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Just weeks after shocking the world by signing a nonaggression pact with Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler began his long-planned invasion of Poland, which quickly fell. And after a brief "phony war" of inaction in the West, in the spring of 1940 Hitler invaded France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Japan's sudden attack on the U.S. military bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, brought the United States into World War II. Over 17 million people were killed in the fighting, and another 20 million civilians perished, including more than 6 million Jews systematically exterminated by the Nazis during the Holocaust. The war finally ended in 1945, after the defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Europe and the entire world entered a new and potentially even more dangerous period, one in which nuclear arms made the threat of another world war even more horrible.

THE GREAT WAR



“The lamps are going out all over Europe. They will not be lit again in our lifetime.” So spoke Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, in early August 1914, as the Great War began. His last-ditch diplomatic efforts to prevent war having failed, Grey was one of the few to share an apocalyptic vision of a conflict that most people thought would be over by Christmas. Few observers anticipated that this war would be more destructive than any ever fought. International peace conferences held in The Hague in 1899 and 1907 had considered ways of reducing atrocities in war, but they failed to take into account that future wars might be different from those of the past. Not even Grey could have foreseen the 38.2 million casualties, the downfall of four empires, and the shifts in Europe’s economic, social, cultural, and political life after the war that made the period before the war seem like “the good old days.”

The Great War was the first large-scale international conflict since the Napoleonic era. It involved all the great powers, with Italy entering the war in 1915, albeit without much popular enthusiasm, and the United States entering in 1917. Before the war ended, it would also draw a host of minor states into the monstrous struggle. The catastrophic conflagration was set off by a spark—the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, on June 28, 1914, by a Serb nationalist. In little more than a month, war engulfed the powers of Europe through the decades-old system of entangling alliances that interwove their fates. And while these alliances did not make a general war in Europe inevitable—in fact, the situation in Europe seemed much more precarious in 1905 and 1911 than it did in 1914 before the assassination—most heads of state, diplomats, and military planners expected a major war in their lifetimes. Some were relieved, and others delighted, when it began. Few were surprised.

ENTANGLING ALLIANCES

Among the national rivalries in Europe, none seemed more irreparable than that between Germany and France. However, none was potentially as

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LE NEZ DE LA TRIPLICE

inséré du « L'Assommoir » satirique

Cartoon satirizing the alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Turkish Ottoman Empire (1896).

dangerous as that between Russia and Austria-Hungary, which was focused on the Balkans. It was accentuated by the presence within the Habsburg Empire of South Slav peoples who looked to Russia as the protector of all Slavs. In the meantime, Russia, with its long-standing goal of increasing its influence in the Balkans, fanned the flames of Pan-Slavism. Germany and Austria-Hungary became firm allies, with their alliance directed, above all, against Russia. In 1882, Italy joined the two Central European powers to form the Triple Alliance, which was revived in 1891 and 1902. By 1905, growing German and British economic and military rivalry helped drive together France and Britain, the oldest rivals in Europe. Russia, France, and Britain formed the Triple Entente. Entangling alliances left the great powers of Europe divided into two armed camps. Because of this alliance system, the outbreak of war between any two rivals threatened to bring all of the powers into the conflict.

Irreconcilable Hatreds

The German Empire, proclaimed at Versailles in the wake of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, had absorbed Alsace and most of Lorraine. The French never reconciled themselves to the loss of two of their wealthiest provinces. Although most Alsatians spoke a German dialect, Alsace had been an integral and strategically important part of France since the seventeenth century. Most people living in the parts of Lorraine annexed by Germany spoke and considered themselves French. The growing rivalry between France and Germany over colonial interests added to mutual mistrust.

Francis Joseph (1830–1916), the elderly emperor of Austria-Hungary, was a plodding man of integrity who had assumed the throne in 1848 and who had once told Theodore Roosevelt, the president of the United States, “You see in me the last monarch of the old school.” Respected by his people, he remained a largely ceremonial figure identified with the survival of the polyglot Habsburg state in an age of nationalism. Francis Joseph bore a series of family tragedies with dignity: the execution in 1867 of his brother Maximilian in Mexico, where he was briefly emperor, his son’s suicide in 1889, and his wife’s madness, separation, and assassination. Throughout his reign, fifteen years longer than even that of Queen Victoria of England, the Habsburg emperor had been determined that the imperial army be strong and that his dynasty maintain international prestige.

(Left) An Alsatian woman learning to goose-step in a caricature from the German satirical review *Simplicissimus*. (Right) The aging Emperor Francis Joseph of the Habsburg monarchy.

La germanisation de l'Alsace.
Alsacienne apprenant le pas de l'oie.
Illustration (1911)
de Simplicissimus



Irreconcilable hatreds existed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was made up of a great many different nationalities. The Austrians and the Hungarians, who dominated the other nationalities of their territories (see Chapter 17), were satisfied, but other peoples were not. Thus Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and others resented Austrian and Hungarian domination. And Romanians were unhappy with Hungary's vigorous campaign to "Magyarize" public life at the expense of non-Hungarian minorities.

The South Slavs were the most dissatisfied peoples within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The southern territories of Austria-Hungary included South Slav peoples—majorities in some regions—who resented subservience to the monarchy. These included Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (see Map 17.3).

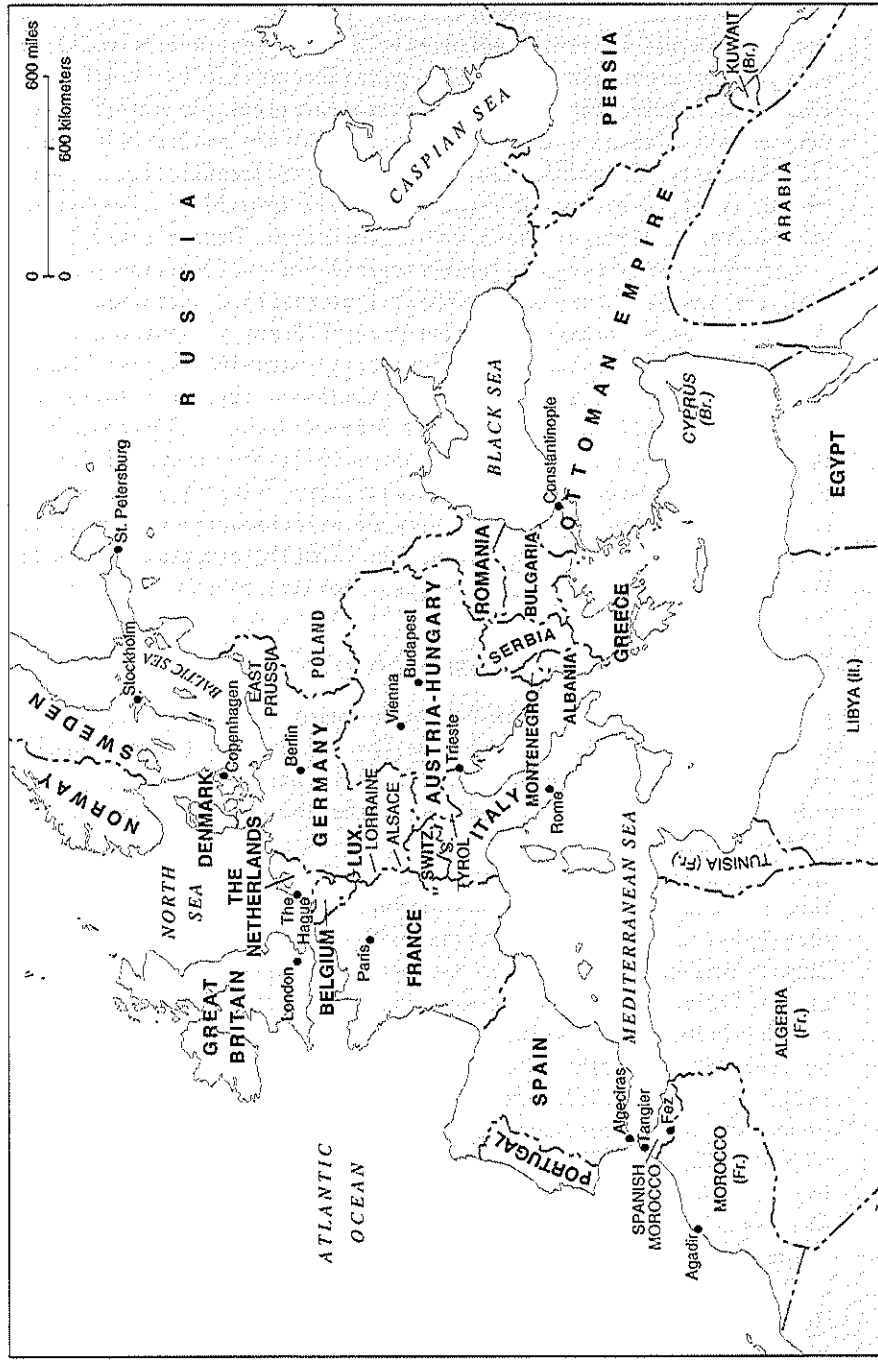
During the mid-nineteenth-century revolutions, the Russian army had bailed out the then-youthful Emperor Francis Joseph, invading Hungary in 1849 and defeating its rebellious army (see Chapter 16). But by the turn of the century, the Russian government was eagerly fanning Pan-Slav fervor in the Balkans, stirring ethnic tension in the southern regions of the Habsburg domains. In the mountainous Habsburg Balkan territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which included Orthodox Serbs, Muslims, and Catholic Croats, many Serbs were committed to joining Bosnia to Serbia. The implication of Pan-Slav nationalism, that Slavs sharing a common culture ought also to share a common government, threatened the very existence of the Habsburg monarchy. The threat of Russian-oriented Pan-Slavism made Austria-Hungary even more dependent on Germany, as it contemplated the possibility of one day being drawn into a war against Russia.

For centuries Russia had coveted the strategically crucial Dardanelles strait, as well as the narrow Bosphorus strait of Constantinople, controlled by the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Russian mastery over the straits that separate Europe and Asia would allow it to control entry to the Black Sea and afford it easy access to the Mediterranean. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856) by Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire had only temporarily diminished Russian interest in the region. British policy in the Balkans had long been predicated on keeping the straits from Russian control.

The Alliance System

The alliance system of late-nineteenth-century Europe, then, hinged on German and French enmity, the competing interests of Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans, and Germany's fear of being attacked from both east and west by Russia and France (see Map 22.1). Great Britain stood independent of any alliance until undertaking an Entente with France in 1904. Colonial rival of both Germany and France and the opponent of Russian expansion, Britain ultimately came to fear the expanding German navy more than French colonial competition or Russia.

MAP 22.1 EUROPE IN 1914 Highlighting Alsace and the part of Lorraine occupied by Germany before the outbreak of the Great War.



The foundation of nineteenth-century diplomacy lay in the assumption by each continental power that alliances with other great powers would protect it by forcing any nation considering war to face at least two hostile powers. Bismarck captured the urgency the European great powers felt about the necessity of alliances, and the delicate nature of the balance of power itself: "All [international] politics reduces itself to this formula: Try to be *à trois* (three) as long as the world is governed by the unstable equilibrium of five great powers"—Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Britain, and France.

The diplomats of the great powers were the heirs of Klemens von Metternich, the Austrian leader who dominated international relations in the three decades following Napoleon's defeat in 1815. Many of them were conservative nobles determined, at least in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, to hold the line against forces of democratization in their own states. War to some extent became an instrument of domestic politics. Diplomats believed that the great powers ought to make decisions in the interest of the smaller ones. They embraced nationalism as a principle, but only when considering the rights of the great powers. If they allowed smaller powers some rights, they ascribed the non-European peoples (with the exception of the United States and Japan, the only non-European powers) none at all.

Germany and Austria-Hungary against Russia

Germany at first enjoyed good relations with Russia, another autocratic power. In 1873, Bismarck forged the Three Emperors' League, an alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia; by the alliance, the three rulers pledged to consult each other in order to maintain the peace "against all disturbances from whatever side they might come." But it was difficult to gloss over tensions between Austro-Hungarian and Russian interests in the Balkans. When Russia sought and found occasions to extend its influence in that region, Austria-Hungary reacted with concern. In 1875, a revolt against Turkish rule had broken out in the Balkan provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following Russian intervention against and victory over Turkey in the bloody Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), the Congress of Berlin in 1878 left Bulgaria nominally under the authority of the Ottoman Empire but also subject to Russian influence. The Austro-Hungarian government would henceforth administer Bosnia and Herzegovina, although they would remain within the Ottoman Empire. But this had the effect of potentially antagonizing Russia, because both territories had populations of Serbs, who looked to Russia for leadership. Moreover, in part because Britain and Austria-Hungary feared that Bulgaria might serve Russian interests, the Congress of Berlin recognized the creation of the independent states of Serbia and Romania (consisting of Walachia and Moldavia) as buffers against further Russian ambitions in the Balkans. Montenegro also gained independence, and the Ottoman Empire ceded the Mediterranean island of Cyprus to British occupation. The Ottoman Empire not only lost considerable territory

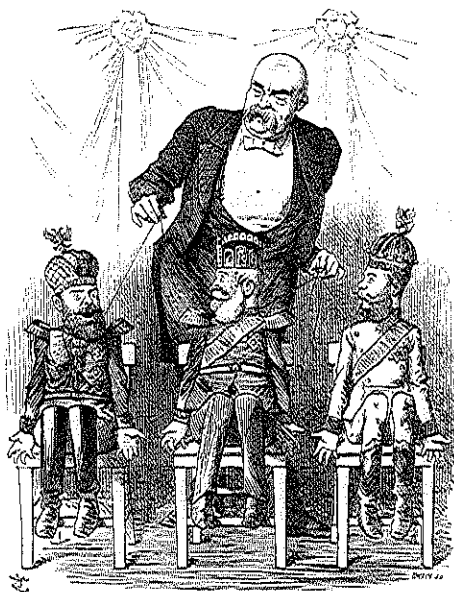
in the Balkans (including much of the empire's Christian population) but now faced two new small but hostile states. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees fled Serbia, Bulgaria, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, pouring into the diminished Ottoman territories. By 1879, about half of the 1.5 million Muslims who had lived in Bulgaria were no longer there; 200,000 had died, and the others had taken refuge in Turkey.

In 1879, fearing Russian expansionism, Bismarck forged the Dual Alliance, the cornerstone alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary, predicated on German support for Habsburg opposition to an expansion of Russian interests in the Balkans. Although the details of the alliance remained secret, its general outlines were well known. The alliance became one of the central factors of European diplomacy for the next thirty-five years. When Italy allied with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1882, the Triple Alliance was formed. Italy was not a great power, but it wanted to be one. The Italian government also wanted support for its aggressive imperial ambitions, which were directed toward the Mediterranean region, particularly North Africa. There France stood in the way, having occupied Tunisia in 1881 before the Italians could get there (see Chapter 21), and Italy now sought support against France.

Germany's alliance with Austria-Hungary made the Three Emperors' League virtually meaningless. Germany and Austria-Hungary each agreed to come to the aid of the other in the event of a Russian attack. Bismarck had intended Germany's alliance with Austria-Hungary to force Russia to seek better relations with Germany. But it had the effect of driving Russia further away. Moreover, Austria-Hungary's alliance with Germany had the potential to make instability in the Balkans a threat to European peace by putting Russia at odds not only with Austria-Hungary, but with Germany as well.

Germany Encircled: Russia and France Ally

The last thing Bismarck wanted was for his alliance with Austria-Hungary to drive Russia and France together. Such an eventuality might one day leave



In a caricature of the alliance system, Otto von Bismarck is depicted as a puppet-master controlling the emperors of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany.

Germany confronting the necessity of fighting a war on two fronts, Bismarck's nightmare. In 1881, he resurrected the Three Emperors' League, which again allied the tsar of Russia with the emperors of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Despite considerable points of tension with the Habsburg monarchy, the Russian government entered this alliance as a hedge against Austro-Hungarian expansion in the Balkans toward the straits of Constantinople. The result was that Bismarck's resourceful diplomacy left Germany allied, in one way or another, with all of its potential enemies except France. As on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, France stood without allies.

Yet several factors seemed to draw Russia and France together, despite great differences in their political systems. Both France and Russia stood outside the Triple Alliance, which joined the powers of Central Europe with Italy. Russia, too, faced diplomatic isolation, despite the Three Emperors' League, because its Balkan interests clashed with those of Austria-Hungary. Russia hoped that an alliance with France would limit German support for the ambitions of the Habsburgs in southeastern Europe. Cultural ties between the Russian aristocracy and France remained strong; many Russian nobles still preferred to speak French.

French investment in Russia increased dramatically in the late 1880s and early 1890s. French bankers seized the opportunity to provide capital at attractive interest rates for Russian railway and mining development, and French investors enthusiastically purchased Russian bonds. By 1914, about one-fourth of all French foreign investment was in Russia. In contrast, Bismarck and his successors made it a policy to discourage and even to forbid German loans to Russia, although they invested in the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. German private investors usually lacked the capital to undertake such loans. At the same time, German and French financial cooperation was extremely limited. French and German capitalists saw each other as rivals.

Franco-Russian ties were further solidified by Tsar Alexander III's visit to Paris during the Exposition of 1889. Yet the French left was outraged by government overtures to the autocratic and often brutal tsarist regime. For their part, Russian Tsar Alexander III and his successor Nicholas II were uncomfortable with close ties to a republic.

As the Russian government blamed Austria-Hungary for opposing what they considered its natural influence in the Balkans, the Three Emperors' League lapsed. In 1887, Germany and Russia signed a Reinsurance Treaty, by which each pledged to remain neutral if the other went to war, but it did not cover the most likely contingency of all—war between Russia and Austria-Hungary—because Germany was already committed to aid Austria-Hungary if Russian forces attacked. The young, headstrong Kaiser William II dismissed Bismarck as chancellor in 1890. Bismarck's successors were increasingly anti-Russian and failed to prevent Russia's alliance with France.

In 1892, Russia and France signed a military treaty by which each pledged a military response if the other were attacked by Germany or by one or more of its allies. A secret formal alliance followed in 1894. The alliance was essentially defensive in nature: the French no more encouraged Russian moves in the direction of the Balkans than the Russians wanted to see France embark on a war of revenge to recapture Alsace-Lorraine from Germany. But the Dual Alliance, as it was called, countered the Triple Alliance. It defeated the most essential thrust of Bismarck's foreign policy by ending France's diplomatic isolation.

Anglo-German Rivalry

During the 1890s, the possibility of Britain joining the Dual Alliance of France and Russia seemed remote. Whereas Germany and Britain had some competing colonial interests—for example, in Africa—the interests of France and Britain clashed in West Africa and Indochina, and France was jealous of British influence in Egypt. When a French force encountered a British army unit in 1898 on the upper Nile at Fashoda, war between the two seemed a distinct possibility (see Chapter 21) before the French government backed down. Furthermore, Afghanistan, lying strategically between British India and Russia, was a particular point of tension between those two powers.

The British government had long made it clear that it sought no alliance with anyone and that it would stand alone, its empire protected by the great British navy. But the British government signed the *Entente Cordiale* ("Friendly Agreement") with France in 1904. Britain did so for several reasons. The hostile reaction from every power in Europe to the Boer War (1899–1902; see Chapter 21) fought by British troops in South Africa demonstrated that it was one thing to stand in proud isolation from the continent, but another to have no friends at all. Furthermore, Britain's relations with Germany soured markedly. Germany's pointed criticism of Britain's war with the Boers strained relations between the two powers. In 1895, Kaiser William II, in his inimitably clumsy way, had sent a telegram congratulating the president of the Boer Republic of Transvaal in southern Africa on the Boers' successful stand against a British attacking force. This unleashed a storm of nationalistic fury in Britain and Germany.

Neither Anglo-German cooperation in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, nor a joint operation to force Venezuela to pay some of its foreign debts in 1902, significantly improved Anglo-German relations. Gradually, the British began to realize the growing extent of German influence in the Turkish Ottoman Empire. British military planners feared that Germany might be able to move troops more quickly overland into the Middle East than the Royal Navy could by ship.

German economic growth and the doubling of its foreign trade during the last three decades of the nineteenth century had begun to make some

in Britain anxious, although Britain still accounted for about 45 percent of world investment. It also inspired a campaign to establish an empire-wide tariff barrier that would encourage trade within the British Commonwealth, while keeping foreign goods out.

Above all, it was the Anglo-German naval rivalry that pushed Britain toward a rapprochement with France. German military spending had already quadrupled between 1874 and 1890 (in a period of little inflation). In 1897 the Reichstag allocated funds for the accelerated expansion of the German navy over six years. William II's uncontrolled enthusiasm provided no small degree of impetus—the vain kaiser loved breaking bottles over the bows of brand new ships of war. Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz (1849–1930) belligerently cited the strength of the British navy as the *raison d'être* for the passage of the bill to build up the German navy. The nationalistic Pan-German League and the Naval League whipped up popular enthusiasm for the navy. The new German fleet began to include some of the biggest, fastest, and widest-ranging warships ever built.

Britain reacted quickly when confronted with the sudden and almost unexpected naval competition. In 1906, the fastest and most powerful battleship in the world, the *Dreadnought*, took to the sea. Germany began to build comparable ships of war, and wild British estimates had the Germans turning out even more, leading to a brief panic in 1909 that a German invasion of Britain was near.

British-French Rapprochement

The British government took a hesitant step toward ending its diplomatic isolation by signing a treaty in 1901 with the United States, which permitted the latter to construct the Panama Canal. By undertaking an alliance with Japan in 1902, Britain sought to counter Russian ambitions in East Asia. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 helped push Britain toward France (see Chapter 18). The Russian Baltic fleet, embarking on a disastrous voyage around the world to confront the Japanese navy in the Yellow Sea, sank several British fishing trawlers in the North Sea, somehow mistaking them for Japanese ships. Germany expected that France would immediately support Russia, with whom it was allied. Yet, to almost everyone's surprise, French Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé (1852–1923) helped mediate between Russia and Britain. Russia's defeat in East Asia confirmed that Britain had far more to fear from Germany than from Russia.

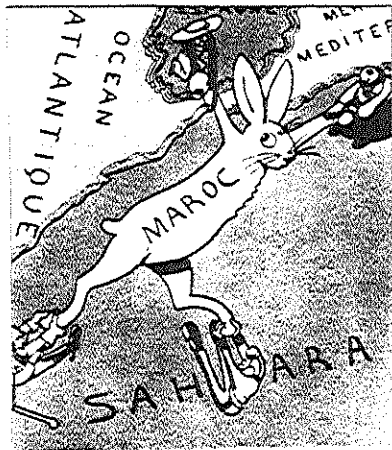
The Entente Cordiale reached between Britain and France in 1904 had the immediate goal of eliminating points of tension between the two powers: Britain recognized French interests in Morocco in exchange for the French recognition of British control over Egypt; both sides accepted the existence of neutral Siam in Indochina standing between French Indochina and British-controlled Burma; and they settled a centuries-old dispute over fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland.

The First Moroccan Crisis (1905)

The First Moroccan Crisis solidified the rapprochement between Britain and France, while highlighting the role of imperial rivalries in international politics. Germany had only modest commercial interests in Morocco, but German Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow (1849–1929) convinced William II to test the recently concluded Anglo-French agreement and perhaps force the British government to leave France to its own devices while casting Germany as defender of Moroccan sovereignty. In March 1905, the German kaiser arrived in Tangier aboard a yacht. William II demanded that Germany receive from Morocco the same commercial benefits as any other trading partner.

The French government reacted with fury, but backed down when British support for war seemed highly unlikely. Germany also pulled away from possible conflict, seeing that only Austria-Hungary took its side. The crisis ended with an international conference in the Spanish town of Algeciras in January 1906. Germany recognized the primacy of French interests in Morocco. This left the German government determined that another humiliation must not be suffered. The incident also seemed to confirm the bellicose and bullying nature of German foreign policy to both France and Britain. Anti-German feeling intensified in France among political moderates as well as those on the nationalist right. French and British generals and admirals began to draw up joint contingency plans for combined warfare against Germany.

The Algeciras Conference, and particularly the policies of Russian Foreign Minister Alexander Izvolsky (1856–1919), also brought Russia and Britain closer together. For Izvolsky, Russian interests were in the Balkans, where they competed with those of Austria-Hungary, not in Asia, where British interests lay. Set on the road to recovery from the disastrous Russo-Japanese War by British loans, the Russian government was now eager for better relations with Britain. The British government had long viewed Russian economic influence in Persia (Iran) and Afghanistan as threatening to its interests because a strong Russian presence in Persia might one day compromise the sea route to East Asia, and because Afghanistan served as a buffer between Russia and British India. In 1907, taking



France and Germany quarrel over Morocco (1905).

advantage of the collapse of the shah's authority, the two powers divided Persia (Iran) into three zones—a Russian zone, a British zone, and a neutral zone—and agreed to respect each other's zone of influence. The Russians accepted British influence in Afghanistan, and both powers agreed to stay out of Tibet. Russia hoped that Britain might support, or at least tolerate, its interests in the Balkans, and its ultimate desire of controlling Constantinople. The elimination of some of the tensions between Britain and Russia strengthened the Franco-British Entente Cordiale.

THE EUROPE OF TWO ARMED CAMPS, 1905–1914

The inclusion of Russia in what was increasingly known as the Triple Entente moved Europe toward a clear division into two camps. Cordial relations, however, continued between Tsar Nicholas II and his cousin, German Kaiser William II. The German emperor was also the grandson of Queen Victoria of England—a standing joke in Berlin went that William feared no one except God and his English grandmother. But in the Europe of entangling alliances, blood relations were subordinate to the logic of great-power interests and alliances.

The German government could find little reassurance in Italy's nominal alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Improved relations between Italy and France confronted Germany with the prospect that Austria-Hungary would be its only dependable ally.

Should Austria-Hungary cease to be a power or, in the worst-case scenario, completely collapse because of national movements from within, Germany might be left alone, encircled by enemies. The German high command prepared for a possible war against both France and Russia, a war that would have to be fought on two fronts. This left the German government in the position of having to support its troubled Habsburg ally unconditionally in the Balkans.

Moreover, the German government, like the other great powers, began to see military strength in a different way in 1904–1905. German military planners, concerned that Russia was rapidly reconstituting its army in the years following its humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, continued to build their forces, as did Austria-Hungary. The powers increased ranks of soldiers and sailors, and almost frantically improved weapons, aided by technological advances in warfare, including artillery that could be fired more rapidly, machine guns, telephones, and even airplanes, at first intended essentially for reconnaissance. Moreover, the German government demonstrated that it was increasingly willing to use the threat of war as a tool of diplomacy. This new approach reflected a growing sense that it would be better to fight a war sooner rather than later, while Germany still had what appeared to be a favorable military balance of power. In the meantime, the public in every major power followed international politics with

increasing care and were attentive to the capacity of their armed forces. Thus, perceptions of the balance of military power came into play in the international crises that led to war in 1914.

The Balkan Tinderbox

The Balkans increasingly became the key to maintaining peace in Europe (see Map 22.2). In 1897, Russia and Austria-Hungary had agreed informally to respect the *status quo* in the region. However, cultural and political nationalism continued to grow among the South Slavs living within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Serbia, or under Ottoman rule. In the Balkans, the vast majority of peoples had remained indifferent or ignorant of nationalist identities until at least the beginning of the twentieth century. Religious identities—Greek, Russian, or Bulgarian Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic, or Jewish—had always defined a sense of community, along with regional and village identities. Then, encouraged by the new states carved out of what had been Ottoman territory, national identities began to take hold. This made southeastern Europe ever more the focus of the rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia.

When a bloody revolution led to the assassination of the king and queen of Serbia in 1903, Russia quickly recognized the new king, Peter, hoping that Pan-Slav elements would dominate. Fearing any delay would push Serbia closer to Russia, Austria-Hungary recognized the *fait accompli*. The Serb parliament voiced its unqualified support for Russian ambitions in East Asia and its disastrous 1904–1905 war against Japan. Serb nationalists began to call for union with Serbs in Macedonia, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire and was peopled by Macedonians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Sephardic Jews, and Greeks, who had largely gotten along in the past. As Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox churches battled for the allegiance of peasants, the strident, aggressive calls of various nationalist groups helped create a nationalism that had previously existed on only a superficial level among elites. Now Greek, Bulgarian, and Macedonian armed groups operated inside Macedonia, as did Bulgarian and Macedonian nationalists. Provocative addresses to minorities worsened ethnic tensions in the region. Religion became much more identified with emerging national identities.

Relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary further deteriorated. When Serbia tried to lessen its economic dependence on Austria-Hungary (the destination of almost all Serb exports) by signing a commercial treaty with Bulgaria, Vienna responded by forbidding the importation of Serb livestock. Thus began an economic battle in 1906 that became known in much of Europe as the “Pig War,” as the humble pig formed a basis of Serbia’s fragile agricultural economy. The Serbs resourcefully found new markets for their pigs. The Habsburg government, despite the lack of Hungarian support for economic retaliation, responded in 1908 by announcing the construction of a new railroad that would further isolate Serbia economically. Serb



MAP 22.2 THE BALKANS, 1914 The Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Balkan states, including territory acquired in the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913.

nationalists viewed Bosnia and Herzegovina as South Slav states that should, with Russian encouragement, become part of Serbia.

Instability in Turkey

Political instability in Turkey in the early 1870s had further whetted the appetites of both Russia and Austria-Hungary for the Balkans, amid financial crisis, poor harvests, and the opposition of religious conservatives to secularization. Following the Crimean War (see Chapter 18), Britain and France had condescendingly invited the sultan “to participate in the advantages of public law and the system of Europe,” while insisting on further Western reforms. The Ottoman default on foreign loans in 1875 led six years later to the administration of the Ottoman public debt being placed

under the control of European administrators. The Ottoman governor of Egypt was constrained to sell his shares of the Suez Canal to the British government for a quarter of their real value, leading Egypt to bankruptcy.

Turkish Sultan Abdülhamid II (ruled 1876–1909) agreed to a constitution upon his ascension to the throne in 1876, consolidating some of the reforms of the past several decades. The constitution established parliamentary rule and guaranteed personal freedom and equality before the law. The sultan hoped to discourage the powers from intervening in Ottoman affairs on the pretext of forcing political reform. But in 1878 he suspended the constitution and dissolved the parliament it had established. The secret police rooted out potential opposition. During Abdülhamid's rule, foreign trade increased, agriculture developed, railway lines and paved roads more than doubled, and public schools increased in number. But his reign was also marked by the brutal repression of non-Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire. About 200,000 Armenians (who made up about 6 percent of the empire's population) were slaughtered in 1894–1895 in eastern Anatolia in response to Turkish fears of Armenian nationalism, encouraged by Russia. Moreover, the empire continued to be beset by financial problems, above all, high-interest debt owed to foreign bondholders. Influenced by Western political ideas and reflecting the emergence of a generation of Turkish intellectuals, a group of nationalists in 1889 founded the Committee of Union and Progress, finding support in the bureaucracy and army. In July 1908, these "Young Turks," as they were called, revolted in the name of "order and progress" and forced the sultan to restore the constitution of 1876. One of their leaders was Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk, 1881–1938). The Young Turks wanted to unify and modernize the Ottoman lands, while preventing Western intervention on behalf of the Armenians. Abdülhamid II was deposed in 1909 when he tried to plot a counter-revolution, and gradually a Western-like bureaucracy was put in place.

The chaos within the Ottoman Empire seemed to promise the realization of the Russian dream of opening the



The Young Turks, 1908.

straits of Constantinople to Russian ships, and perhaps only Russian ships. The Austro-Hungarian government faced the possibility that lands still held by the Ottoman Empire might be added to Serbia and Romania, further destabilizing the Balkans. This pushed Russian and Austro-Hungarian relations toward a breaking point.

The Bosnian Crisis of 1908

Turkish instability led to the Bosnian Crisis of 1908. In 1878, the Congress of Berlin had authorized Austria-Hungary to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, although both territories technically were still part of the Ottoman Empire. Austria-Hungary had done so, at the risk of bringing more Slavs into the empire, not only to solidify its position in the Balkans but to prevent Serbia from absorbing them. The Russian government had been secretly negotiating with Austria-Hungary to trade Russian acceptance of the absorption of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Austria-Hungary's support for the opening of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles straits to the Russian fleet. In October 1908, a day after Bulgaria, nominally under Ottoman sovereignty, declared its independence, the Austro-Hungarian government suddenly announced that it would directly annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, fearing the influence of the Young Turks there. The annexation was a clear violation of the agreements reached at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The Russians reacted with rage. Serbia, furious that two territories in which many South Slavs lived were to be incorporated into the Habsburg Empire, mobilized its army with Russian support. Austria-Hungary responded in kind. The annexation also considerably strained relations between Austria-Hungary and Italy, nominal allies, because of Italian strategic and economic interests on the Adriatic coast. Pressured by Germany, Turkey received financial compensation in exchange for accepting the *fait accompli*.

The resolute opposition to war by Hungarian leaders within Austria-Hungary, as well as the opposition of the heir to the Habsburg throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand (1863–1914), helped defuse the crisis. Not only would war be expensive, victory might well add a considerable South Slav population (from Serbia) to Hungarian territories. Furthermore, despite diplomatic bluster, Russia was not ready to fight, and its ally France was unwilling to go to war over the Balkans, where it had no interests. Lacking French or British support, the Russian government backed down, forcing Serbia to recognize the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

War had been avoided, but the European powers had drawn significant conclusions from the Bosnian Crisis. Italy remained allied with both Central European powers, but both Berlin and Vienna viewed Italy's commitment to the alliance as uncertain. Italy's problematic status as an ally thus further firmed up Germany's alliance with Austria-Hungary. German and Austro-Hungarian military commanders met to plan for hostilities with Russia,

France, Serbia, and possibly—given its announced interests in Tyrolean Austria and Dalmatia—Italy. The German government demanded that Russia recognize Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Russian government, viewing itself as a victim of German bullying, now sought a closer relationship with Britain. With German shipyards rapidly producing the most modern and heavily armed fighting ships at a frightening pace, British officials quickly gave up their reservations about the Entente Cordiale with France.

The Bosnian Crisis left deep scars on Russian relations with Austria-Hungary. Serb relations with Vienna worsened. The Habsburg government presented poorly forged documents to support claims that Serb authorities were trying to stir up the Slav populations within the empire. However, in fact, several groups of devoted Serb nationalists, including "The People's Defense" and "The Black Hand," received tacit support from the Serb state, as well as Russian encouragement.

The Second Moroccan Crisis (1911)

Germany also provoked the Second Moroccan Crisis. France had established a virtual protectorate in Morocco, which violated the Algeciras agreements of 1906. Using a local rebellion against the new Moroccan sultan as an excuse, a French army marched on the town of Fez, allegedly to protect French settlers. When the French government did not offer to compensate Germany because France had added another protectorate to its empire, the German emperor sent a small gunboat, the *Panther*, to the port of Agadir. It arrived on July 1, 1911, with demands that Germany receive the French Congo as compensation for France's claiming Morocco as a protectorate. France refused, bolstered by its closer relations with Britain, Russia's increased stability, and a wave of nationalist sentiment at home. Even German moderates seemed angered at what appeared to be a British commitment to preventing Germany from finding its "place in the sun."

The Second Moroccan Crisis, like the first, passed without war. In November 1911, Germany agreed to recognize Morocco as a French protectorate in exchange for 100,000 square miles of the French Congo. But the crisis further solidified Europe's competing alliances. Britain and France now formalized the agreement by which each pledged to aid the other in case of an attack by Germany. In April 1912, the British and French admiralities established zones of responsibility for their fleets—the French in the Mediterranean and the British in the English Channel and the North Sea. The arms race intensified.

The Balkan Wars

The Bosnian Crisis of 1908 had demonstrated that events in the Balkans could carry Europe to war. In 1911, the Turkish Ottoman Empire provided

the kindling for another international flare-up. Late in the year, Italy invaded Libya, part of the Ottoman Empire, in what became known as the Tripoli War, overcoming resistance in October 1912. France acquiesced to the Italian seizure of Libya in exchange for Italian recognition of Morocco's status as a French protectorate. Another piece of the Ottoman Empire had been swallowed up.

Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece had formed the Balkan League with the intention of freeing the Balkans from Ottoman rule. Encouraged by the difficulty the Turkish army had in putting down an insurrection in Albania in 1910 and by the Turkish defeat in Libya, they declared war on Turkey in 1912. The First Balkan War lasted less than a month, with the Balkan League emerging victorious. However, the success of the Balkan states worried the Austro-Hungarian government. Russia and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy seemed on a collision course in the Balkans. Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece each annexed Ottoman territory (for Greece, which increased its territory by 70 percent, this new territory included the prize port of Salonika). Only one small chunk of the once enormous Ottoman Empire now remained on the European side of the straits (see Map 22.2).

Yet Russia and Austria-Hungary had avoided war. New foreign ministers, Sergei Sazonov (1861–1927) of Russia and Leopold Berchtold (1863–1942) of Austria-Hungary, helped defuse the crisis. Austria-Hungary's goals were to see that no Balkan state became so strong that it could generate nationalist agitation within its territories, and to prevent Serbia, Russia's friend, from gaining a port on the Adriatic. In the interest of peace, Britain and France supported Austria-Hungary's call for the creation of the independent state of Albania on the Adriatic, which would prevent Serbia from having its port. The German government viewed these issues as sufficiently grave to warrant its unconditional support for Austria-Hungary. The Treaty of London of May 1913 divided up most of the remaining Ottoman holdings in southeastern Europe among the Balkan states.

However, Bulgaria felt aggrieved by the fact that Serbia and Greece had ended up with large parts of Macedonia and attacked both states. Serbia and Greece, with the assistance of Romania and the Turks, quickly defeated Bulgaria in 1913 in the Second Balkan War. With the Peace of Bucharest, Serbia received the parts of what had been Ottoman Macedonia, which Bulgaria was to have received; Greece gained more territory on the Aegean coast as well as Crete, where Greeks had risen up against Turkish rule on two previous occasions and which Greece tried to occupy in 1897 before being easily defeated by Ottoman forces. The small Muslim state of Albania came into existence. Serbia emerged from the Balkan Wars larger, stronger, more ambitious, and angry that Austria-Hungary had frustrated its quest for an Adriatic port. It also may have emerged with the impression that there were limits to Germany's support for Austria-Hungary, since the German government had at least appeared to restrain the Habsburg government's aggressive response to Serbia's demand for a port.



"The Vortex—Will the powers be drawn in?" This image of the Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, had a ring of prophetic accuracy.

South Slav nationalism gained more adherents in the Balkans. After backing down against Austria-Hungary for the second time (the first having been the Bosnian Crisis in 1908), Sazonov irresponsibly placated the Serbs by telling them that their promised land lay inside the frontiers of Hungary. Some Serb political leaders sympathized with the young fanatics of "The People's Will" and "The Black Hand" nationalist organizations. In 1910, a boy who had been taught to shoot a gun by a Serb officer attempted to use it on the Austrian governor of Bosnia; the youth committed suicide after failing, becoming a martyr in Serbia. A few Habsburg personages, possibly including the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, may have been willing to consider the South Slavs as partners in a tripartite empire—the mere suggestion of which infuriated almost all Magyars and most Austrians. But the Austro-Hungarian government considered the South Slav nationalists to be threats who would ultimately have to be crushed. Because of the Balkan situation, the German military command once again turned its attention to readying its army, reacting to Russian measures of military preparedness. But in 1914 Europe seemed far less close to war than it had been in 1905 and 1911, the years of the two Moroccan Crises.

THE FINAL CRISIS

The powers of Europe were poised for conflict, divided into two armed camps by two rival alliances. While the outbreak of war was probably not inevitable—although many nationalists and military planners believed it to be—it was likely. Furthermore, once two powers seemed on the verge of war, the entangling alliances that pitted the Triple Alliance against the Triple Entente seemed likely to bring all of the European powers into the conflict. The crisis that precipitated World War I occurred in the Balkans, when Serb

nationalists assassinated the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria. Europe's diplomatic house of cards collapsed and the Great War began.

Assassination in Sarajevo

Archduke Francis Ferdinand was heir to the Habsburg throne. His first love was his commoner wife, Sophie; his second, hunting—he bragged of having killed 6,000 stags in his lifetime and of having bagged 2,763 seagulls on a single day. The archduke was not considered particularly pro-German, and probably had more sympathy for the problems of the South Slavs than any member of the royal family. Hungarians disliked him, fearing that when he came to the throne, he might eventually grant the South Slavs the same status as the Austrians and Hungarians. But many Serb nationalists would accept nothing less than an expanded independent Slavic state, or what they called Greater Serbia.

On June 28, 1914, Francis Ferdinand and his wife were on an inspection tour of the army in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. As the archduke's motorcade approached the center of the city, a small bomb exploded under the archduke's car. The motorcade continued to the town hall, where the archduke expressed his indignation at the attempt on his life. When the motorcade departed, the drivers had not been informed of a change in route chosen to avoid the tangle of streets in central Sarajevo. When the first several vehicles began to turn into a narrow street, the military governor ran ahead, ordering their drivers to back up. Gavrilo Princip (1895–1918), a young member of the Black Hand Serb nationalist group, saw his chance, as

On an inspection tour of the army in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia, Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife bathe in a warm welcome. They were assassinated a few hours later.



he happened to be only a few feet from the archduke's car. He opened fire, killing Francis Ferdinand and his wife.

Although the Serb government had been aware of the Black Hand nationalist organization and some individual officials had supported it, the Austrian description of the youthful killers as puppets whose strings were pulled in Belgrade was incorrect. Nonetheless, Serb newspapers virtually celebrated the death of the Habsburg heir. In Vienna, even those who had disliked the archduke for having married a commoner now mourned the couple fervently.

The Ultimatum

Within the Habsburg imperial administration, many officials immediately took the view that the chance to crush Serbia had arrived, and that, unlike 1908 and 1912, this time the opportunity would not be missed. The usually indecisive Austrian foreign minister, Leopold Berchtold, who had opposed war during the Balkan Crisis of 1912, now took a hard line.

From Berlin, William II urged retaliation, blaming Serbia for the assassination. German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921) stubbornly held the view that Germany's strength must be paramount. ("Necessity knows no law," he once said.) Bethmann-Hollweg was now determined to stay the course with a numbing fatalism undoubtedly accentuated by the recent death of his wife. He advised his son not to plant his estate with trees that would take a long time to grow, because they would please only the Russians, whom by then he expected to have occupied northeastern Germany. He expected a war and wanted Russia to appear the aggressor. In Berlin, the German government gave an Austrian official a "blank check" to act with knowledge of full German support, that Germany would, if necessary, fight both France and Russia if those two powers intervened once Austria had declared war on Serbia. In this case, Bethmann-Hollweg expected Britain to remain neutral.

But for the moment, Austria-Hungary waited. Berchtold convinced the Hungarian leaders to support war against Serbia, promising that no Slavs from territories taken from defeated Serbia would be incorporated into Austria-Hungary. The Hungarian Social Democrats ended their opposition to the war. On July 21, 1914, Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov, encouraged by Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador, warned Austria-Hungary against taking any military measures against Serbia.

On July 23, 1914, almost a month after the assassination, the Austrian ambassador in Belgrade presented a lengthy ultimatum to Serb officials. It denounced what it claimed was Serb activity aiming to "detach part of the territories of Austria-Hungary from the Monarchy." Austro-Hungarian demands included the end of all anti-Habsburg publications, the dissolution of all Serb nationalist organizations, and a purge of officials and army officers to be named by Austria-Hungary. The Serb reply was expected

within forty-eight hours. Grey, the British foreign secretary, called the ultimatum "the most formidable document ever presented by one independent state to another."

The Serb government was in a no-win situation. Serbia's small army was no match for that of Austria-Hungary. Its options were either to capitulate completely to the ultimatum and suffer a humiliating diplomatic defeat, or, as one official put it, to die fighting. This made Serbia almost totally dependent upon Russian intervention.

The ultimatum sent shock waves through the capitals of Europe. Upon learning its contents, Sazonov exclaimed, "It's the European War!" He blamed Germany, claiming that the ultimatum was part of a German plan to keep Russia from reaching Constantinople. Some of Tsar Nicholas II's advisers saw war as a means of rallying the support of the Russian Empire behind the tsar. Yet others remembered Russia's disastrous defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, which had contributed to the outbreak of the Revolution of 1905 (see Chapter 18). Sazonov's first concern was to mobilize French support against Austria-Hungary, believing that a united show of strength would force the Central European allies to back down. From the Russian point of view, if Austro-Hungarian influence expanded in the Balkans, German influence would soon be manifest in the straits, because a coup in Turkey in 1913 had brought the Ottoman Empire even closer to Germany. French President Raymond Poincaré's state visit to Saint Petersburg from July 20 to July 23 seemed to indicate that France would stand by Russia, and Sazonov received quick assurance from the French ambassador of full French support.

On July 25, 1914, two days after the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, the tsar placed the Russian army on alert, a stage that would normally precede mobilization. Such a step was fraught with consequences for the military planners of each power. Mobilization meant preparing an army for war, calling up reserves, declaring martial law in frontier areas, readying the railways for hauling troops and supplies, and accelerating the production of munitions. In these circumstances, a Russian decision to mobilize would be tantamount to an act of war in the eyes of German military planners.

The Schlieffen Plan

Germany's plan for war against France had been drawn up in 1905 by Count Alfred von Schlieffen (1833–1913), a former chief of the German general staff. Based on the assumption that it would take Russia, France's ally, several weeks to prepare its armies to fight, the Schlieffen Plan called for the German armies to use a lightning attack to knock the French out of the war. Then the German forces would be able to confront the Russian army attacking in the east. The German attack on France would require its forces to violate Belgian neutrality in order to bypass the sturdy fortifications the French had constructed on their eastern frontier after the

Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. German troops would march through the flat terrain of Belgium and the Netherlands, and turn south once the last soldier on the northern flank had brushed his sleeve against the English Channel. A pincer movement southward would encircle Paris from the northwest, and then turn to trap the French armies that had moved into Alsace-Lorraine. France would surrender. Schlieffen and his successors recognized that the plan would probably bring Great Britain into the war because that nation would never accept the violation of Belgian neutrality and the possible presence of an enemy power just across the Channel. But German commanders believed that the war on the continent would be over before the superior British navy could make a difference and that the small, volunteer British army posed little immediate threat. Then there would still be time to ship enough of the victorious army to the east to defeat the Russians as they rolled slowly toward Germany. This was the solution to Bismarck's nightmare, a simultaneous war on two fronts.

The French high command had its own plan for war. "Plan XVII" called for a rapid attack by two French armies into Alsace-Lorraine, as the Germans expected. With the bulk of the German army tied up by French and British troops in Belgium, and, at worst, northern France, the way to Berlin would be open. The French army was itching to redeem itself. Unlike Germany, which had to contemplate fighting a war on two fronts, the French army enjoyed the advantage of being able to focus its full attention on Germany. Marshal Joseph Joffre (1852–1931) had overseen French plans for the war. (When asked in 1911 if he thought about war, he replied, "Yes, I think about it all the time. We shall have a war, I will make it, and I will win it.") To the French high command, *élan*, or patriotic energy, was expected to bring victory: "The French army . . . no longer knows any other law than the offense," announced one of Joffre's disciples; "[we need only] to charge the enemy to destroy him." The French plan counted on the Russian army attacking Germany from the east by the sixteenth day of mobilization.

The British government suggested that, following Russian mobilization, the other powers help arrange a peaceful solution. Britain was unwilling to back Russia, a move that at this point might have made both Austria-Hungary and Germany consider backing down. The German government still assumed that the British would remain neutral in a war between France and Russia against Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The Russian government continued to believe that its resolute support for Serbia might well be enough to force Austria-Hungary to reconsider. Austria-Hungary and Germany were laboring under the same kind of illusion about Russia. Both believed that a show of unconditional support—Germany's "blank check" to Austria-Hungary—would force Russia to pull back. Yet Germany's aggressive support for its ally, combined with the bellicose prodding of the Russian government by the French ambassador, had just the opposite effect.

The Serb government therefore ordered military mobilization on July 25, 1914, confident of full Russian support. It then presented a formal reply to the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum just before the forty-eight hours had elapsed. It was surprisingly conciliatory. The Serbs accepted five of the demands without reservation; four others they would accept pending discussion and some further explanation. They rejected only one outright—that Austro-Hungarian representatives collaborate in the investigation of the Serb “plot” against the Habsburg Empire.

The Austro-Hungarian government viewed anything less than total compliance as unsatisfactory. It ordered military mobilization against Serbia, but stopped short of declaring war. The British again proposed a meeting of the powers in the hope of avoiding conflict in the Balkans, or at least keeping it limited to the Balkans. This the German government rejected, believing that Britain would not go to war unless it appeared that Germany was intending to conquer and absorb France.

“A Jolly Little War”

Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914, exactly one month after the archduke’s assassination. The declaration claimed an unsatisfactory Serb response to the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, as well as an attack on Austro-Hungarian troops along the Bosnian frontier, an event that never took place. In a final attempt to avert war, British Foreign Secretary Edward Grey asked if Germany would participate in a last-ditch attempt to negotiate a settlement to the crisis. Germany accepted, but at the same time did nothing to try to forestall an Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia. If anything, Bethmann-Hollweg egged his ally on. In Saint Petersburg, the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war generated popular support for Serbia. An American diplomat reported tersely, “Whole country, all classes, unanimous for war.”

On July 28, the same day as the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war, Bethmann-Hollweg sent a telegram to Vienna suggesting that its ally find a way to make it appear that, if a European war followed, it would be Russia’s fault. And finally he warned that if Russia continued to support Serbia, Austria must stay the course, even if it led to war, or else forever renounce its status as a great power.

By the time the British cabinet discussed the Serb crisis on July 24, it was clear that Germany would not restrain Austria-Hungary. The Liberals, who had come to power in 1905, had long opposed entangling international alliances and large military expenditures, and they were divided over British intervention. Many Liberals and most Labourites disliked the idea of fighting alongside tsarist Russia. The government was beset by a number of pressing political issues, including the Home Rule Bill for Ireland—on July 16, British troops had fired on rioters in Dublin. The Royal Navy was placed on alert.

Bethmann-Hollweg now sent a sealed envelope to the German ambassador in Brussels, which was to be presented to the Belgian government when the order came. It contained a demand that German troops be allowed to march through Belgium. But, for the moment, there still seemed to be hope. William II sent a telegram to the tsar expressing his desire for peace. He signed it, "your very sincere and devoted friend and cousin, Willy."

Russian ministers and generals had debated since July 28 whether the crisis called for a limited mobilization of a million soldiers on the Polish and Galician frontiers, or a full mobilization. On July 29, word reached Saint Petersburg that the Austrians had bombarded Belgrade from the Danube. After twice changing his mind, Nicholas II ordered a full mobilization on July 30 for the following day. The tsar's diary entry for that day read: "After lunch, I received Sazonov. . . . I went for a walk by myself. The weather was hot. . . . I had a delightful bath in the sea." The Russian mobilization put an end to any hope for a negotiated settlement to the crisis. In Vienna, Francis Joseph declared general mobilization against Russia and Serbia.

A mood of anxious excitement prevailed in Paris. The army had already readied France's frontier defenses, but French troops were pulled back several kilometers from the frontier to avoid any incident with German units. In France, only the Socialist Party spoke out against the imminent outbreak of the international war. Many socialists still hoped that French and German workers would lay down their weapons and refuse to fire on fellow proletarians. Anti-militarism ran deep in some of France, not only because the army took sons away from farms, industrial work, and families, but also because the French government used the army to break strikes. The government maintained a list of socialists and other leaders of the left to be arrested in the event that war was declared.

In the meantime, the Russian and French ambassadors demanded assurance of British military support. The French ambassador even asked if the word "honor" would be stricken from British dictionaries if Britain refused to join France and Russia. Britain asked both Germany and France for a guarantee that Belgian neutrality (which had been accepted by Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia in 1839) would not be violated. Germany did not reply, Bethmann-Hollweg having earlier referred to the old guarantee as "a scrap of paper."

In Berlin, even the Social Democratic newspapers now accepted war as inevitable. Helmuth von Moltke (1848–1916), chief of the German general staff, pushed for an immediate attack on France, fearing that should Russian mobilization proceed any further, the Schlieffen Plan might fail. On July 31, 1914, Germany warned Russia to suspend mobilization at once. Germany demanded that France guarantee its neutrality in the event of a Russo-German war, and that German troops be allowed to occupy a number of French frontier forts as a show of French good faith. This no French government could accept. When no response was heard from either Russia or France, on August 1 the German army mobilized.

The relentless logic of the entangling alliances and military plans propelled Europe to war, as if the great powers were being pitched forward on an enormous wave. In Britain, Grey's frantic attempts to arrange a direct negotiation between Russia and Austria failed. The struggle of socialists in many countries to rally opposition against the war fell far short. On July 31, a rightist assassinated the popular French socialist leader Jean Jaurès. But Jaurès, too, had apparently just come to the conclusion that he should support the war against autocratic Germany. The Austrian socialist leader Victor Adler predicted: "Jaurès's murder is just the beginning. War unchains instincts, all forms of madness."

Of the powers, only Italy was not committed by alliance to fight, unless its allies in the Triple Alliance were attacked, and Italy could now reasonably claim that Austria-Hungary and Germany were launching hostilities. France ordered mobilization after receiving the impossible German demands. Germany declared war on Russia that same day, August 1. This obliged France, by virtue of its alliance with Russia, to fight Germany. German troops invaded Luxembourg, claiming falsely that a French attack on them was imminent and that they needed to seize the small duchy's railroads to defend themselves. On August 2, the German ambassador in Brussels handed the Belgian government the letter requesting permission to march armies through its territory. The negative reply came the next morning. Britain assured France that the Royal Navy would defend its Channel ports. On August 3, Germany declared war on France, falsely claiming that French planes had attacked Nuremberg. When Moltke's army marched into eastern Belgium and the German government ignored the British government's formal demand that they withdraw, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914. Enthusiastic crowds toasted departing soldiers in Paris and Berlin. The German crown prince anticipated "a jolly little war."

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

When war was declared, eager commanders put long-standing military plans into effect. The German general staff counted on a rapid victory against France in the west before the giant Russian army could effectively be brought into action in the east. German troops outflanked French defenses by invading Belgium. However, this violation of Belgian neutrality brought Britain into the war on the side of France and Russia. Thus, the Great War pitted the Triple Alliance (Germany and Austria-Hungary, minus Italy, which for the moment remained neutral) against the Triple Entente (France, Great Britain, and Russia). These alignments had been shaped by the international tensions of the past decades.



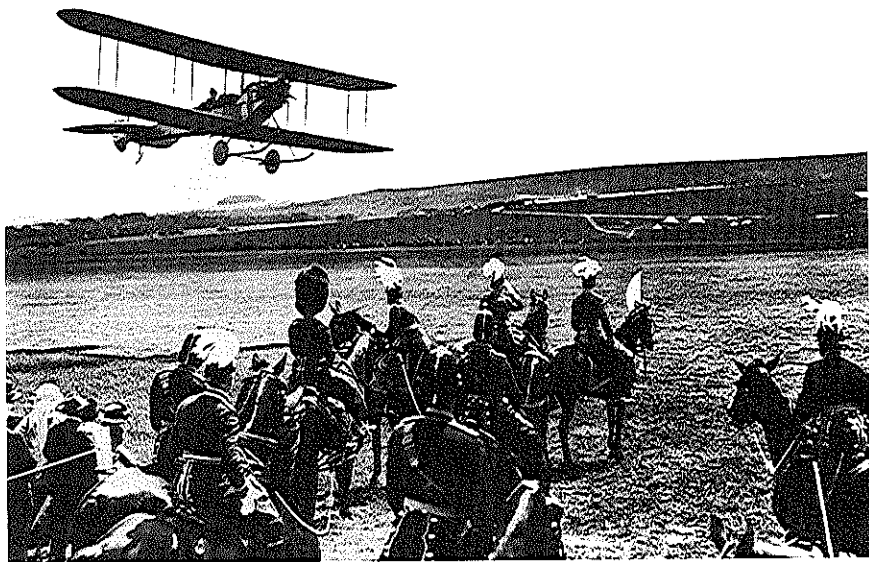
(Left) French soldiers depart for war. (Right) British men surge toward a recruiting office.

Opening Hostilities

The Schlieffen Plan dictated the course of the opening hostilities. It was as if Schlieffen's "dead hand automatically pulled the trigger." However, Moltke had eliminated the Netherlands from the invasion plan and reduced the strength of the attacking force in order to bolster German defenses in Alsace-Lorraine. The French high command, which had known the basics of the Schlieffen Plan for years, did not believe the German army could move rapidly through Belgium, in part because the attacking forces would have to overcome the imposing fortress at Liège. The French also doubted that reserves incorporated into the German army could quickly become an able fighting force. In any case, the French command expected a frontal attack between the Meuse River and the hills of the Ardennes in northeastern France. The French generals also underestimated the speed with which their enemy could attack.

Although the Belgian army fought bravely against vastly superior strength, Liège fell on August 16 after a massive bombardment, followed by the fall of Namur. The Belgian army retreated north to Antwerp. Moltke then deployed seven divisions to prevent the Belgian army from escaping, further weakening the attacking forces that Schlieffen had anticipated would move as rapidly as possible toward the English Channel.

General Alexander von Kluck, commander of the First German Army, turned his troops toward the Belgian town of Mons. He hoped to force the French to surrender before they could bring up more troops from the Paris region. French advances in Alsace now convinced Moltke to divert troops to that border region from the primary attacking force, which intended to



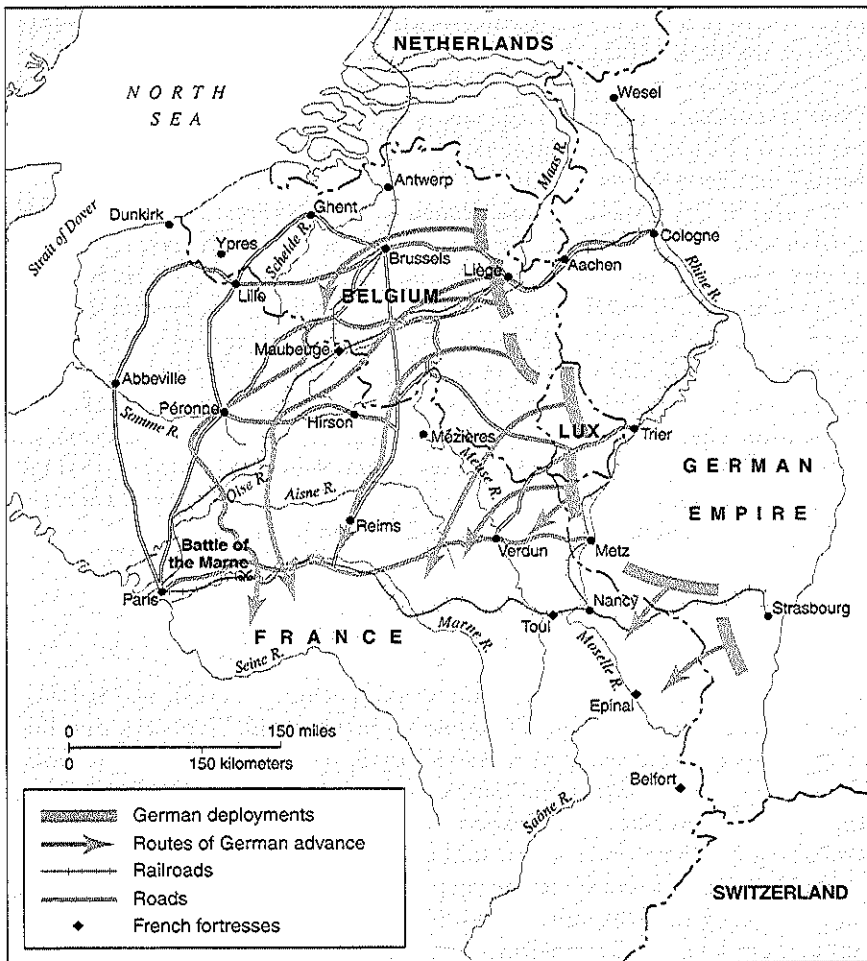
Old and new combat in World War I.

encircle the French capital. Both the French and German high commands still considered success in Alsace critical to their strategies and to morale at home.

The British Expeditionary Force of 100,000 troops arrived to take its place on the French flank on August 20. One British soldier who went off to war in the summer of 1914 reassured his family, "At least the thing will be over in three weeks." But by August 24, the Allied (Entente) armies were rapidly retreating. At Mons and then Le Cateau, the British army fought its biggest battles since Waterloo in 1815. Yet retreat did not yet spell defeat. The Germans, fatigued by the pace of their march, also suffered from Moltke's indecision and inadequate communications. Kluck's army was already spread too thinly across a wide front. Now Moltke, surprised by the relatively rapid Russian mobilization and told of an early Russian victory on the eastern front, ordered four divisions to confront the surprisingly rapid Russian advance.

Nonetheless, the German armies managed to fight to within thirty-five miles of Paris (see Map 22.3). The French government provisionally withdrew to the safety of Bordeaux, just as they had been forced to do during the Franco-Prussian War. But despite heavy losses, Joffre was able to reinforce his defensive positions around Paris. This was in part possible because the French had concluded a secret treaty by which Italy, whose commitment to Germany and Austria-Hungary was defensive in nature, agreed to remain neutral if Germany attacked France. The German government, unaware of the treaty, still hoped Italy would join Germany and Austria-Hungary. Joffre

MAP 22.3 THE GERMAN ADVANCE, 1914 The Germans moved quickly into Belgium and France, largely following the Schlieffen Plan of 1905.



could thus count on troops that otherwise would have been needed in southeastern France to halt a possible Italian invasion.

At the dawn of air warfare, a French reconnaissance pilot noticed Kluck's army changing direction as it swept toward a point southeast of Paris, leaving its flank open. The French army rushed every available soldier into action, some arriving at the front in requisitioned Parisian taxis. When the Germans crossed the Marne River on September 5, the French counterattacked. Two German armies retreated, fearing that the French might take advantage of a sizable gap between their forces. It was the end of the Schlieffen Plan, and of the offensive war that the German generals

had planned. The British poured through another gap between German armies, forcing the Germans to retreat forty miles to the Aisne River. There, on September 14, the Germans fortified their position by digging deep defensive trenches. Like the Battle of Valmy in 1792 during the French Revolution, the Battle of the Marne saved France in 1914.

The Germans then tried to outflank the British and French forces in what amounted to a race for the sea, as the Allied armies kept pace, holding much of Picardy and Flanders, before both sides ran out of space. The British and French, too, dug in.

A series of attacks and counterattacks in the fall took frightful tolls, with neither side able to break through. In November 1914, the last open battle of the western front was fought in the mud around Ypres in Belgium; British forces prevented the Germans from reaching the French Channel ports. By the end of the year, the German and French armies had combined casualties of 300,000 killed and 600,000 wounded. The British Seventh Division arrived in France in October with 400 officers and 12,000 soldiers; after eighteen days of fighting around Ypres, it had 44 officers and 2,336 men left. In a special British battalion of football players, originally brought together to play exhibition matches near the front and then sent to fight like everybody else, only 30 of 200 men survived.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF WAR

The German and Allied armies stared at each other across a broad front that reached from the English Channel to Switzerland. Two long, thin lines of trenches ended dreams of rapid victory based upon a mastery of offensive tactics. Few analysts had considered the possibility of a frozen front that would rarely move more than a few hundred yards in either direction and along which several million soldiers would die.

Besides trench warfare, new weapons dramatically changed the nature of battle. During the war, poison gas, hand grenades, flamethrowers, tanks, military airplanes, and submarines entered the arsenals of both sides. A new scale of warfare required an unparalleled, total mobilization of the home front to sustain the war effort.

Trench Warfare

Spades for digging trenches and rows of tangled barbed wire became more important than the rifle and bayonet, weapons of attack. Soldiers on both sides dug about 6,250 miles of trench in France. The front-line trenches were six to eight feet deep and about fifty yards to a mile apart. They were supplemented by support trenches several hundred yards to the rear and linked by communications trenches. Small fortress-like "strong points" held the line together even if part of the system was overrun. Sandbags and

rows of barbed wire protected the trenches from attack. As the months passed in sectors where the front lines were immobile, the trenches became more elaborate, offering electricity and a certain minimal level of comfort. When there was no fighting, the soldiers confronted boredom. The French theater star Sarah Bernhardt, who had herself lost one leg to amputation (because of several bad falls) was carried on a stretcher near the front so she could entertain soldiers by reciting poetry. Some soldiers read voraciously to pass the time; the British poet Siegfried Sassoon was only half kidding when he remembered, "I didn't want to die, not before I'd finished reading *The Return of the Native* anyway." Since they were below ground, trenches offered soldiers some protection from rifle or pistol fire, but not from direct artillery hits. The periscope, sticking up from the trench below, provided the only safe way of looking across at the enemy lines without being shot by enemy snipers.

The front-line soldier lived amidst the thunder of barrages and the scream of falling shells. Persistent lice, mice, and enormous rats were his constant companions in the stagnant water of the trenches. So, for many, was venereal disease, contracted in the brothels near the front. A British soldier described a night in the trenches in January 1916:

Lights out. Now the rats and the lice are the masters of the house. You can hear the rats nibbling, running, jumping, rushing from plank to plank, emitting their little squeals behind the dugout's corrugated metal. It's a noisy swarming activity that just won't stop. At any moment I expect one to land on my nose. And then it's the lice and fleas that begin to devour me. Absolutely impossible to get any shut-eye. Toward midnight I begin to doze off. A terrible racket makes me jump. Artillery fire, the cracking of rifle and machine-gun fire. The Boches [Germans] must be attacking. . . . Everything shakes. Our artillery thunders away without pause. . . . I doze off so as to get up at six. The rats and the lice get up too; waking to life is also waking to misery.

The cold and wind tore into the troops, especially in winter. "Before you can have a drink," one soldier wrote home, "you have to chip away the ice. The meat is frozen solid, the potatoes are bonded by ice, and even the hand grenades are welded together in their cases." The German army had been so sure of an easy victory that it had not equipped its men with high lace-up boots or adequate coats. German troops prized the British soldiers' sheepskin coats and removed them from enemy corpses when they had the chance. After battle, the screams of the wounded and dying filled the air; groans in German, French, and English from no-man's-land grew increasingly faint, but sometimes lasted for days.

Death was everywhere. It numbed. An Austrian soldier, a violinist, wrote: "A certain fierceness arises in you, an absolute indifference to anything the world holds except your duty of fighting. You are eating a crust of bread,



Paul Nash's *We Are Making a New World*, a tormented painting evoking the pockmarked landscape around Ypres in Flanders.

and a man is shot dead in the trench next to you. You look calmly at him for a moment, and then go on eating your bread. Why not? There is nothing to be done. In the end you talk of your own death with as little excitement as you would of a luncheon engagement." Hundreds of thousands of soldiers suffered shell shock, psychologically devastated by the battle raging around them.

On the western front, as both sides believed that a breakthrough was possible, massive attacks were preceded by an intensive bombardment of enemy positions. Such bombardments, lasting hours and even days, clearly indicated where the next attack could be expected, allowing the enemy to bring up sufficient reserves to prevent a breakthrough. Both sides adopted the use of "creeping barrages," which moved just ahead of the attacking army to soften resistance. The shelling mangled the terrain, leaving huge craters, thereby creating unanticipated obstacles to the attacking troops. The attackers then faced the most effective weapon of trench warfare, the machine gun—a defensive weapon that mowed down line after line of advancing soldiers carrying rifles, bayonets, and pistols that they often never had a chance to use.

Piles of the dead filled shell craters left by the first barrages. If attacking Allied troops managed to reach, take, and hold the first line of trenches, they confronted fresh reinforcements as well as an even more solid second line of defense. The defensive lines could bend, but then snap back against attacking forces that soon outran their cover. Joffre's second offensive in Champagne in 1915 illustrated this situation well. The French offensive ran right into the second line of defense, took enormous casualties, and



(Left) French soldiers wearing gas masks prepare to attack. (Right) Victims of a German gas attack lining up at a field hospital.

then faced a vigorous counterattack. The Germans lost 75,000 killed and wounded, the French 145,000, for not more than a few miles of ravaged land. Still, Joffre ordered another attack. The result was the same.

Soldiers also faced new, frightening perils. German attacks against British positions around Ypres featured a horrifying new weapon, mustard gas, which, carried by the wind, burned out the lungs of the British soldiers. A member of the British medical corps wrote, "I shall never forget the sights I saw by Ypres after the first gas attacks. Men lying all along the side of the road . . . exhausted, gasping, frothing yellow mucus from their mouths, their faces blue and distressed. It was dreadful, and so little could be done for them." The gas mask soon offered imperfect protection—"this pig snout which represented the war's true face," as one combatant put it.

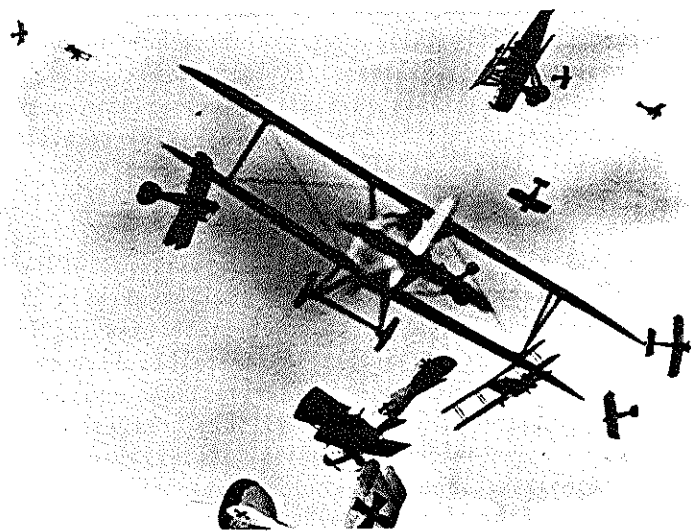
War in the Air and on the Seas

Airplanes became weapons of combat. In the first months of the war, airplanes were only used for reconnaissance in good weather; in 1915, techniques evolved and pilots began to photograph enemy trenches. Some pilots kept carrier pigeons in a cage, so that, if they had to ditch their planes, they could scribble their approximate location on a paper and send the information back to headquarters with the bird. Pilots fired pistols and hurled hand grenades and even bricks at enemy planes and troops before both sides discovered that machine guns could be mounted and timed to fire between the blades of the plane's propellers.

By the end of 1916, dashing and brave "aces," such as the German Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, and beginning in 1917 the American Eddie Rickenbacker, chased each other around the skies in fighter planes, cheered on by the trench soldiers below. When Richthofen was shot down behind British lines in April 1918, he was buried by his enemies with full military honors. Although the "dogfights" of combat in the skies had a romantic dimension, the airplane soon began to terrorize civilians. Paris and London were bombed several times during the war, as the speed and capacity of the first warplanes increased; the Rhineland German cities suffered heavy bombardments later in the conflict. By the war's end, Germany had produced more than 47,000 aircraft, France more than 51,000, and Britain more than 55,000 planes.

With the European powers fighting a land war unlike any ever seen, and conflict having taken to the skies, the seas remained relatively quiet. The British navy retained control, and the famed and feared German dreadnoughts stayed in port. The British navy won a series of initial encounters as far afield as the coast of Chile, the Falkland Islands near Argentina, and the Indian Ocean. German battleships trapped in the Mediterranean at the beginning of the war took refuge in Constantinople and were turned over to the Turks. The German navy took them back when Turkey entered the war in November 1914 on the side of the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). Turkey was again pitted against its old enemy, Russia. The Austro-Hungarian navy, based in Trieste, was small and its influence was limited to the Mediterranean. The British admiralty, which possessed the German code book—plucked from the Baltic Sea by Russian sailors—

German and British planes in a dogfight high above the trenches.



awaited a major confrontation. Certain that the German fleet was going to sail from Wilhelmshaven, the British Grand Fleet lay in wait. At Dogger Bank on January 24, 1915, the Royal Navy sunk a German battleship. The British blockaded the principal German ports, neutralizing the kaiser's proud fleet.

Late in the 1880s, several countries had experimented with underwater warfare. At the turn of the century, the U.S. Navy was the first to commission a submarine. Although all of the powers had submarines by the time of the Great War, those of Germany made the greatest impact. The German navy believed that its fleet of submarines, which brought another fearful dimension to warfare, could force Britain to pull out of the war by sinking its warships and by preventing supplies from reaching the British Isles from the United States. In September 1914, a German submarine, or "U-boat," sank three large British armored cruisers off the coast of Belgium. U-boats, 188 feet long and with a range of 2,400 miles, could slip in and out of ports undetected. Yet ships carrying supplies to Britain continued to get through.

The Home Front

The waging of war on such an unprecedented scale required the full support of the "home front," the very concept of which emerged during the war. Sustaining the massive war effort depended first on mobilizing enough soldiers and food to supply the front, and then on producing enough guns and shells. It also depended on maintaining morale at home. Popular enthusiasm increasingly fed on a deep hatred of the enemy. German propagandists portrayed the war as a fight for German culture, besieged by Russian barbarians and the dishonorable French. A German soldier wrote, "We know full well that we are fighting for the German idea in the world, that we are defending German feeling against Asiatic barbarism and Latin indifference." British propagandists depicted the Allies as defending law, liberty, and progress against German violations of national sovereignty and international law. French propagandists had the easiest case to make: Germany had, after all, invaded France.

Such propaganda mixed elements of myth and truth. By the end of 1914, false tales of Germans impaling children and raping nuns were horrifying British and French readers. The German high command had instructed officers to ignore provisions of the Hague Conventions that sought the humane treatment of soldiers and civilians during war, which Germany had signed. Rumors had spread that civilians had killed German soldiers. The German army executed 5,500 Belgian civilians in two months, including in Louvain, where troops panicked when they heard shots fired in the distance by French troops and mistook them for action by Belgian citizens. The Germans then burned the library of the University of Louvain, which included rare manuscripts, for good measure. Austrian soldiers massacred, mutilated, and raped villagers in Serbia, as did Russian troops in East Prussia

and Galicia. These actions, reflecting the brutalization of war and the banalization of death, foreshadowed a new kind of war—a total war in which civilians were not spared.

At the outbreak of hostilities in Britain and France, shops owned by people with German-sounding names were pillaged (in the latter case, some victims were French Alsatians for whom the war, at least in part, was supposedly being fought). A publication for French schoolchildren told this story: "Your little brother in your presence has lied to your mother. You take him aside and tell him, 'Do you want to behave like the Krauts?'" The younger boy confesses, now understanding that "the French don't lie." A publication for girls informed them that "pillage is a German word." German propaganda similarly smeared their enemies, particularly the British, who supposedly used dum-dum bullets that exploded upon impact and gouged out the eyes of German prisoners.

The outbreak of the war pushed aside bitter political divisions at home. In France, competing parties proclaimed a "sacred union," and the socialist Jules Guesde became minister of commerce. There was little public criticism of the way the war was being run until later in the conflict when casualties mounted. In Germany, too, socialist opposition to militarism based on class solidarity quickly turned to patriotic support. In Russia, at least in the first few years, only the tsar's will seemed to matter. In Austria-Hungary, the ability of the imperial bureaucracy to supply its multinational army, the prestige of which had helped keep the Habsburg Empire together, seemed almost miraculous. Tensions between the empire's nationalities remained beneath the surface, at least in the war's early years.



A poster showing support from the home front.

In Britain, the angry quarrels over strategy among the generals, as well as between them and the cabinet, were well hidden from the public. A volunteer army was raised with remarkable enthusiasm and speed, aided by an effective recruitment poster sporting the face of Lord Horatio Kitchener, the secretary of war. On a single day in September 1914, 33,000 men joined up. By the end of the year, the British had 2 million men in uniform. The volunteer force that German Kaiser William II had called "a contemptible little army" fought very well. In 1916, Britain began military conscription.

David Lloyd George (1863–1945), the Liberal politician who headed the wartime Ministry of Munitions, skillfully oversaw the transition from peacetime to wartime industrial production, using the powers

specified by the Munitions of War Act of May 1915. The act forbade strikes and provided for the requisition of skilled workers for labor in factories, which were converted to the production of war materiel. Supplying the front with shells alone was a monumental task. In the opening months of the war, 500 German trains crossed the Rhine every day to supply troops. The nineteen-day artillery barrage at the third Battle of Ypres in 1917 expended all shells carried to the front by 321 trains, the output of a year's work for 55,000 armament workers.

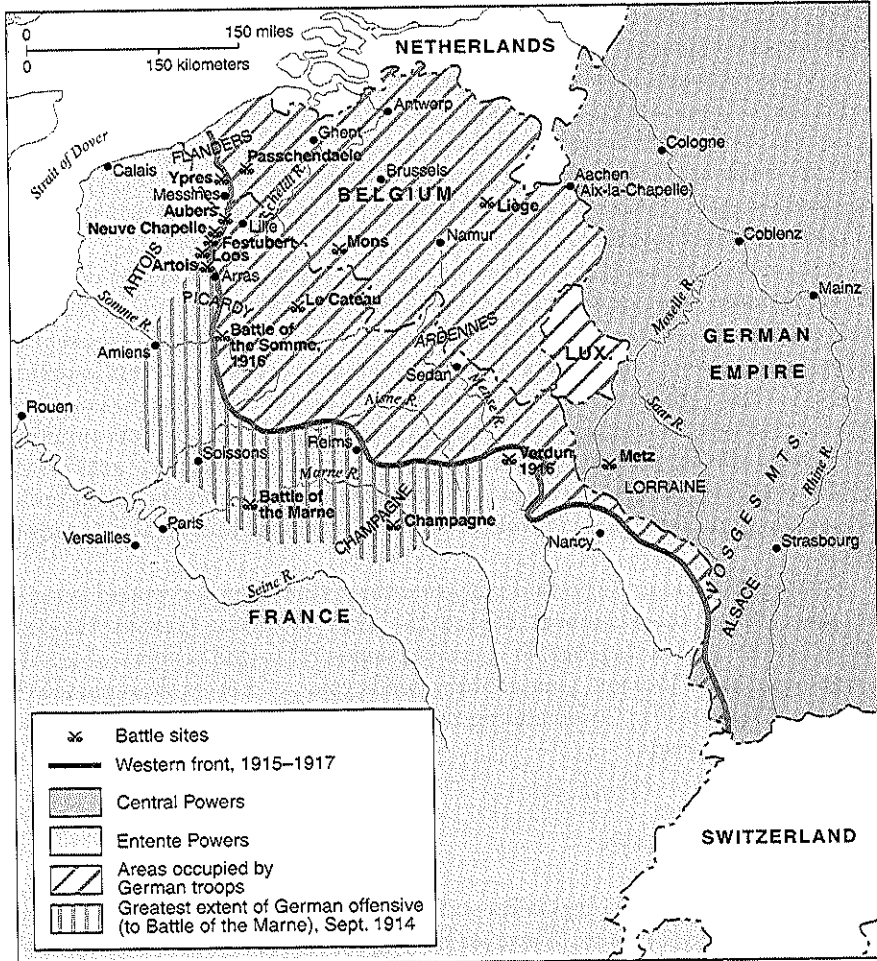
The war spurred other changes in daily life at home. As heavy drinking became more widespread, legislation restricted the operating hours of British pubs. Some complained that the war had brought Britain a loosening of morals, frivolous dress and dancing, and an increase in juvenile delinquency. Daylight savings time was introduced for the first time to conserve fuel. A successful campaign for voluntary rationing of essential commodities such as sugar allowed the British to avoid mandatory rationing until early 1917, when hoarding contributed to shortages. The government instituted a coupon system, but price controls on essential commodities served to ration food.

Suffragette leaders, who had put aside their campaign for women's right to vote, threw their support behind the war. Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847–1929), a leading British feminist, appealed to the readers of a suffrage magazine: "Women, your country needs you. . . . Let us show ourselves worthy of Citizenship," proclaiming that she considered pacifism almost the equivalent of treason.

THE WAR RAGES ON

Early in 1915, the French general staff predicted that its army would break through the German lines. However French attacks in the spring in Champagne and then in Artois further north brought enormous casualties but little progress (see Map 22.4). A British assault at Neuve Chapelle on March 10 gained 1,000 yards at a cost of 13,000 casualties. The British lost almost 300,000 men in 1915 alone; the Germans, who had a much larger army, suffered at least 610,000 casualties. Both nations' casualties, however daunting, paled alongside those of the French, who suffered 1,292,000 killed and wounded in 1915. French infantrymen were not helped by the fact that their uniform pants were, at least in the early stages of the war, bright red, which could be more easily seen through the morning mists than the German gray.

Italy had remained neutral at the outbreak of the war but gave in to street demonstrations and entered the war on the Allied side through the secret Treaty of London, signed in April 1915. Britain and France held out as bait territories many Italian nationalists claimed as part of "Italian Irredenta" ("unredeemed lands"), including the Tyrol in the Alps and Istria along the



MAP 22.4 THE WESTERN FRONT, 1914–1917 Major battles from 1914–1917, and location of trenches at the end of 1915 and at the end of 1917.

northern Adriatic coast. Italian nationalism, as well as the desire of powerful Italian businessmen to find new markets in the Balkans, had proved stronger than Italy's pre-war commitment to its former allies. Austria-Hungary now found itself, like Germany, fighting a war on two fronts. The Italians attacked with the port of Trieste as their goal. The struggle between Britain and Turkey—which was also allied with the Central Powers—carried the war into the Middle East. Japan, coveting several German islands in the Pacific and the German naval base at Kiaochow, and seeking sanction for its interest in northeastern China, entered the war on the Allied side in 1914. What began as a European war became a world war.

The Eastern Front

In the wide-open spaces of the eastern front, the Russian armies had advanced into eastern Prussia despite the incompetence of the Russian general staff, intense animosity among commanders, hopelessly archaic equipment, and communications so inadequate that the Germans could easily listen to Russian officers discussing tactics on the telephone. In late August 1914, German forces trapped a Russian army almost 200,000 strong at Tannenberg in East Prussia, killing, wounding, or capturing 125,000 soldiers. Two subsequent military victories ensured that Russian forces would remain outside of German territory for the duration of the war. On the more confident German side, sixty-seven-year-old General Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934), a stolid Prussian who had been called out of retirement, and the determined General Erich Ludendorff (1865–1937) embellished their reputations in these battles.

The Austro-Hungarian army, which had no joint plan of military coordination with its German ally, found the huge Russian army an imposing foe. Too many divisions had been diverted to the punitive invasion of strategically unimportant Serbia. In September 1914, the Russians captured the fortress of Lemberg in Galicia from the Austro-Hungarian armies and took 100,000 prisoners (see Map 22.5). Many of these were conscripted Slavs who felt more allegiance to Russians, their fellow Slavs, than to their German-speaking officers.

In January 1915, the Habsburg forces launched an offensive against the Russian army in the Carpathian Mountains. Although the offensive looked good on a map, the reality was otherwise. Snow-covered mountains posed a daunting obstacle: supplies had to be moved over ice or freezing marsh; low clouds obscured artillery targets; and soldiers had to warm their rifles over fires before they could use them. When the Russians counterattacked, the Germans had to send troops to support their ally in the Carpathians, and as a result they lost over 350,000 men. With the stalemate in the west, the Germans wanted to defeat the Russians before the latter could vanquish the Habsburg army. In May 1915, a massive German attack drove the Russian army back almost 100 miles. The Russian retreat, which had been orderly in the beginning, turned into chaos. A million civilians moved eastward with the Russian armies. An observer remembered that “while thousands of people trudge along the railway lines they are passed by speeding trains loaded with couches from officers’ clubs, and carrying quartermasters’ bird cages.” The Russian retreat from the Carpathian Mountains gave the Austro-Hungarian forces some badly needed breathing room. German forces reached Brest-Litovsk in August 1915, ending 100 years of Russian control of Poland.



MAP 22.5 THE EASTERN, ITALIAN, AND BALKAN FRONTS Russian and Austro-German advances and battles along the eastern front; Austro-Hungarian and Italian armies face off along the Italian front; and Turkish and Allied armies clash on the Balkan front.

The War in the Middle East, Africa, and the Far East

British military and political leaders were divided between those who believed that victory would have to be won in the west, and others who pushed for a series of dramatic strikes against Germany or its allies on Europe's periphery. The latter included Winston Churchill (1874–1965), the First Lord of

the Admiralty, and Lloyd George. Such victories might also even expand the British Empire, thus such a campaign would please the colonial lobby at home. This strategy angered the French government, which bitterly opposed any reduction of British support on the western front.

Churchill and Lord Kitchener planned an attack on Germany's ally, Turkey. When the Turks entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary in November 1914, they closed off the Dardanelles strait, which separates the Aegean Sea from the Sea of Marmara. This cut off an important route for supplies to Russia through the Black Sea. Turkish forces also tied up Russian troops in the Caucasus Mountains. Turkey posed a potential threat to the Suez Canal. The British high command planned an assault on the Dardanelles strait. If everything went well, a British success might bring an end to the power of the pro-German faction in the Turkish government. Moreover, a successful campaign could open up a route to Russia through the Black Sea. With Turkey out of the war, Churchill reasoned, the German effort in the Balkans could be undermined, and Bulgaria would stay out of the conflict.

In April 1915, British ships sailed through the Dardanelles, destroyed several Turkish ships, and disembarked five divisions of troops on the beach of Gallipoli (see Map 22.5). British soldiers hurled themselves against the well-defended heights held by the Turks. British troops managed to dig in,

British troops massing during the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign.



and in August launched an assault that failed miserably. In the meantime, British, French, and German submarines were active during the campaign, forcing both sides to adapt supply tactics to the new threat. After committing more than 400,000 men, half of whom were killed or wounded, the British were fortunate to evacuate their remaining forces in January 1916. Amid harsh criticism of the campaign's humiliating failure, Churchill and Kitchener lost influence. To this day, the Gallipoli Campaign remains controversial. Some historians consider it an imaginative, even brilliant stroke that might have won the war. Others agree with most contemporaries who believed that it was a needless diversion dictated by British colonial interests in the Middle East and for which Australian and New Zealander troops paid a disproportionate price.

Still hoping to knock Turkey out of the war, the Allies tried to coax Bulgaria into the war on their side. But in October 1915 Bulgaria joined the Central Powers, who promised Bulgaria all of Macedonia, which the Allies could not because of Serb claims there, as well as much of Thrace. Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian forces thus controlled an important part of the Balkans. A month later, a Franco-British force landed in Salonika, Greece, to try to aid Serb troops. But within two months, the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Bulgarian armies had crushed the Serb army, which by 1916 had suffered 100,000 deaths of the 450,000 men serving in 1914. The Germans called Salonika their "largest internment camp," since that campaign tied up half a million Allied troops fighting the Bulgarians. In the meantime, British troops fought a desert war against the Turks in Palestine and Mesopotamia.

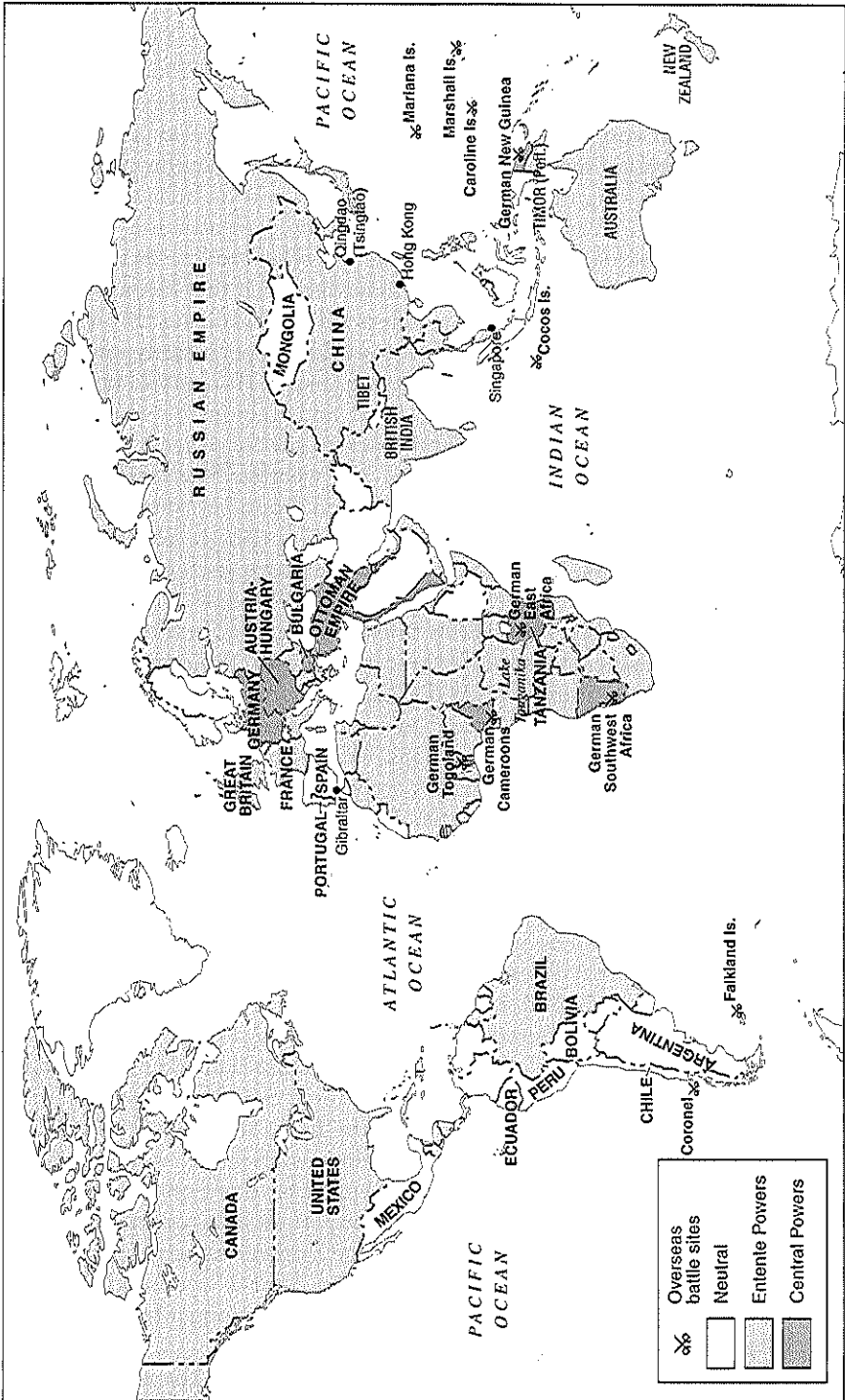
Smaller British forces were occupied fighting for the German colonies in Africa (see Map 22.6). German Togoland fell in August 1914, German Southwest Africa in 1915, and the German Cameroons in 1916. In German East Africa (Tanganyika), combat continued for the duration of the war, pitting German troops against British and South African soldiers, and both sides against mosquitoes and disease. In Asia, Japanese forces captured the fortress and port of Tsingtao (Qingdao) from a German garrison, and seized the undefended German islands of the Marianas, Carolines, and Marshalls in the North Pacific.

The Western Front

Following Gallipoli, the British again focused on the western front. Southern England was so close to this front that officers who had lunch in private railroad cars before leaving Victoria Station could be at the front—and perhaps dead—by dinner. When British miners managed to blow up a previously unconquerable ridge near Messines in western Belgium, it was said that the explosion could be heard in Kent.

General Douglas Haig (1861–1928) was named commander in chief of the British army in France in December 1915. He agreed with Joffre's plan

Map 22.6 THE WORLD WAR



for a mighty offensive in the vicinity of the Somme River. The assault would have to await the arrival of more British soldiers and good weather. The German army, too, had big plans. The new German commander in chief, General Erich von Falkenhayn (1861–1922), planned an assault on the fortresses surrounding Verdun in eastern France. Falkenhayn had no illusions about breaking through the French lines, but he believed that with a massive attack on Verdun, the Germans could “out-attrition” the French, who, by virtue of a lower birthrate, could not afford to lose as many soldiers as their more populous enemy. Falkenhayn assumed that France would lose five men for every two German soldiers killed. Realizing that even more German victories on the eastern front would not necessarily knock Russia out of the war, and doubting the ability of Austria-Hungary to hold off both the Russians on Germany’s eastern front and Italy in the south, the German command needed to force the French to sue for peace.

After nine days of delay because of bad weather, the German artillery began to bombard the French forts stretched around Verdun across a front of eight miles on February 21, 1916 (see Map 22.4). Some of the guns weighed twenty tons; it took nine tractors to move each piece and a crane to load the shells. The French prepared to hold Verdun at all costs. Its loss would be a potentially mortal blow to French morale. In the damp, chilling mists of the hills northeast of Verdun, hundreds of thousands of men died, killed by shells that rained from the sky, machine guns that seemed never to be stilled, or bayoneted in hand-to-hand fighting within and outside the massive cement forts. French troops were supplied by a single “sacred road” on which trucks and wagons arrived from the town of Bar-le-Duc. Verdun was truly a national battle, in part because a new system of furloughs meant that nearly everyone in the French army spent some time in the hell that was Verdun.

The French army held. General Philippe Pétain (1856–1951), the new commander, became a hero in France. But the cost of this victory came close to fulfilling Falkenhayn’s expectations. The French lost 315,000 men killed or wounded; 90,000 died at the appropriately named “Dead Man’s Hill” alone. The Germans suffered 281,000 casualties. A French counterattack in the fall recaptured several of the forts the Germans had taken, and again the casualties mounted. In all, the French suffered 540,000 casualties and the Germans 430,000 at Verdun. At one of the forts, Douaumont, one can still see plaques put up by proud, grieving relatives after the war, one of which reads, “For my son. Since his eyes closed mine have not ceased to cry.”

The Battle of Verdun, while extremely important as a symbol of French resistance, merely postponed plans for a huge British offensive on the Somme River, supported by a similar French thrust. After a week’s bombardment, the assault began on July 1 in the hills and forests along a front of eighteen miles.

Allied troops climbed out of the trenches at dawn to the whistles of their officers and moved into no-man’s-land. Artillery barrages had chopped up

the terrain over which the attackers had to struggle but left intact most of the German barbed wire, too strong for British wire cutters. German machine gun emplacements had also survived the barrage. Many British soldiers managed only a few yards before being hit, falling with the sixty-six pounds of equipment they were carrying. A captain sought to inspire his men by jumping out of the trench and leading the attack by dribbling a soccer ball across no-man's-land. He was shot dead far from the goal. The Germans moved up reserves to wherever their lines were bending. The British commanders sent wave after wave of infantrymen "over the top" to their death; corpses piled up on top of those who had died seconds, minutes, or hours before. Of 752 men in the First Newfoundland Regiment, all 26 officers and 658 men were killed or wounded within forty minutes. Sixty percent of the Tenth Battalion of the West Yorkshires died in the initial assault. At the end of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, about 60,000 soldiers of the 110,000 British soldiers had become casualties, including 19,000 killed. (There were more British soldiers killed and wounded in the first three days of the Battle of the Somme than Americans killed in World War I, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined, and three times more killed than in fifteen years of war against Napoleon.)

When the disastrous offensive finally ended in mid-November 1916, Britain had lost 420,000 men killed and wounded. The French lost 200,000 men in what was primarily a British offensive. It cost the Germans 650,000 soldiers to hold on. This was almost 200,000 casualties more than at Verdun. Such losses helped convince the German high command that only a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare against ships supplying Britain might bring victory. Yet the maximum German retreat was a few kilometers; in most places, Allied gains were measured in yards. A sign left over one mass grave said, "The Devonshires held this trench, the Devonshires hold it still." The British poet Edmund Blunden, who survived the Battle of the Somme, tried to answer the question of who had won: "By the end of the [first] day both sides had seen, in a sad scrawl of broken earth and murdered men, the answer to the question. No road. No thoroughfare. Neither race had won, nor could win, the War. The War had won, and would go on winning."

Futility and Stalemate

Futility and stalemate also prevailed on the mountainous Austro-Italian front, where in 1916 there were *twelve* different Battles of the Isonzo River, where the Habsburg armies had well-developed defensive positions. The Italian army considered one of these, the sixth, a great victory because it moved three miles forward. After half a million casualties, the Italians were still only halfway to Trieste. In the twelfth Battle of Isonzo in 1917—more widely known as that of Caporetto 1917—Austro-Hungarian and German forces broke through the Italian lines, capturing more than 250,000 troops.



British soldiers wearing gas masks firing a machine gun during the Battle of the Somme, 1916.

On the eastern front, General Paul von Hindenburg claimed that there was no way of gauging the number of Russians killed with any accuracy: "All we do know is that, at times, fighting the Russians, we had to remove the piles of enemy bodies from before our trenches, so as to get a clear field of fire against new waves of assault." In June 1916, the Russian offensive pushed back the Austrians by combining smaller surprise attacks by specially trained troops, without the preliminary barrages, against carefully chosen targets. But the arrival of more German troops minimized Russian gains. Each side lost more than 1 million men in these encounters.

In 1916, the British poet Isaac Rosenberg, who would later be killed in the war, wrote "Break of Day in the Trenches," one of the most haunting poems to come out of the war.

The darkness crumbles away.
It is the same old druid Time as ever,
Only a live thing leaps my hand,
A queer sardonic rat,
As I pull the parapet's poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure

To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
Less chance than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver—what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe—
Just a little white with the dust.

The winter of 1916–1917 was bleak. There seemed few families on either side who had not lost a relative or friend at the front. On the Allied side, there was some cheer when Romania joined the war in exchange for the promise of some Hungarian territory with a significant Romanian population once the Central Powers had been defeated. But Falkenhayn, removed from the western front in disgrace after Verdun, quickly defeated the Romanian army. The war eroded the resources and morale of Bulgaria and Turkey. In December 1916, both states issued declarations expressing willingness to discuss terms for peace. The following March, Emperor Charles I (ruled 1916–1918) of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who assumed the throne after Francis Joseph's death in November 1916, sent the Allies a peace proposal, without having consulted Germany. It included a willingness to recognize French claims to Alsace-Lorraine. But talk of a compromise peace was hushed and, at least in Vienna, deemed unpatriotic.

Unlike the French and British, the Germans realized that victory by breakthrough was extremely unlikely, if not impossible. To the Allies, a compromise peace seemed out of the question given that enemy troops were occupying much of the north of France. The complete withdrawal of German troops required a total victory that would guarantee France's future security. Increasingly criticized for the staggering casualty rate, Joffre was replaced by General Robert Nivelle (1856–1924) as commander in chief of the French forces in 1916. Nivelle insisted that a breakthrough on the western front could be achieved.

In Britain, Lloyd George became prime minister in December 1916. Even after staggering losses on the Somme, he agreed with British commanders that military victory was possible if the Allies cooperated more closely. The British government thus rejected a peace note sent by Germany on December 12, the aim of which was to force an end to the war by splitting apart Britain and France.

In some ways, life in Britain and in the other combatant powers seemed to go on as before, which increasingly outraged soldiers returning from the front. Elegantly dressed people of means dining in the finest restaurants or watching the races at Derby and Ascot contrasted dramatically with the returning trainloads of badly wounded soldiers, and with the rationing of coal and food. A newspaper headline in 1917 gave equal emphasis to its two lead stories: "Battle Raging At Ypres. Gatwick Racing—Late Wire." Some big businessmen found the war very profitable, amassing fortunes on war supplies: Anglo-Persian Oil, which had lost money in 1914, enjoyed profits of 85 million pounds in 1916, 344 million in 1917, and over 1 billion in 1918. Profits of rubber companies increased fourfold.

In every belligerent country, women made contributions to the war. Nurses served courageously at the front and were acclaimed as heroines. Women took over many of the jobs of men who left to fight, or who had been wounded or killed. These included the enormous, back-breaking tasks of working the land. Over 1 million British women stepped into jobs from which they had previously been excluded, ranging from skilled and semi-skilled jobs in munitions factories ("Shells made by a wife may save a husband's life" went one poster in Britain) to positions as tram conductors and

Russian sharpshooters in a trench on the eastern front.



gas-meter readers. A visitor to Berlin in March 1916 reported "no men anywhere, women are doing everything."

But women workers, as in the past, received lower wages than their male counterparts, allowing many employers to reduce expenses and increase their profits. In France and Austria, women workers struck in 1917 and 1918 to protest working conditions. Everywhere, shortages and economic hardship made women's tasks of managing the household economy that much more difficult, including standing in line for hours at stores. Crowds of women demonstrated against high prices in Italy in 1917.

Censorship, particularly in the first year, prevented the population from knowing about the staggering death tolls, or about the strategic blunders of the generals. "The war, for all its devastating appearances, only seems to be destructive," one Parisian newspaper assured its readers in November 1914, and in July 1915 it asserted that "at least [those killed by German bayonets] will have died a beautiful death, in noble battle . . . with cold steel, we shall rediscover poetry . . . epic and chivalrous jousting." Other papers emphatically related that "half the German shells are made of cardboard, they don't even burst," and that "Boche corpses smell worse than [those of the] French."

The British poet Robert Graves wrote that "England looked strange to us soldiers. We could not understand the war-madness that ran wild everywhere. . . . The civilians talked a foreign language; and it was newspaper language." Lord Northcliffe, the press baron named by the British government to provide the public with reports of the war, described the trenches, "where health is so good and indigestion hardly ever heard of. The open-air life, the regular and plenteous feeding, the exercise, and the freedom from care and responsibility, keep the soldiers extraordinarily fit and contented." A French newspaper headline in December 1916 read, preposterously enough, "Among the many victims of gas, there is hardly a single death." A French captain wrote to protest newspaper accounts of heroic fighting and glorious death on the battlefield: "How does [the civilian] picture us combatants? Does he really believe we spend our time brandishing great swords with heroic gestures and yelling 'Long live France!' at the top of our lungs? When will these ladies and gentlemen in civilian life spare us their fantasies?"

The men in the trenches forged close bonds with those with whom they served. They bitterly resented senior officers who barked out deadly orders from the safety of requisitioned châteaux behind the front lines, and they detested government propagandists and censors. On leave, soldiers headed together to music halls, cabarets, and bars, hoping to forget a war they felt uncomfortable trying to describe to civilians who knew so little about it.

More than this, embittered soldiers occasionally felt more sympathy for those in the opposite trenches than for the politicians and generals at home. On Christmas Day, 1914, on the western front in France, German and British soldiers spontaneously declared their own one-day truce, some meeting in no-man's-land to exchange greetings, souvenirs, and even home addresses. In one or two places, soldiers from both sides played soccer.

A year later, a British soldier was executed for ignoring orders that such an event was not to recur. There were even occasional informal arrangements between units that had been facing each other across no-man's-land for several months, agreeing not to fire during mealtimes, or entertaining each other in verse or song. A British writer later recalled calmly discussing Nietzsche with a German he had captured just minutes after almost killing him. One prevalent rumor in both trenches had an entire regiment of German, French, and British deserters living under no-man's-land in tunnels, coming out only at night to rob corpses and steal food and drink from both sides. They, many soldiers said, were the lucky ones.

It was impossible to hide the effects of the war. In all combatant countries, women in mourning clothes were an increasingly frequent sight, clutching telegrams that began, "Be proud of X, who has just died like a brave man. . . ." Illegitimate births rose rapidly. In Germany, state governments, except for that of Prussia, for the first time allowed "illegitimate" birth certificates and gave unmarried or widowed women the right to call themselves *Frau* (Mrs.) instead of *Fraulein* (Miss).

As casualties mounted and the fighting ground on, opposition to the war emerged, particularly in Britain. Elsewhere in Britain, a relatively small number of pacifists and conscientious objectors protested against the war. Some of them were prosecuted and imprisoned. In 1916, when Britain adopted military conscription, pacifists became more vocal. In *No Conscription Leaflet No. 3*, the writer Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) warned, "The Cat kept saying to the Mouse that she was a high-minded person, and if the Mouse would only come a little nearer they could both get the cheese. The Mouse said, Thank you, Pussy, it's not the cheese you want, it's my skin."

Irish Republicans opposed Britain in order to gain Ireland's independence. The Germans encouraged Irish Republican preparations for an insurrection in Dublin set for Easter Sunday, 1916. Sir Roger Casement (1864–1916), an Irish nationalist who had denounced the brutal conditions under which indigenous laborers worked in imperial colonies, tried to form an Irish Legion and urged the Germans to send military assistance to those working for independence in Ireland. But seeing that the Germans had no plans to offer substantial help, he landed on the Irish coast with the help of a German submarine with the goal of convincing Irish Republicans to call off the insurrection, but was arrested immediately. The Easter Rising went ahead, but ended in dismal failure after five days of bloody fighting with 450 insurgents killed. Casement was among those executed, traitor to the British, hero to many Irish.

In Germany, Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), a militant socialist, went to jail because she refused to stop denouncing the war and tried to mobilize working-class women against a struggle between capitalist states that pitted worker against worker. Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish socialist living in Germany, also went to prison for her efforts to turn more members of her party against the war.

When Dutch socialists initiated a peace conference in Stockholm in December 1917, Britain prohibited British citizens from attending. The poet Siegfried Sassoon, wounded at the front, returned to England and publicly declared, "I believe the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers." After being incarcerated in a mental asylum, he returned to the front because of his allegiance to his comrades. There he was wounded again.

In the meantime, the French government faced different problems on the home front than those confronting Britain. The German armies occupied some of France's richest agricultural land and industrial centers of the north and northeast. Refugees from the war zone arrived in Paris and, increasingly, the south carrying their remaining possessions. But the French home front held together, despite ebbs and flows in morale as the war went on and on. Although there was grumbling about peasants who profited from price rises for commodities, or about specialist workers exempt from conscription because munitions factories required their skills, and about other "shirkers" who escaped service, there were relatively few signs of opposition to the war in France, particularly early on. The government's decision in the war's first month to provide some financial assistance to families with husbands, brothers, and sons in uniform was popular. The French gradually adapted to the war. With the German army deep inside France, close to Paris, capitulation was unthinkable, as was even a negotiated settlement.

The German home front also held together. Posters showed an ogre-like British "John Bull" with the caption "This man is responsible for your hunger." However, in 1917 signs of war weariness increased as casualties reached astronomic levels and rumors spread that the campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allies was failing. Open criticism of

Berliners hunt for food.



officials became more common. In July, the Reichstag passed a resolution by a large majority asking the government to repudiate a policy of annexation and commit itself to seeking a peace of reconciliation. But the Reichstag had little influence in what amounted to a military government. In Germany, when William III dismissed Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in 1917, he gave Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff even more power.

THE FINAL STAGES OF THE WAR

In 1917, two events of great consequence changed the course of the war. Reacting in part to the German campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare against Allied shipping, the United States entered the war in April on the Allied side. And Russia, where the February Revolution toppled the tsar (see Chapter 23), withdrew from the war after the Bolsheviks seized power in October. Meanwhile, the French armies seemed on the verge of collapse. Widespread mutinies occurred. And a massive German offensive that began in March 1918 pushed Allied forces back farther than they had been since 1914, before grinding to a halt in the face of stiff resistance. The stage was set for the final phase of the war.

The United States Enters the War

In 1916, Woodrow Wilson had been re-elected president of the United States on the platform "He kept us out of war." The U.S. government had adopted a declaration of neutrality, but American popular sympathy generally lay with the Allies, even though the German government tried to capitalize on American resentment of the British blockade, which entailed searches of American ships. U.S. bankers made profitable loans to both sides, but far more funds went to the Allies than to the Central Powers.

On May 7, 1915, a German submarine sank the British cruise liner *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland. The ship was, despite U.S. denials, carrying American-made ammunition to Britain; 128 U.S. citizens were among the almost 1,200 killed. The United States, already outraged by the recent German introduction of mustard gas into combat, protested vigorously, and on September 1 the German government accepted the American demand that it abandon the unrestricted submarine warfare. Germany, wanting to keep the United States neutral, adopted a policy of warning liners before sinking them, providing for the safety of the passengers.

The fact remained that only with submarines could Germany prevent Britain from maintaining total control of the high seas. In 1916, the German fleet left port to challenge the British Royal Navy. The German admiral hoped to entice part of the main British fleet into a trap by offering a smaller fleet as a target off the Norwegian coast. German submarines lay in wait, along with a sizeable surface fleet. The British, who had broken

the German code, hoped to have the last laugh when the entire Grand Fleet suddenly appeared. The German and British fleets stumbled into each other off the coast of Denmark, in the Battle of Jutland, May 31–June 1, 1916. In a heavy exchange of gunfire, the British lost fourteen ships and about 6,000 men; eleven German ships were sunk and about 1,500 men were killed. Both sides claimed victory, but British losses were heavier, surprising and embarrassing British naval leaders (such that one admiral turned to a junior officer and stammered, “Chatfield, there seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today!”). Yet in the end, it was the German fleet that fled, leaving the Royal Navy in control of the seas for the duration of the war.

The continuing success of the British blockade led Germany to announce on February 1, 1917, that its submarines would attack any ship in “war zones.” In March 1916, the U.S. government had forcefully protested the sinking of the British ship *Sussex* in the English Channel, with the loss of American lives. Germany agreed to the “*Sussex* pledge,” reaffirming the agreement to give up unrestricted submarine warfare. But pressure came from the German high command to turn loose the submarine fleet, now 120 strong, as the only hope for knocking Britain out of the war. This was a calculated risk, like the invasion of Belgium in 1914, because it would surely entail American intervention. Two weeks earlier, the United States had intercepted a coded telegram from the German foreign secretary, Arthur

(Left) Allied tanks stuck in the mud. (Right) A German U-boat surfaces.



Zimmermann, to his ambassador to Mexico. The "Zimmermann telegram" brazenly offered Mexico German help in taking back the states of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico if it would go to war against its powerful northern neighbor. With more Americans killed in submarine attacks, Wilson used the telegram to bolster support for a declaration of war on April 6, 1917. Wilson promised a war that would "make the world safe for democracy." The United States turned its industrial might toward wartime production and drafted and trained an army that reached 4 million, of which half was in France by November 1918. The entry of the United States into the war tipped the balance fatally against Germany.

During 1917, German submarines sank one-fourth of all ships sailing to Britain. Half a million tons of shipping were sunk in February, three-quarters of a million in March, and nearly 1 million tons in April, when 350 British ships were sunk. But in the midst of despair, the British admiralty discovered that heavily escorted convoys could get through. Submerged mines at the entrances to the Channel also helped reduce the German U-boat threat. Within a few months, the first American troops reached the continent, along with a steady stream of military supplies.

Russia Withdraws from the War

The second remarkable event of 1917 was the Russian Revolution. The eastern front had stabilized following the Russian offensive at the end of 1916, as the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies were depleted and exhausted. The Russian home front seemed on the verge of collapse. In February 1917, amid a chorus of demands for political reform, strikes and bread riots in Petrograd spread rapidly. Tsar Nicholas II abdicated on March 15. The head of the provisional government, Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970), had no intention of abandoning the war effort, and he ordered the commander in chief to launch another offensive on July 1. But "peace, land, and bread" became the motto of the soldiers. Many deserted or refused to obey their officers. Within a matter of weeks, a German counterattack pushed the Russians back nearly 100 miles.

As the Russian provisional government faced opposition from many sides, the Bolsheviks aimed to seize power and then take Russia out of the war as quickly as possible. They expected revolutions to break out in other countries as well, beginning with Germany. The German government desperately wanted to force the Russian provisional government to make peace as soon as possible, so that the German high command could turn its full attention to the western front before the American entry into the war could turn the tide. With this in mind, they allowed exiled Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) to return to Russia from neutral Switzerland through Germany and Finland.

On November 6 (October 24 by the Old Russian calendar), the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government. The German army, facing little

opposition, had captured Riga, the fortified capital of Latvia, and was advancing along the Baltic coast. The Germans were happy to comply with Lenin's request for an immediate armistice. In return, the German government wanted the revolutionary government to agree to the independence of Finland, Poland, Galicia, Moldavia, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Their goal was to create a series of small buffer states between Germany and Russia that they could dominate. The Allies understandably worried that such a peace between Germany and Russia would make it difficult to obtain peace in the west, as the German army could devote all its attention to that front.

The French and British governments feared the effect Russia's withdrawal from the war, in the wake of a revolution, might have on workers and socialists at home, as well as on the war's outcome. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and British Prime Minister Lloyd George denounced the Bolsheviks, but relatively few people in Russia wanted the war to continue. In December, the Bolsheviks unilaterally declared the war over and signed a temporary armistice with Germany. When the revolutionary Russian government did not agree to the German terms for a formal armistice, the German armies marched into the Russian heartland. They reached the Gulf of Finland—only 150 miles from Petrograd—as well as the Crimean peninsula in the south, and advanced far into Ukraine. The Germans then offered a cessation of hostilities in return for virtually all Russian war materiel they could carry with them. They also again demanded the independence of the border states of the Russian Empire. The Bolsheviks abandoned Russian claims on Poland, Ukraine, and what would become Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In March 1918, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk officially ended Russian participation in the war.

Offensives and Mutinies

The year 1917 brought another major Allied offensive in the west. General Nivelle of France convinced his British counterpart in February that the long-awaited knockout punch was at last possible if a British attack would divert German forces along the Aisne River. But the British attack ran headlong into the impenetrable German second line of defense, the "Hindenburg Line." On April 16, Nivelle sent 1.2 million soldiers into battle along the Aisne River in miserable weather. Allied tanks, which had been introduced into battle for the first time in 1916, became stuck in the mud or in shell craters. Ten days later, French losses totaled 34,000 dead, 90,000 wounded, and 20,000 missing. Soldiers sang, "If you want to find the old battalion, I know where they are, I know where they are—They're hanging on the old barbed wire. I've seen 'em, I've seen 'em, Hanging on the old barbed wire." Nivelle again promised the increasingly anxious government in Paris that the breakthrough was just around the corner. More troops were sent into the meat grinder.

For the first time, soldiers resisted. Some French regiments were heard "baaing" like sheep led to the slaughterhouse as they marched past their commanding officers. On May 3, mutinies broke out. By the end of the month, they had spread to other regiments, even though soldiers who refused to go over the top knew they could be summarily shot. They reasoned that they were going to die anyway. Some regiments elected spokesmen, who declared that they would defend the trenches against German attacks, but would not participate in any more foolish assaults. The mutinies affected half of the French divisions along the western front, and at the beginning of June, only two of twelve divisions holding the line in Champagne had been unaffected. More than 21,000 French soldiers deserted in 1917.

Some soldiers were summarily shot where the officers retained the upper hand; 23,000 others were court-martialed, 432 sentenced to death, and 55 executed. Some generals blamed socialist "agitators" and peace propaganda. General Pétain, the hero of Verdun, knew otherwise, and at least tried to improve the conditions of daily life for the soldiers. The Nivelle offensive ground to a halt.

In the meantime, Haig planned another British offensive around Ypres, the "fields of Flanders." The goal was to push the Germans back from the coast to Ghent. Haig had not bothered to inspect the front himself, nor did he pay attention to the pessimistic reports of his intelligence staff. He had not reported estimates of German troop strength to the war cabinet in London. The battle began in heavy rain; the preliminary barrage turned the chalky soil into something like the consistency of quicksand. In the Battle of Passchendaele ("They died in hell, they called it Passchendaele"), named after a devastated village, the British gained four miles in exchange for 300,000 dead or wounded. One soldier determined that, in view of such gains, it would take 180 years to get to the Rhine River. The offensive ended. Haig kept his command.

Morale plunged during the winter in Germany and France. A writer was surprised to see a soldier who had lost an arm drunkenly begging on a Parisian boulevard, muttering, "Peace, Peace." Shortages became worse, rationing more vexing. Occasionally, in the south of France were heard sarcastic references to "Paris's war," or to the blond refugees from the embattled northern departments known as "the Krauts (*boches*) of the North." The French armaments minister faced shouts of "Down with the War!" when he visited a factory. There were waves of strikes in 1917. But Georges Clemenceau rallied the war effort after again becoming prime minister. He used troops against strikers, as he had before the war. He ordered the arrest of those calling for peace without victory, including his minister of the interior. A cartoon in Britain—unthinkable until 1917—pictured the encounter of two enlisted soldiers at the front. One said, "'Ow long you up for, Bill?" "Seven years," was the reply, to which the first soldier said, "You're lucky—I'm duration."

Compounding this bleak picture for the Allies was a combined Austrian and German offensive in Italy, strengthened by the arrival of German troops from the Russian front. They pushed the Italian army back seventy-five miles in the Battle of Caporetto on the Isonzo River in October 1917, taking three-quarters of a million prisoners. Despite 200,000 casualties and twice that many desertions, the Italians held along the Piave River, just twenty miles from Venice. The Allies coordinated their war efforts. In October 1917, they established a Supreme War Council, which held regular meetings of the prime ministers of France, Britain, and Italy, as well as a representative sent by President Wilson.

Better news for the Allies came from the Middle East. The discovery of oil there prior to the war had dramatically increased the stakes for influence in the region. During the war, the British took advantage of Arab resentment—particularly by Muslim fundamentalists—of the Turks, who had ruled much of the Middle East for centuries. They stirred up revolts beginning in June 1916. The writer T. E. Lawrence (1888–1935), a British colonel, coordinated attacks against the strategically important Turkish railway that led from the sacred city of Medina to Damascus.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, more Jews in Europe had begun to long for a homeland in Palestine, which was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. By 1914, 85,000 Jews had moved there. The British government in principle supported the Zionist movement for a Jewish state. On November 2, 1917, the Balfour Declaration expressed British willingness to support the future creation of a “national home” for the Jews in Palestine, once the Turks had been defeated, provided that such a state would recognize the rights of the Arab populations who already lived there. This declaration partially contradicted the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which had secretly divided Syria and other parts of the Middle East into British and French zones of influence. The British government hoped that the eventual creation of a Jewish state in Palestine could serve as a buffer between the Suez Canal and Syria, the latter controlled by France. In December 1917, a British force captured Jerusalem. The Central Powers’ ally Turkey seemed on the verge of collapse.

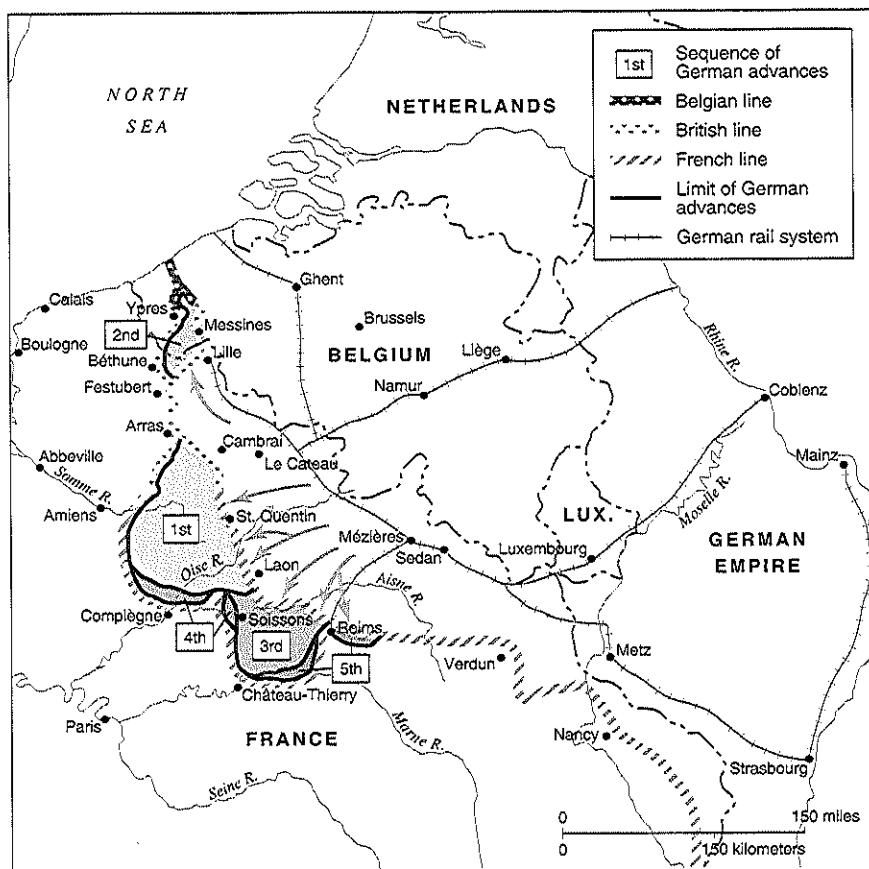
The German Spring Offensive

In the spring of 1918, the Germans launched their “victory drive,” their first major offensive since 1914. But Austria-Hungary showed signs of virtually dissolving, with major national groups openly calling for independence. The United States now had 325,000 troops in Europe. They were commanded by General John Pershing (1860–1948), who had won early fame for leading a “punitive expedition” (which turned out to be a wild-goose chase) against the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa. He had also served in campaigns against the Sioux in the American West, and had fought in the Philippines and Cuba. Pershing, a tall, tough, stubborn commander, insisted that

his troops remain independent, fearing that French and British generals would lead them to slaughter.

Emboldened by the withdrawal of revolutionary Russia from the war, Ludendorff decided on a massive German assault along the Somme River, thereby avoiding the mud of Flanders and the hills and forts of eastern France around Verdun. On March 21, 1918, after a brief bombardment of five hours to maintain some element of surprise, 1.6 million men attacked the Allied defenses in five separate offensives over a front of forty miles (see Map 22.7). When the weather cleared at noon, British pilots observed that the Germans had succeeded in breaking through the Allied lines. Five days later, some German units had pushed forward thirty-six miles. The Germans now advanced in Flanders, moving forward with relative ease against troops from Portugal, which had recently entered the war on the

MAP 22.7 THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE, 1918 The spring offensive of 1918 in which the Germans attacked the Allies in five separate offensives along the western front.



Allied side. Ludendorff hurled all available reserves into the battle. It looked as though the Germans would take the Channel ports. The Germans bombarded the French capital with their giant gun, "Big Bertha," which could lob shells, each weighing up to a ton, twenty-four miles through the air before they fell to earth with deadly impact. Late in May 1918, the offensive pushed French troops back to Reims, and then as close to Paris as the Marne River in early June. The French stopped the German advance short of Paris. In the gloom of the Allied headquarters, French Marshal Ferdinand Foch (1851–1929) assumed command of the combined French, British, and American armies.

However, the Germans had outrun their cover and supplies, and faced fresh Allied reserves. On July 15, 1918, another major German attack was repulsed. Ludendorff's offensive, which he viewed as the last chance to win the war, had failed. France was not about to negotiate for an armistice. Morale plunged in Germany, amid extreme shortages of food, gas, and electricity. Rationing became more stringent and black markets spread. Inflation was rampant, pushed by the circulation of more paper money, as gold and silver were withdrawn to prevent hoarding. In January 1918, 400,000 workers in Berlin went on strike, demanding a democratization of the government and peace. Carefully couched criticism of the war and of Kaiser William II began to appear in the press. Socialists became bolder. Demonstrations took place in several cities, including Berlin.

The Allies counterattacked in July 1918. The British used their tanks with increasing effectiveness to go over craters and barbed wire and to protect the advancing infantry. Coordinated attacks on the German lines began on August 8, 1918, when the British moved forward eight miles north of the Somme River. A month later, the Germans had been pushed back to the positions they had held at the start of the Ludendorff spring offensive.

The Allies were now confident that they would win the war, probably in 1919 if all went well. Ludendorff advised the kaiser to press for an armistice before it was too late. With the Allies gaining ground, on October 4, 1918, Germany's new chancellor, Prince Max von Baden (1867–1929), a liberal monarchist, asked President Wilson for an armistice based on the American president's call for "peace without victory." The Reichstag passed laws making ministers responsible to it and not to the kaiser. It was a revolution of sorts. Given the circumstances, Kaiser William II could do virtually nothing.

The situation for the Central Powers worsened on the Italian front. His armies in retreat, Austro-Hungarian Emperor Charles I seemed little inclined nor able to continue the war as desertions mounted. There was now little doubt that the defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary was near.

The Fourteen Points and Peace

On January 8, 1918, in an address to a joint session of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, President Wilson set out a blueprint for permanent

peace. His "Fourteen Points" were based upon his understanding of how the Great War had begun and how future wars could be avoided. The first point called for "open covenants, openly arrived at," in place of the secret treaties whose obligations had pulled Europe into war. Wilson also called for freedom of the seas and of trade and the impartial settlement of colonial rivalries. Other points included the principle of nonintervention in Russia; the return of full sovereignty to Belgium and of Alsace-Lorraine to France; autonomy—without mentioning independence—for the national groups within the Austro-Hungarian Empire; and the independence of Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Poland. The last of the Fourteen Points called for the establishment of an organization or association of nations to settle other national conflicts as they arose. If the desire of the European peoples to live in states defined by national boundaries had been one—if not the principal—cause of the war, then a peace that recognized these claims would be a lasting one. Or so thought Wilson, and many other people as well.

Germany now appeared willing to accept Wilson's Fourteen Points as grounds for an armistice, hoping to circumvent the British and French governments, which clearly would demand unconditional surrender and were not terribly interested in Wilson's idealism. The British, for example, opposed the point calling for freedom of the seas. As Wilson considered what to do with the German proposal for an armistice, a number of U.S. citizens were killed when a U-boat again sank a British ship off the Irish coast. An angry Wilson then replied to Prince Max that the German military authorities would have to arrange an armistice with the British and French high command, and not with him. Germany called off unrestricted submarine warfare and tried to convince Wilson that recent changes in the civilian leadership in Berlin amounted to a democratization of the empire. Foch and Clemenceau demanded unconditional surrender of the German fleet and occupation of the Rhineland by France.

The collapse of the Central Powers accelerated. When French and British troops moved into Bulgaria in September 1918, Bulgaria left the war, as did Turkey the next month. British forces occupied Damascus and Constantinople. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire also tried to get Wilson to negotiate an armistice based on the Fourteen Points, which trumpeted the sanctity of the nation-state, Czechs in Prague proclaimed an independent Czechoslovakia. Croats and Slovenes announced that they would join the Serbs in the establishment of a South Slav state of Yugoslavia. Hungary, too, proclaimed its independence, as if the Great War had been something forced on it by the Austrians. Facing no opposition, the Italian army finally managed to advance into Habsburg territory. Austria-Hungary signed an armistice on November 3, 1918. German sailors mutinied in the Baltic port of Kiel and riots rocked Berlin. An insurrection in Munich led to the declaration of a Bavarian Republic.

On November 7, 1918, an ad hoc German Armistice Commission asked the Allies for an end to hostilities. Two days later, a crowd proclaimed the

German Republic in Berlin. William II blamed socialists and Jews for the overthrow of the empire and then fled across the Dutch border. On November 11, 1918, a representative of the provisional German government and General Foch signed an armistice in a railroad car in the middle of the forest near Compiègne, north of Paris. Celebrations in London, Paris, and New York lasted for days. The mother of the poet Wilfred Owen received news that he had been killed as the church bells of her village were ringing for victory. A French veteran, tiring of the street festivities in his town, went at dusk to a cemetery. There he came upon a woman crying next to the tomb of her husband. Their small boy was with her, playing with a tricolor flag. Suddenly the boy cried out, "Papa, we've won!"

THE IMPACT OF THE WAR

There had been nothing like the Great War in history. About 6,000 people had been killed each day for more than 1,500 days. On average, more than 900 French and 1,300 German soldiers were killed each day during the more than four years of war. Nearly 74 million soldiers were mobilized. Of the 48 million men who served in the Allied armies, at least 18 million were casualties, not including the hundreds of thousands listed as missing. The Central Powers mobilized 25.5 million men and had 12.4 million casualties, again not counting the missing. In all, approximately 9.4 million men were killed or "disappeared," 21.2 million wounded (of whom an estimated 7 million may have been left permanently disabled), and 7.6 million prisoners of war. Many—perhaps millions—of civilians died from war-related causes, principally related to not having enough to eat. As Table 22.1 shows, the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and French armies suffered proportionally more than the other major combatants. Of all French troops mobilized during the war, 16.8 percent were killed (compared to 15.4 percent of German soldiers). Furthermore, about 50 million people died in a worldwide influenza epidemic in 1918–1919 that killed more people in Europe than did the war.

But sheer numbers, however daunting, do not tell the whole story. Of the wounded who survived, many were condemned to spend the rest of their lives—shortened lives, in many cases—in veterans' hospitals. Soldiers who had lost limbs or who were mutilated in other ways became a common sight in European cities, towns, and villages after the war. Europe seemed a continent of widows and spinsters; so many men were killed in the prime of life that the birthrate fell markedly after the war. Support for families of the dead soldiers and invalids unable to work strained national budgets. War cemeteries stretched across northern France and Belgium. Warfare had changed. The Battle of Verdun had lasted ten months, that of Gallipoli more than eight months, and the Battle of Somme in 1916 more than five

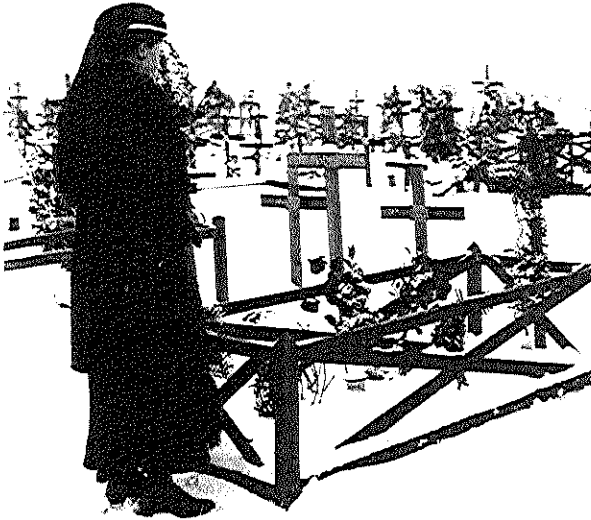
TABLE 22.1. CASUALTIES IN THE GREAT WAR

ALLIED POWERS						
Country	Mobilized	Dead	Wounded	POW/ Missing	Total	% Casualties
Russia	18,100,000	1,800,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,250,000	51.10
France	7,891,000	1,375,800	4,266,000	537,000	6,178,800	78.30
G.B., Emp. and Dom.	8,904,467	908,371	2,090,212	191,652	3,190,235	35.83
Italy	5,615,000	578,000	947,000	600,000	2,125,000	37.85
U.S.	4,273,000	114,000	234,000	4,526	352,526	8.25
Japan	800,000	300	907	3	1,210	0.15
Romania	1,000,000	250,706	120,000	80,000	450,706	45.07
Serbia	750,000	278,000	133,148	15,958	427,106	56.95
Belgium	365,000	38,716	44,686	34,659	118,061	32.35
Greece	353,000	26,000	21,000	1,000	48,000	13.60
Portugal	100,000	7,222	13,751	12,318	33,291	33.29
Montenegro	50,000	3,000	10,000	7,000	20,000	40.00
Total	48,201,467	5,380,115	12,830,704	3,984,116	22,194,935	46.05
CENTRAL POWERS						
Germany	13,200,000	2,033,700	4,216,058	1,152,800	7,402,558	56.08
Austria- Hungary	9,000,000	1,100,000	3,620,000	2,200,000	6,920,000	76.89
Turkey	2,998,000	804,000	400,000	250,000	1,454,000	48.50
Bulgaria	400,000	87,500	152,390	27,029	266,919	66.73
Total	25,598,000	4,025,200	8,388,448	3,629,829	16,043,477	62.67
Grand Total	73,799,467	9,405,315	21,219,152	7,613,945	38,238,412	51.81

Source: J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London, Macmillan, 1985), p. 75.

months (in which 4 million soldiers fought, of whom more than a quarter were killed, captured, or "disappeared"). The carnage was not limited to the European continent. In response to Armenian demands for an independent state, in 1915 the Turks forced 1.75 million Armenians to leave their homes in Turkey; more than a third of them perished without water in the desert sun on the way to Syria.

The flower of European youth—or much of it—had perished in the war. There were other costs as well. The economic structure of northern France and part of Belgium had been chewed up in the fighting. The German economy, which was devastated by the war, would be further crippled by the terms of the peace treaty (see Chapter 24). The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace made a brave attempt to calculate the war's actual



A widow in mourning before her husband's grave at the end of World War I.

cost, coming up with a figure of \$338 billion dollars after establishing a rough value for property and even lives lost.

No one could begin to measure other dimensions of the war's impact. The psychological damage to the generation of survivors can hardly be measured. "Never such innocence again," observed the British writer Philip Larkin, referring to the period before the war. The post-war period, rampant with hard times and disappointments, caused many people to look back even more on the pre-war period as the "Belle Époque," the good old days.

Woodrow Wilson was not alone in thinking that the Great War was the war to end all wars. Many people reasoned that no one could ever again wish such a catastrophe on humanity. The American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald took a friend to a battlefield in the north of France: "See that little stream—we could walk to it in two minutes. It took the British a month to walk to it—a whole empire walking very slowly, dying in front and pushing forward behind. And another empire walked very slowly backward a few inches a day, leaving the dead like a million bloody rags. No European will ever do that again in this generation." He was wrong.

The Great War had several causes, with none alone standing as a sufficient cause. To be sure, the entangling alliances of the European great powers were undeniably a principal factor in the outbreak of hostilities. Aggressive nationalism spilled out of the opposing alliances during this period. Schoolchildren throughout much of Europe were taught that their country was the greatest nation in history, and that their rivals and enemies were craven reptiles. The imperial rivalries of the great powers—above all, in Africa—helped make the alliance system more rigid, sharpening rivalries between Germany and Britain and France. Nationalists strongly believed that having colonies helped define status as a great power: by such reasoning, states had to expand their military forces and be prepared to defend their empires as they would their own borders.

Military planners (who were, after all, nationalists themselves) in Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, and, to a lesser extent, Russia, all considered war not only inevitable but desirable. To one British writer, "War . . . is the sovereign disinfectant, and its red stream of blood . . . cleans out the stagnant pools and clotted channels of the intellect." In Germany, an official in the chancellery wrote that "the hostility that we observe everywhere [is] the essence of the world and the source of life itself." War would be the ultimate test by which the fit—individuals and nations—would be measured. "Give me combat!" rang out from the dueling fraternities in Heidelberg to the gymnastic and shooting clubs of Paris.

For those who had been lucky enough to survive, how much greater the disappointment, disillusionment, and bitterness that would follow. One contemporary observer did not mince words: "The World War of 1914–1918 was the greatest moral, spiritual and physical catastrophe in the entire history of the English people—a catastrophe whose consequences, all wholly evil, are still with us." Soldiers returned home to find skyrocketing prices and unemployment awaiting them. In Britain, parents whose sons had died as foot soldiers in France or Belgium learned that families of aristocratic officers had complained that their sons had been buried alongside ordinary people. Politicians who had put aside their differences during the war in a common effort for victory—such as the "Sacred Union" in France—reverted to bitter disagreements that were compounded by the dilemmas posed in the peace settlement. The problems of making peace and putting Europe back together again, as well as paying for the war, would not be easily resolved. U.S. participation in the war and, particularly, the Russian Revolution, which we will examine in the next chapter, would each have a profound impact on Europe's future. War became the continuing experience of the twentieth century.