

Lesson #68 U.S. History

The Great War 1914

Balkans (Powder Keg)

War started with the killing of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria/Hungary by a Serbian (a member of the Black Hand) at Sarajevo – Serbia/Bosnian – Gaurilo Princip

This date was the anniversary of the defeat of Serbs by Turks in 1389 A.D. Battle of Kosovo - Austria demands on Serbia caused the following events July 23, 1914 Punish and complete surrender.

Sarajevo – Franz Joseph sure of victory waited a month to issue ultimatum

1. stop anti-Austrian groups
2. allow Austria to check
3. 48 hours
4. or invade

Peter agreed to 1,2, & 3 of the ultimatum

Serbia mobilization – Reply

Russia Mobilization start July 30. Fast

Austria – German “Blank Check” Mobilized

Germany August 1 declared war on Russia – August 2 asked Belgium for open road and Belgium refused – August 3 War on France

Low Countries

Belgium treaty with all parties to protect.

Kaiser called Treaty a “Scrap of paper” - War guilt

England enter war for Belgium “...a nation not a road map.”

Italy – stayed out played both sides

Turkey would join Germany – Russian!

Early in the war all sides tried to explain why they went to war:

 Germans – White Book on August 3, 1915

 British – Blue Book on August 5, 1915

 France – Yellow Book

 Russia – Orange Book in late September 1915

 Belgians – Grey Book in October 1915

 Austrians – Red Book – late 1915

Western front 600 miles

Belgium slowed down German drive.

Russia mobilized fast – Germany reacts and sent 100,000 men to the east.

 “Russian Steam Roller”

Germans changed plan and turned to soon on Paris.

1914 Battle of the Marine taxicab army saved Paris -troops rush to front to hit German line that turned to soon.

Trench Warfare starts: 100 yards at times in “No Man’s Land” “over the top” =Attack

Routine “dull” day

1. Stand-to before dawn in case of attack
2. Breakfast
3. Quite time = jobs or rest
4. Stand- to at “dusk” once more
5. Dinner and Rum
6. Sentries and raids

Trench system:

Forward Zone = light garrison to delay attack and fragment attack

Battle Zone = 1-2 miles back / 2,000 to 3,000 yards deep / 2/3 of guns and reserves

Rear Zone = 4-8 miles back



French not willing to give an inch of land to Germans –PRIDE -temporary trenches
British not willing to give land for fear of being cut off at sea – temporary trenches
Germans came to stay and built trenches to stay

November 10, 1914

The German Fourth Army order into battle at Langemarck a hopeless battle. The young men of the 26th Reserve Corp were beaten back. Then over the battlefield they heard one voice singing *Deutschland, Deutschland, Uber alles* which was picked up by others as they returned to attack the British line once more. The field was litter with dead and dying men with calls for “Kamerad” as the men attack again. The song was again picked up by the young men and they rushed into the lead teeth of British guns.

General Joffre – war of “attrition” wear down the enemy. He never went to the front for he could not stand the death. He lacked curiosity and imagination and could not communicate beyond headquarters by phone. At the end of the battle - he spoke of “victory in defeat”.

Day’s activity:

- Up late morning
- Sign papers at 11:00 a.m.
- Lunch at 12:00
- Walk in forest
- Afternoon orders 17:00
- Dinner at 19:00
- Did not allow want telephone

British Blockade

Neutrals & Contraband

British armed merchant ships

Cunard Shipping Lines on May 12, 1913 special shell racks installed along with revolving gun-rings mounted on rear deck for 2 six-inch guns and 4 six-inch guns along the sides.

August 8, 1914 the guns were installed, and the ship was registered as an Armed Auxiliary Cruiser with Admiralty

In 1914 Winston Churchill wrote to the Board of Trade “We need to entangle neutral ships with German submarines, and the ships we most need to involve are the Americans” British ships were ordered to sail under neutral flags in British waters. The Cunard Line flew under the American flag.

December 23, 1914 British warships told to fire on U-boats under a “White Flag”

Christmas Truce Germans placed Christmas trees up in their trenches and sang carols. These were picked up by the other side. Soon both armies were meeting in “no man’s”. Order came down from both side to end. Men were transferred and disciplined, and any further active would result in executions.

Eastern Front 1914

Russia only had 6 double railroad tracks lines and two single lines running west – this allowed 200 trains per day – yet bridges and rail beds were poor, and failure was common. Signal boxes were at a greater distance than German boxes. The idea was to limit the Germany invasion mobility. Russia had available 214,000 railroad wagons in 1914.

The Germans learn during the American Civil War the effectiveness of railroad for movement of troops. Small German stations had long platforms for fast troop boarding and unloading.

Battle of Tannenberg 300,000 Russians killed, wounded, or missing
80% of troops illiterate left few reminiscences

Russian had called up 15,000,000 men caused a slowdown in industry, agriculture, and transportation. This created poor supplies, lack of weapons, organization, coordination of movement, communications,

Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff sent east with 100,000 more men out numbered 4 to 1. Ludendorff was the one the General Staff wanted to send, but he was not a high enough rank. Hindenburg was chosen for he would allow Ludendorff to run the show. Hindenburg claimed victory and became national hero.

Tannenberg was the site of Polish victory over Prussians in 1410 – Germans saw 1914 as a reclaiming a lost. Two Russian Armies were taken out of action one at a time. There were a 100,000 Russian POW’s taken in battle

Battle of Lodz was the highwater mark for Russian Army 1914 December. Poor leadership was the reason for failure to follow up victory.

Learning as you go War:

The war started with all parties believing it would be over by Christmas. One British officer boarded the troop ship with two attendants one for his person and one for his horse.

Both side enter the war with plans for last war.

French

General Petain = cautious “cannon conquers, infantry occupiers”

Attack – Attack – Attack

French orders of Day “You have a mission of sacrifice...it is your duty to fall.”

France started war with artillery of 4 rounds per day per artillery gun

France had 2,000 rounds per day

Would not give up land for an advantage on battle field

British

High command did not think artillery needed in attack

British officers were shaped by colonial war when decisive results were gained with little output and casualties from weaker forces.

Class War: England middle class was 23% of population

The upper class 10% population owned 92% of the wealth

Victorian values of accepted class inheritance – unquestioning of superiors – mute acceptance of war conditions and incompetence of leaders

Germans

Germans give land for advantage in battle/built better trench system

Old Guard saw cavalry as elite force and ended all war games with a mass cavalry charge.

Germany had 3,000 rounds per day the artillery guns

German caste system (“Junker” from Teutonic Knights) – Ludendorff of humble origins had to wait before the war the Kaiser always won the war games

The machine gun numbers were increased as the war went on many at the started viewed the machine gun as a waste of bullets.

As the war went on the killing became more effective.

The British and propaganda turned Germany into savage brutes. Most stories were fake.

“Hun’s” of the Past

One British Officer went to war with luggage and a valet for himself and one for his horse.

This was to be a short war!