

20th Century World History

Book I

War and Peace 1900-1945

Alan Jamieson



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War and Peace, 1900–1945

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The D-Day landings, 1944



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Word-list

alliance:	an agreement between two or more States or governments
autocracy:	a system of government where the ruler has total power
autonomy:	the right of self-government or personal freedom
Bolsheviks:	a section of the Social-Democrat Party in Russia that broke away in 1903 and eventually became the Communist Party of the USSR
capitalism:	an economic system where the ownership of the means of production and property (factories etc) is held by one class of people—the capitalists
coalition:	a government formed by a union of two or more political parties
colonies:	territories which are ruled over by another country or State but do not form part of it
communism:	can mean (1) a system where property is owned by the people as a whole or (2) a revolutionary movement which seeks to achieve this by overthrowing the capitalist system or (3) a system of government like that of the USSR
democracy:	a system of government where people, by voting in elections, have control over the government
dictatorship:	a system where the powers of government are held by one man or a small group without the agreement of the people
elections:	people vote to appoint their representatives to parliament or other bodies
empire:	territories ruled and owned by another country
fascism:	a political system, applied by Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany, where all power was in the hands of one party leader
Gestapo:	the German secret police which discovered and punished opponents of Nazism
government:	(1) how power is organised in a State or (2) the people who hold this power
independent:	free of all ties to another country or a political party
Kaiser:	the ruler (Emperor) of Germany before 1918
mobilize:	to call up the armed forces of a country for war
mutiny:	revolt by members of the armed forces against those in authority
nationalisation:	where the State takes over property (such as the steel industry)
nationalism:	love of one's country; the policy of making a nation strong and independent of other countries
Nazism:	policies of Hitler and the National Socialist party in Germany, 1933–45
parliament:	a law-making body elected by the votes of the people
party:	a group of people who join together for the same political objectives
reparations:	money and goods paid by defeated nations to compensate for war damage caused by them
republic:	a form of government without a king or queen where the Government represents the people
revolution:	a violent rising against the ruling government
socialism:	a system where the economic power of a country is owned and planned by the State and where the principle is not for individual profit but the general welfare of the people
SS:	a military organization in Nazi Germany which began as Hitler's bodyguard and became a special part of the armed forces
terrorists:	people who take to violence and terror to overthrow the government
Tsar:	ruler (Emperor) of Russia before 1917
Zionism:	belief in the movement to establish a Jewish homeland

Introduction

For the Pupils—How to Use this Book

20th Century World History is made up of two books. One book is about the period of history from 1900 to 1945 and includes accounts of the First and Second World Wars. The second book deals with events throughout the world since 1945. Most of the important things that happened in these years are described in the books. They are about world leaders, wars, peace treaties, and men who influenced history such as Karl Marx, Lenin, Hitler, Mao Tse-tung, President Roosevelt and many others.

The books have been designed to help you with your studies and examinations. There is information about the main events, and there are also maps, drawings and pictures to help to explain what happened. Lastly, there are questions for you to answer. The information that you need to answer these questions is mainly

provided in the text, or in the maps and pictures. Sometimes you will have to read more about the topic in another book. The questions that you have to answer are based on questions set by examination Boards such as those that set the CSE exams. You should have a looseleaf file or a notebook in which to write your answers, and to draw the maps and pictures. All the questions that you have to answer appear in boxes and are printed in smaller type like this:

1 Draw a map to show the advance of the German army to Dunkirk.

Words used in the book

Some words used in this book such as 'socialism', 'fascism' and 'colonies' are difficult to understand. On page 4 there is a *word-list* which gives these words with an explanation of their meaning.

Evacuated Children, 1939



1 The Road to War 1900–14



The War Lords. The two men leading a group of German officers did much to bring about the First World War. William II, the Kaiser (ruler) of Germany is in the centre. He is accompanied by Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria whose murder in 1914 sparked off the events that led to war.

The Dual and Triple Alliance

Europe had been preparing for war long before 1914. As the map on p. 7 shows, the German Empire sat at the centre of Europe. Kaiser William II, a boastful, conceited man, wanted Germany to dominate Europe and have an overseas Empire like those of Britain and France. William made no attempt to be friendly to France. The French had been enemies of Germany since 1871 because the Germans had seized Alsace-Lorraine (*see the map on p.36*) and refused to return the provinces to France. Germany had the most powerful army in the world, but the Kaiser was still not satisfied. He wanted a navy too. Admiral Tirpitz was encouraged to plan a new fleet of 40 battleships and 60 cruisers. The big German industrial firms, making huge profits from guns and ships, encouraged the Kaiser to go 'full steam ahead'.

By their actions, the Germans annoyed almost every nation in Europe. Only Austria-Hungary was a friend, an ally, of Germany. Austria-

Hungary was a huge Empire and included within its borders, Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Serbs and many other nationalities, Austria, with a lot of problems, was glad of Germany's help.

“All through my reign, the rulers of Europe have paid no attention to what I say. Soon, with my big navy, they will have to be more respectful.”
Kaiser William II of Germany, in 1901.

The two Empires had been allies since 1879. Unlike Germany, with its massive steel, coal and iron industries, Austria was weak. But together these two countries dominated the rest of Europe. In 1882 Italy joined to make it a Triple Alliance. The Germans were very pleased. They did not want anyone to ally with France, and in the 1890s, France was kept 'isolated'.

The Big Navies

Britain was very annoyed when Germany built a fleet of battleships. A large British navy (equal to any other two navies in the world) was needed to protect the overseas Empire and the trade routes to it. Until 1900, Britain had been friendly towards Germany. But the naval rivalry changed things. In 1906 the famous *HMS Dreadnought*, with twice the fire-power of any other battleship and with 11-inch thick armour plating, was

HMS Iron Duke was one of the new British battleships which fought in the First World War



launched. More new battleships were added to the British fleet and in 1909 a public demand for another eight warships was successful.

The Entente Cordiale

For 30 years the British believed that they did not need any allies. But times changed. In 1902 an alliance was signed with Japan. In 1904 an Entente Cordiale (a friendly agreement) was drawn up, linking Britain and France. It was not a promise to aid each other in war, but it did mean that the two nations would work together against Germany. France, defeated and occupied by the German army in 1871, and then without a friend for 30 years, was very glad to have Britain's friendship. In 1907 Russia, also angry at Germany's ambitions and already an ally of France, also signed an agreement with Britain.

By 1907, therefore, the Great Powers of Europe were divided into two groups. And, as the details of the agreements were kept secret, the leaders of these countries feared that there were plots they did not know about. In this atmosphere of suspicion, it needed only a rifle shot to push them all into a war.

Morocco

The first shots nearly came earlier than 1914. In 1905 Kaiser William paid a visit to Tangier in Morocco—a country which the French had

their eyes on (*see the map*). He made a speech there saying that the Sultan (ruler) should be independent (free) of France. A conference was held which gave France the right to 'police' Morocco. Instead, the French army gradually took over. Annoyed by this setback, William in 1911 sent a warship, the *Panther*, to the port of Agadir. Britain disliked the German show of force and the fleet was given orders to prepare for war.

William did not want to fight in North Africa, so he quickly agreed that France should have a free hand in Morocco. In exchange, Germany was given a useless piece of territory in the Congo, deep in central Africa. The vain Kaiser had been made to look foolish. Very angry, he decided that, next time, Germany would fight.

- 1 Copy or trace the map of Europe into your notebook. With one coloured pencil shade in Germany and her allies (the Central Powers). With a different colour, shade Britain and her allies (the Entente).
- 2 Write a few sentences to explain why Britain was annoyed when Germany built a large navy after 1900.
- 3 Write sentences to explain what happened at:
 - a) Agadir, in 1911
 - b) Sarajevo, in 1914 (*see next page*).

Europe in 1914–15



The Balkans

The Balkans is the name given to the South-East area of Europe. As you can see from the map on the previous page, there were several small states there—Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Rumania and Serbia. Surrounding them were three great empires: *Turkey* wanted to hang on to territories that remained from a once huge empire; *Russia* had helped the small countries to fight against the Turks, and hoped one day to have a Russian port somewhere along the Mediterranean coast—perhaps even the great Turkish city of Constantinople; *Austria-Hungary* contained within its territories people from many different nationalities. One group, the Serbs, had won their independence from Austria. Other Serbs still lived within the borders of Austria and some Serbian revolutionaries helped them to fight against Austrian rule. It was here, in Austria, in the town of Sarajevo, that the shots were fired that set the Great War in motion.

1908

Two provinces, Bosnia and Herzegovina, had once belonged to Turkey. Ever since 1878 they had been governed by Austria. In 1908 the Austrians suddenly annexed (added) them to the Empire. The Russians, Turks and Serbs were all very angry and there was almost a war between these countries and Austria.

1912

The Turkish Empire had been falling apart for years. Britain had seized Egypt; France had taken Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco; and Italy had acquired Tripoli. In the Balkans, Serbia and Bulgaria had become independent. But in 1911 there was a revolution (a violent uprising) inside Turkey, and a new party took over, determined to restore order in what was left of the Turkish Empire.

The Balkan countries took fright and formed a League. In 1912, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria declared war on Turkey. After several battles, the Turks were driven from Europe except for a small area around Adrianople (*see the map*).

1913

The big powers became anxious. What would they get from this war? Nothing. In 1913, an international conference was called and a peace treaty (formal agreement) was signed in London. At this point, the Bulgarians quarrelled with their allies and began the Second Balkan War. Rumania joined in, and the Bulgarian army was crushed. Again the big powers stepped in to force a second peace treaty (the Treaty of Bucharest, 1913).

The Balkan wars made the nations choose their allies. Turkey and Bulgaria sided with Germany. The Serbians' hatred of Austria deepened and they looked to Russia for help.

Sarajevo 1914

Within Serbia were secret groups like the Black Hand, prepared to murder to free all Serbs from Austrian rule. A chance came on 28 June 1914. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was heir to the Austrian throne. He travelled with his wife to visit the town of Sarajevo. Waiting for them were six young Serb revolutionaries armed with pistols and bombs. The first attack with a bomb failed. But as the Archduke's car slowed, Gavrilo Princip jumped forward and shot Ferdinand and his wife Sophia.

Assassination at Sarajevo. The police seize a young man after Archduke Ferdinand has been killed. But was this Gavrilo Princip, the assassin, or another member of the Black Hand gang?



'Is it War?'

At first, the Great Powers did nothing. Then Austria sent a letter to Serbia, making several demands including one that Austrian troops should be allowed into Serbia to find the revolutionary groups. Serbia agreed to everything but this demand. On 26 July, therefore, Austria declared war on Serbia.

Tsar Nicholas II of Russia ordered the Russian army to mobilize (to prepare for war). The danger was spreading. What could Germany do? The answer came quickly. The Kaiser said Russia must stop the mobilization of her army. The Tsar refused. The Germans knew that their army was the best in Europe. Why not knock out the Allies in a sudden campaign? On 1 and 2 August Germany declared war on Russia and France.

What about Britain?

The Germans immediately asked Belgium for permission to cross into France. When the Belgians refused, the German army invaded. Under the terms of the Treaty of London (signed

in 1839), Belgium was recognized as a neutral country. So when Belgium was invaded, Britain declared war. The Kaiser was surprised. 'Just for a scrap of paper (the Treaty of London), Britain is going to make war on a nation that is part of the family', he said. So, by 4 August 1914, the nations of Europe were lined up for war.

Whose Side Were They On?

Germany	France
Austria-Hungary	Britain
Turkey	Japan
Bulgaria (1915)	Belgium
	Serbia
	Italy (1915)

- 4 What were the causes of the First World War? Write out in your notebook a list of the reasons why Europe went to war in 1914.
- 5 Whose fault was it? Do you think that the Kaiser, Serbia, Russia or some other country was to blame? Explain what you think was the most important *single* cause of the war.

Steps to war

- 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand murdered at Sarajevo
- 1912-13 the First and Second Balkan wars
- 1911 crisis at Agadir in Morocco
- 1908 Austria-Hungary takes control in Bosnia
- 1907 agreement between Russia and Britain
- 1904 the Entente Cordiale of France and Britain is signed (France and Russia had been allies since 1893)
- 1902 an Alliance between Japan and Britain
- 1900 the German Navy Law: a new High Seas Fleet is built
- 1889 William II becomes Kaiser and dismisses Bismarck
- 1879 the Dual Alliance is signed by Germany and Austria (in 1882, Italy joined to make it the Triple Alliance)

A delighted Adolf Hitler in the middle of a huge crowd in Munich, Germany, hears that war has been declared on 2 August 1914

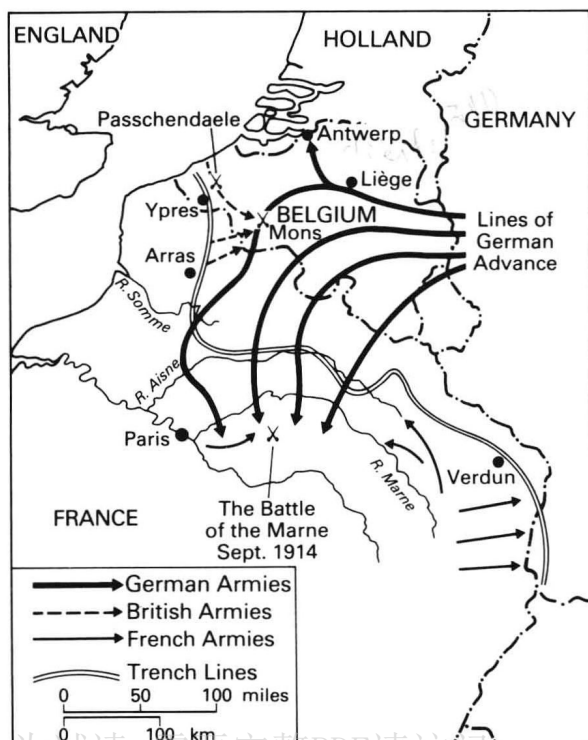


2 The War on the Western Front, 1914–18

The Schlieffen Plan

For years Germany had expected to fight both France and Russia. Count Schlieffen, who had been Chief of Staff, had worked out a plan by which the Germans would be able to knock out the French army in a few weeks and then move against Russia. A large army was to move quickly across the flat Belgian countryside, slip behind the French army, and capture Paris. At first, all went well. Over a million grey-uniformed German soldiers swept through Belgium and into northern France (*see the map*). But then things started to go wrong. The little Belgian army defended the city of Liège for 10 days, and Antwerp held out longer. The British forces ('a contemptible little army', said the Kaiser) defended bravely at the battle of Mons before they turned in retreat. The Russians moved more quickly than the Germans expected and invaded Eastern Germany, Moltke, the German commander, had therefore to send part of his army to fight on the Russian front.

The Western Front, 1914–15



As he went off to war, a young German soldier wrote:

Our helmets and tunics are covered with flowers; there are cheers on every side; as we march, hundreds of people come out to greet us.'

5 August 1914

Happy German soldiers go off to war, 1914



The Battle of the Marne

Even so, the power and the weight of the German advance broke through. Paris was in danger. But the German troops were exhausted. For a month, in blazing sunshine, they had fought and marched their way across Belgium and France. Sometimes they marched 30 miles in a day, with full pack and rifle. When they stopped, they fell to the ground and slept. On 6 September 1914 the French commander, Joffre, decided to attack. Along 150 miles of the river Marne, French soldiers swarmed forward. Over 200 taxis, full of troops, left Paris to join the fighting. More men went by bus. The French stopped the German advance and began to push the enemy soldiers back. The German commander, Moltke, lost contact with his men. The retreat gathered pace and the Germans went back to the river Aisne. Very tired, both armies halted and dug holes in the ground for protection. The Schlieffen Plan, to capture Paris and defeat France, had failed. General Moltke, dismissed the following day, told the Kaiser, 'we have lost the war.'

A German officer's report, just before the battle of the Marne:

6 Our men stagger forward, their faces coated in dust. Their uniforms are in rags. They look like scarecrows.
6 September 1914

Lord Kitchener appeals for men to join the British army



- 1 Draw a sketch map of Belgium and northern France. Mark with thick black lines the German advance to the Marne and retreat to the Aisne.
- 2 Write down three reasons to explain why the Schlieffen Plan failed.
- 3 Why did the confidence and the appearance of German soldiers change between 5 August and 6 September 1914?

The Race to the Sea

The rival commanders wondered what to do next. They could turn north and outflank the enemy troops. Both armies set off, racing each other in parallel lines towards the North Sea Coast. Fierce battles were fought at Arras and Ypres. Men died for a hilltop, a wood, a village. The machine-gun, protected by sandbags or earth mounds, and sunk into a trench, became the king of the battlefield. Thousands of men died in the hail of bullets. At Ypres, one battalion of the Highland Light Infantry started with 900 men: after 8 weeks only 30 men were left.

The Trenches

When the armies reached the sea, they dug in. Soldiers tunnelled into the ground to escape from the shells and bullets. The trench system became more complex. In front of the front line trench were thick hedges of barbed wire; behind were shell-proof dugouts and reserve lines—a

A British trench. The equipment included a hooter (to warn of attacks), a Lewis gun (being cleaned), and a roll of barbed wire



spider's web spreading across the ruined countryside.

With the first winter came the rain, mud and cold. To protect themselves, sandbags, duckboards for their feet, and side panels were fitted to the trenches. But the rain fell without ceasing. Soldiers slept in wet clothes; the rain dripped into their tea; they ate mud with their bully beef. As a verse from a soldier's song put it:

'Raining, raining, raining
Always bloody well raining,
Raining all the morning
And raining all the day.'

Between the two opposing lines of trenches lay No Man's Land, scarred by shell craters and broken trees, No birds sang. Instead, the tac-tac-tac of the deadly machine-gun or the whistle and crash of high explosive shells disturbed men's rest.

- 4 Make a list of other equipment, weapons and defences that were used in this trench.
- 5 Imagine that you are a soldier serving in the British army in the trenches. Write a report to your commanding officer describing the conditions. (Soldiers were not allowed to write home about their experiences.)

The Fight for Verdun

In 1915 the French and British armies attacked. Men were sent 'over the top' into the direct path of rifle and machine-gun fire. When the attack halted, the Germans fought back and recovered the lost ground. At Ypres, poison gas was used for the first time—thousands died or had their lungs severely damaged.

By 1916 the old volunteer armies had been destroyed. More men were needed to fill the gaps. In Britain, men between 18 and 41 (later raised to 50) were called up and these new armies, trained and equipped, were sent to France. The Germans, however, were the first on to the attack. For a week the city of Verdun was shelled. But when the Germans moved in, French soldiers came out of their cellars and dugouts. The Germans tried everything—bayonet charges, naval guns, poison gas—but the French hung on. When the guns fell silent after 10 months of fighting, almost a million men, French and German, had been killed for a few miles of French soil.

The Somme

Sir Douglas Haig, the new British commander-in-chief, massed his troops to strike at the German line along the river Somme. For five days the big guns thundered, warning the Germans of the coming attack. At dawn on 1 July 1916 the new armies went forward. The machine-guns chattered. A mile of German trenches was captured but at a terrible cost. 60 000 British soldiers fell on the first day alone. The battles

continued until the autumn when the rains came, turning the trenches into muddy bogs.

War Poetry

Poets and writers served with the armies in the Great War. Wilfred Gibson, who wrote 'Breakfast', was an ordinary soldier.

'We ate our breakfast lying on our backs
Because the shells were screeching overhead.
I bet a rasher to a loaf of bread
That Hull United would beat Halifax
When Jimmy Stainthorpe played full-back
instead
Of Billy Bradford. Ginger raised his head
And cursed, and took the bet, and dropped
back dead.
We ate our breakfast lying on our backs
Because the shells were screeching overhead.'

- 6 There are several books of war poetry. Find one of these books, and write out a poem that you like.
- 7 Look carefully at the picture of the field dressing station. Write out a list of the different activities that are going on.
- 8 'Forward Joe Soap's army
Marching without fear
With our old commander
Safely in the rear.'
What does this verse (sung to the tune of 'Onward Christian Soldiers') tell us about the soldiers' opinion of the senior officers?

A field dressing station near the British front line



1917

Behind the front lines, the commanders worked out battles by arithmetic. The Allies had 4 million men in France; the Germans had 2½ million. By steadily killing Germans, the war would be won. The two new German generals, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, waited. They had worked out the score and did not dare to attack. More men were lost by attacking than by defending. Around the towns of Ypres, at the village of Passchendaele, at Verdun, and at other places, the Allied armies moved forward. In heavy rain the killing went on—and on. Wounded men sank into the quagmires of No Man's Land to drown in mud. Food tasted of earth; the stench of poisonous mustard gas hung over the battlefields. Tanks were used for the first time but the generals did not understand how the lumbering giants could help to bring about the precious 'breakthrough'. The only ray of hope for the Allies was that the USA entered the war.

In the last year of the war, the German people suffered a great deal from hunger. There were strikes and riots. Letters taken from captured German soldiers told the story:

“ We are knitting you socks of old wool, because they took away my new wool. We have nothing but hunger. There is only black bread, black coffee—everything is black in Bavaria.”

August 1917

“ In Dusseldorf there was a great riot in the streets, and people broke everything because they could get nothing to eat. As if that wasn't enough, we had an air-raid, and we had to stay in the cellar for three hours.”

November 1917

1918

By 1918 Russia had dropped out of the war but American troops were starting to arrive in Europe. The Germans knew that they must strike before the Allies were ready. After several battles, the Germans crossed the French and British trenches and at one stage were only 37 miles from Paris. But by July they were exhausted. Aided by tanks and aircraft, the Allied armies rolled forward. At the end, the collapse came quickly. On 11 November 1918, in a railway carriage in a French forest, the German generals surrendered to the Allied commanders.

A group of captured German officers



- 9 Write a paragraph about each of these battles:
 - a) the Somme;
 - b) Verdun;
 - c) the German offensive of 1918.
- 10 Can you think of any reasons why conditions in Germany were worse in 1918 than in Britain and France?
- 11 Write out a list of reasons why Germany lost the Great War.

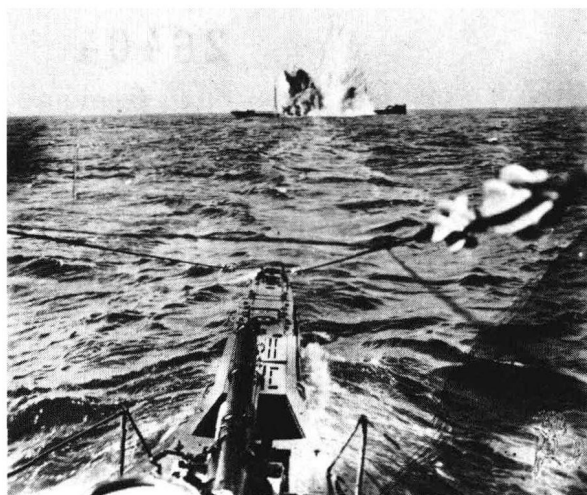
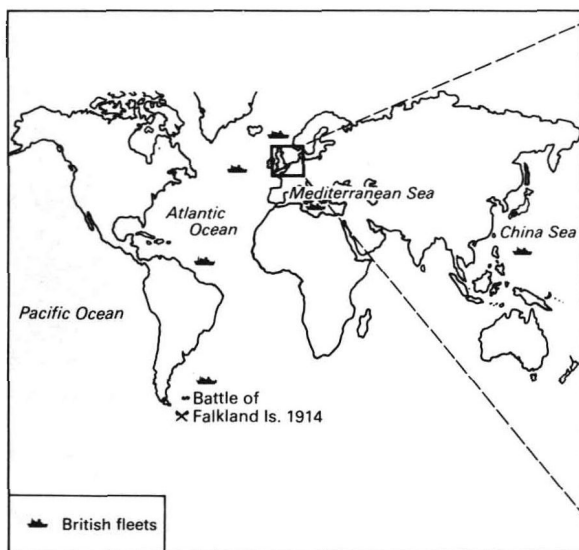
3 The War at Sea

In 1914 Britain had the biggest navy in the world. But the fleets were scattered. The Grand Fleet, based on Scapa Flow (see the map) patrolled the North Sea and the Atlantic. The Channel Fleet guarded the French coast. In addition, there were fleets in the Mediterranean, in the China Sea, in the Pacific and in the South Atlantic.

The British fleet had many duties. It had to be ready to deal with the German High Seas Fleet or with lone raiders from it; protect convoys; chase submarines; ferry troops to France and other battle areas, and guard British coastal towns. The main task of the British, however, was to strangle German overseas trade. This brought terrible food shortages to the German people and eventually helped to win the war for the Allies.

The Germans concentrated all their efforts on protecting their main fleet, and later in the war, on submarines. By sinking hundreds of merchant ships each month, the German U-boats (submarines) severely damaged British trade.

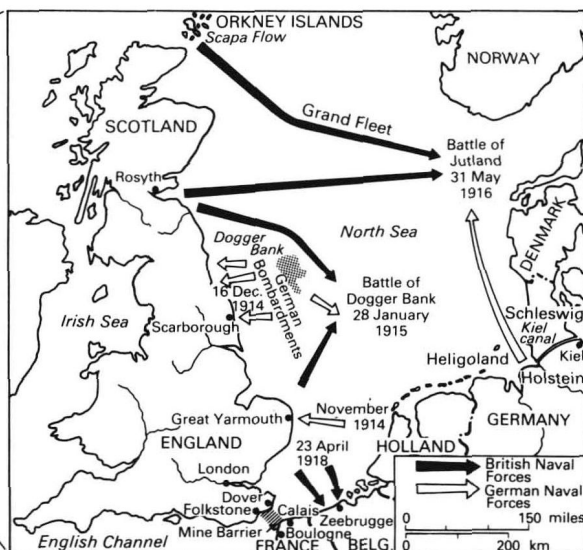
The war in the North Sea, 1914–18



A British merchant ship is torpedoed by a German submarine

The first major battle took place in August 1914 near the island of Heligoland. Admiral Beatty pursued German destroyers towards their coast. The Germans lost three cruisers and a destroyer in the fighting, but learned a lesson—to protect their harbours with mines and submarines. German U-boats slipped out to lay mines near the British coast and to shell towns such as Scarborough and Yarmouth.

When the war began, Germany had naval squadrons in distant seas. One of them, in the Pacific, first destroyed a small British squadron before it was caught and blown to pieces at the Falkland Islands. The German cruiser *Emden* sank ships in the Pacific before it, too, was cornered and destroyed.



The German Fleet

The German navy marked up some successes in the war. In 1914 a submarine torpedoed and sank a British cruiser. Two other cruisers stopped to pick up survivors and were themselves sunk. One U-boat thus sank three ships and 800 men. Submarines laid mines, and a battleship, *Audacious*, struck one and sank.

In January 1915 Admiral Beatty surprised a German fleet in the North Sea. In a running battle the Germans showed the accuracy of their guns. In May 1915 the *Lusitania*, an unarmed passenger ship, was sunk by a U-boat with the loss of over 1100 people. This action horrified people in Britain and the USA.

The Battle of Jutland

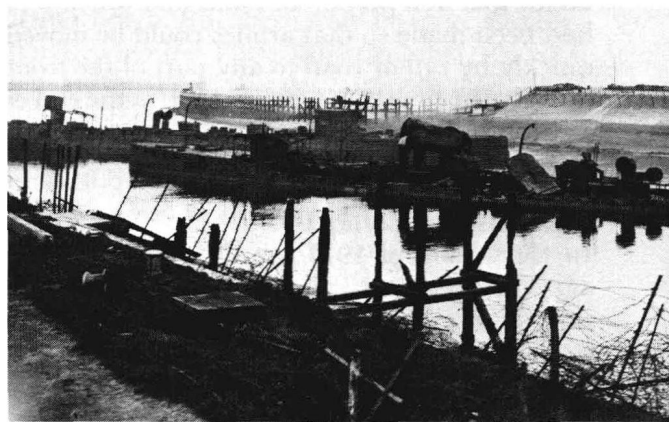
The only battle of any real importance took place at Jutland, off the Danish coast on 31 May 1916. The German High Seas Fleet came out to challenge the British. In a short, violent battle the Royal Navy suffered two blows straightaway. When a battle cruiser was struck by shells, the ship exploded and sank, taking its crew with it. Another salvo struck the battleship *Queen Mary* which went up in flames and sank with 1200 men. Beatty turned aside and said, 'there seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today'. As dusk fell, the German ships ran for their harbours. The British had lost more ships (14) than the Germans (11) but because the High Seas Fleet never came out again, the British claimed the victory.

In April 1917, 335 Allied ships were sunk by German submarines: Britain had only eight weeks' supply of food. To stop the heavy losses, ships sailed in convoy; nets were laid across the Channel and Admiral Keyes led an attack on Zeebrugge where the U-boats had their lairs (see map). Ships were sunk at the entrance to the harbour.

When the USA entered the war at the end of 1917, things changed. American warships protected convoys and joined in the patrols in the North Sea. At the end of the war, 74 German ships steamed into Scapa Flow to surrender. After rusting at anchor for 10 months, the German admiral scuttled (destroyed and sunk) the whole of his fleet.



The badly damaged German cruiser, *Seydlitz*, lies at the dockside after the battle of Jutland, 1916



British ships deliberately sunk at the entrance to Zeebrugge harbour, although U-boats could still squeeze past, 1918

- 1 Draw a picture of a battleship or another warship of the Great War.
- 2 Draw a sketch-map to show the movements of the British and German fleets in the North Sea during the war.
- 3 Write out a list of the jobs that the Royal Navy had to do during the war.
- 4 Find out more about the battle of Jutland or one of the other sea battles of the war. Write a short account of it.
- 5 Germany came near to winning the war by using submarines. Describe how the British fought back against the U-boat peril.

4 The War in Eastern Europe

On the Russian Front

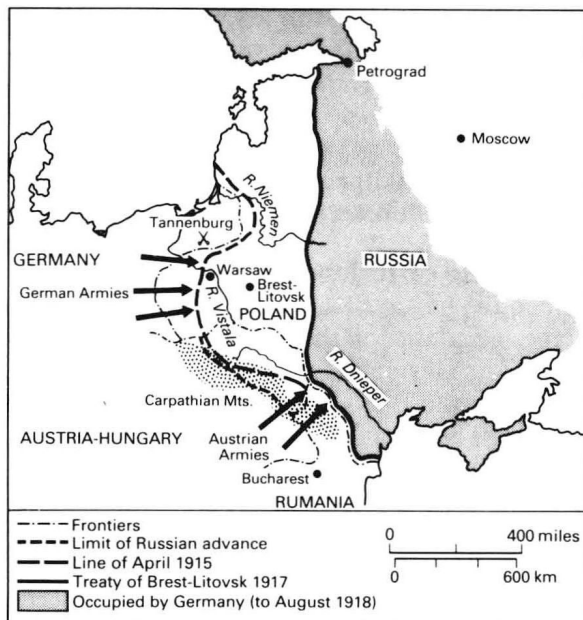
In August 1914, while the Germans were marching through Belgium, the Russian 'steamroller'—millions of men in tightly-packed armies—rolled forward into eastern Germany. The Russians reached Tannenberg (see the map) where the Germans (despite being outnumbered 2 to 1) defeated the Russian army.

The truth was that Russia was weak. Russian rifles and artillery guns were inferior to German equipment. German officers were better trained and more daring; their troops were more determined and fiercer than the Russians. The Tsar had neglected his army (only 679 vehicles for the whole of his forces in 1914). The roads were often pitted with holes. Germany, on the other hand, was well prepared. Plans and timetables had been made so that armies could be moved quickly by rail or road to any part of the front line. By the time that winter came, at the end of 1914, the Russians had already been forced to retreat.

The Russian Collapse

In the spring of 1915 the Germans attacked again. Only one Russian soldier in three had a rifle. (Those who did not waited until they could pick up a rifle from a dead man.) Artillery guns were rationed to four shells a day. But every time the Germans won a battle, another Russian army appeared out of the forests. By the spring of 1916 the Germans had advanced 200 miles, and the Austrians, fighting in the south (see the map) had crossed the Carpathian Mountains. But the Russian bear was not finished yet. In 1916 the Germans were caught by surprise and forced to retreat (see the *Punch* cartoon). But food and ammunition was short. As the bitter winter of 1916 came on and bread became scarce, the Russian troops left the front in their thousands. In 1917 a revolution in Russia overthrew Tsar Nicholas II, and by the time the peace treaty was signed at Brest-Litovsk, the Germans were deep inside Russia (see the map). Germany took over vast areas of Russia until

the end of the war when the whole map of eastern Europe was altered.



The German advance into Russia 1914-18



"THE STEAM-ROLLER."

AUSTRIA: "I SAY, YOU KNOW, YOU'RE EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMIT!"