

# World War I – The Front Lines and Home Front

## Plans

- Schlieffen Plan
  - o German Strategy
  - o Assume that any war against Russia is also against France
  - o Plan was to attack France first through neutral Belgium
    - Defeat the French and then redeploy against Russia
  - o Germany demanded passage through Belgium on August 2<sup>nd</sup>
    - Belgium declined
      - Would have been similar to act of war to say yes
    - Declared war on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>
      - Violated Belgian neutrality act
    - Britain declared war on Germany
      - In response to German violation of Belgian neutrality
      - To protect self-interests
      - Germany called the neutrality agreement a “scrap of paper”
    - Spielvogel suggests that fear of a powerful Austria-Germany motivated the British
      - Britain worried about balance of power
- French Plan
  - o Attack towards Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhine
- Russian Plan
  - o Russia assumed any war would be against both Germany and Austria
    - Planned to simultaneously attack East Prussia in the North and Galicia in the South
- All plans depended on rapid deployment and quick movement
  - o Advantage to whoever was most “ready” to go
  - o Most armies away in July getting ready for harvest
    - Race to recall soldiers



## Reality 1914-15

- Germans seemed to be following plan
  - o Crossed into Belgium Aug 4<sup>th</sup>
  - o By 1st week in September they were 20 miles from Paris
  - o Germans underestimated the speed of British mobilization
    - Did not realize how quickly Britain would come to help the French
    - Counterattack by Gen Joffre
      - Stalemate
        - o Both sides were stuck in the mud
- Trench war in west
  - o “Immobilized...for **four** years”
    - They were basically in the same spot (trenches) for four years
  - o Life in the trenches were horrible
    - Mice, mud, dust
- Eastern front
  - o More movement by very heavy losses
  - o Russian attack into eastern Germany defeated by German generals von Hindenburg and Ludendorff by Aug-Sept



- Austrians were defeated by Russia in Galicia and thrown out of Serbia
  - Germans come to aid of Austrians
    - Push Russians 300 miles back into Russia
- Italy switched sides and joined the Allies and attacked Austria
  - 1915
  - Sees Central Powers as weaker
  - Italy was promised certain territory for joining the Allies
- Bulgaria joins the CP
  - Eliminates Serbia with the Austrians and Germans

### The Great Slaughter 1916-17

- Naval battle anti-Climatic
  - **Battle of Jutland**
    - May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1916
    - Both Germans and British afraid of losing fleet
    - Tentatively attacking
      - Both sides claim victory and withdraw
  - Germany *unterseebooten*
    - Etiquette is to surface and allow crew to leave ship
    - British ships began opening fire
      - Germans switch to policy of unrestricted submarine warfare
- Trenches “work”
  - Provided good defensive cover
    - Heavy artillery and concrete based machine guns
  - Attempts to move trenches caused many deaths
    - Troops were not as enthusiastic anymore
    - Made unofficial truces
      - Christmas Truce of 1914
      - No attacking during breakfast
      - Major truces done by 1915
        - Everyone too afraid of sticking head up
    - Heavy casualties
  - New Technology
    - **Machine Guns**
    - **Artillery**
    - Sniper Rifles
    - Gas
    - Air Planes
    - Tanks



### “Bleed White”

- Strategies of Western Front
- Battle of Verdun
  - February to December 1916
    - 500,000 French casualties
    - 400,000 German casualties
      - Average of 70,000 a month
- Battle of the Somme
  - July to November 1916
    - 620,000 French and British casualties
      - 50,000+ on the first day
    - 465,000 German casualties



- War goes global
  - British attack German African holdings
    - German South-West Africa
      - Under the command of Boer Jan Smuts
        - Quick moving
        - Capture German territory
          - By early 1915
    - German East Africa
      - Jan Smuts again
        - Guerilla style fighting on both sides
        - Germans formally surrender in November, 1918
  - Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers
    - Britain tried to open a Balkan front at Gallipoli
    - ANZAC
      - Australia and New Zealand Army Corps
    - Fails horribly
      - Attacking heavily fortified Turks
  - Arabian Peninsula
    - British send Thomas Edward Lawrence to encourage an Arab revolt against Ottomans
      - Promises Arab rule in the Middle East
    - Indian soldiers brought in to help
- United States neutrality
  - United States does not want to pick sides
    - Avoiding war that is “Europe’s problems”
    - Recent German immigrants pushing for Alliance with Germany
  - British blockade of Germany
    - Enforced by submarines
  - British ship Lusitania sunk by German submarines
    - 100 Americans died
    - British ammunition on board
      - Which is why the boat blew up so quickly
    - United States upset
    - Change in German policy
      - No longer using submarines
  - Germans return to unrestricted submarine warfare
    - British release **Zimmerman Telegram**
      - British cryptologists had deciphered it
        - Waited to show it to Americans to increase impact
      - Letter from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmerman
        - Asking Mexico to join the war against the United States
    - United States declares war on Germany April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1917
- Russia Pulls out
  - Horribly outmatched
  - Germans smuggle Lenin back into Russia
    - Sparks revolution
  - Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
    - March 3, 1918
    - Give up a lot of land in return for peace

## Home Front

### - Total War

- Everyone involved
  - No unemployment
- Political Centralization
  - Government takes over Economy
    - Imports and exports under control
    - Rationing
      - Famine in Germany and Russia
        - 750,000 starving in Germany
      - France has many problems
    - Controlled prices, wages, rent
    - Bond drives
    - Nationalized Resources and transportation
      - Problem – Frances coal and iron fields in German control
    - Media
      - Propaganda
        - Not needed at the beginning because most people were enthusiastic and supported the war
          - As the war goes on they need it more
      - Censorship
        - Journalists who wrote against war were put in war
- Nationalized transportation
  - Priority for war goods
- Mass Conscription
  - For war industries as well
    - Manufacturing conscription



### - Social changes

- Trade unions more accepted
  - Carries over into post-war culture
- Women
  - New jobs opened for women
    - Banking and physical labor
    - Middle class women were shocked at the language and immorality of lower classes in the factories
      - Men sometimes watched their mouths
  - *Women's wages grow*
    - Not equal to men's but better
  - Little security in women's jobs
    - Women stop doing jobs after the war
      - Fired after the war
      - Women's wages cut
  - Long term effects for women
    - **Right to vote:** Britain, Germany, and Austria right after the war
      - US in 1919
      - Social emancipation of middle and upper class women
- Social classes
  - Deaths hit junior officers



- Often aristocrats
- unskilled workers/peasants hit hardest
- Skilled workers often were exempt to train workers in war industries
- Economic impact was uneven
  - Large firms favored for war production
  - Inflation cut purchasing power
    - British workers were the exception
      - Wages increased more than prices
  - Middle class people often could not keep up
    - Pensions and salaries did not keep up

- Germany

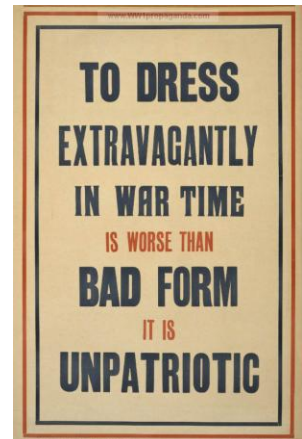
- **Walter Rathenau** organized and controlled the War Raw Material Board
  - Decided whether materials were used for war goods or personal goods
  - Military dominated by von Hindenburg and Ludendorff



- Auxiliary Service Law
  - All males aged 16-60 not in army had to work in a job that helped the war effort

- Britain

- Tried to limit government intervention
  - Rationed food
  - Rent controls
  - Draft not instituted until 1916
- Ministry of Munitions under David Lloyd George
  - Encouraged the production of munitions and limited profits
- **Defense of the Realm Act**
  - A dissenter who spoke up against the war could be arrested as a traitor



- France

- Conflict between military and civilian authorities
  - Civilian control under Clemenceau
- Major problems
  - Germany occupied Northeast of France
    - Coal and steel producing areas
  - Unorganized
    - Horrible at rationing
      - Starvation in rural areas
  - Animal conscription
    - Cows and horses
    - Wondered why agricultural production decreased
- 1/3 of French male population killed or wounded in war

- Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Italy had many more problems

- Not well organized
- Backward economies
- Did not have enough materials
- Problems with minorities
  - Minorities were nationalistic
    - But not to the empire

- Not enthusiastic to the war
    - Especially in Italy
- Problems of Public opinion
  - Opposition to war came from liberals and socialists
    - Liberals wanted peace
      - With no change to borders
      - Calls for peace generally ignored
        - Can be considered sedition
    - Mutinies
      - Especially dangerous
      - Hard to put down mutinies, but eventually suppressed
  - People were not as enthusiastic about not striking anymore
    - After 1916 strikes
  - Germany
    - Berlin arrest of **Karl Liebknecht**
      - Socialist
      - 50,000 workers went on strike
    - Cuts bread rations
      - 200,000 people go on strike
  - Ireland
    - **Sinn Fein**
      - Easter Sunday Uprising
      - Irish Republican Brotherhood and Citizens Army
        - Wanted Irish Independence
        - Took over government buildings
        - British put down rebellion and condemned the leaders
  - Austria
    - Czechs make push for independent Czech state

