

THE GREAT WAR

History is the study of the past of humankind. By collecting and researching sources we try to reconstruct the past, because the past can't be directly observed. Important in the study of history is **causation** (= explaining events by looking at the reasons for this event) and **consequences**. Within history we use:

Direct causes: The reason why an event takes place and that triggers that event (the spark). For every event there is only once direct cause (in Dutch we call this 'aanleiding').

Indirect causes: The reason why an even takes place. An indirect cause has no influence on when an event takes place, it only makes sure the circumstance is right.

WARFARE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the nineteenth century the way wars were fought were changed dramatically. At the beginning of the century warfare was seen as heroic. Professional armies fought on the battlefield and a victory or loss was clear for all. Due to industrialization the war changed to a **total war** (= a war in which the whole of society was involved in the war). More and more the population was victim of the war or was influenced by what happened in the war. An important factor of this was the introduction of **conscription armies** (= armies consisting of young male citizens who had to join the army as a duty). Because of the conscription armies everybody knew someone in the army. Also, the armies became bigger and needed more equipment which had to be produced in the factories of the army. Furthermore, new technologies made warfare easier so even untrained soldiers could fight (and die).

CHARACTERISTICS OF WARFARE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Importance of economy	The economy determined the military force of a country. If a country was wealthy and had a lot of factories it could produce weapons quickly and cheaper.
Importance of technology	New weapons could influence the battle because they could be used to kill more men in a shorter amount of time. Also the element of surprise would be beneficial. Due to new weapons the method of fighting would change.
Importance of leadership	No longer soldiers would be professionals, but rather normal citizens. This meant that political leaders had to convince the normal citizens before they would accept a war (after all who would risk the lives of their own sons?).
Importance of strategy and tactics	Because the way of fighting changed new ideas formed about warfare. The objectives of warfare changed. Strategy (= long-term goals within a war) and tactics (= manner on which the goals are realized) became important. With a successful strategy of tactic a war could be won.
Importance of the public opinion	Because the populace became an objective in the war (by killing the enemy's citizens he could no longer continue a war), people became more involved. Therefore the support of the populace was important for military and political. To get support propaganda (= political marketing) was evolved.

THE GREAT WAR

The Great War, or the First World War, broke out in 1914. At first it seemed only a minor problem in a specific region of Europe. To understand this war we need to look at the indirect causes:

Nationalism: At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a positive feeling in Europe. Every country tried to become more important than the others and get more influence in the world. This positive feeling was generally based on the benefits of the industrialization: more products became available and problems were solved with new inventions. The quality of living was raised.

Germany: Germany was a new country in the middle of Europe. It was founded as an empire after the Franco-Prussian war against France was won. The Germans did not own any colonies, but saw itself as a very important and influential country. They wanted to get more influence in the world (colonies / imperialism).

France: France was one of the old powers in Europe. After the fall of Napoleon its influence weakened and was nearly gone after the Franco-Prussian War in which it lost Alsace Lorraine. It tried to maintain influence.

Russia: Russia was only partly European. It did not have an ice-free harbor so getting colonies was difficult. However it tried to get more land in Asia. It also saw itself as the protector of the Slavic people on the Balkan (southeastern Europe).

Great Britain: Great Britain was the most influential country in the world. It owned about a quarter of the globe and had a total populace of 4 million people. It own strategic colonies (such a Suezcanal). Although it was a big player in the world it tried to keep to itself.

Austria Hungary: Also called the Dual Monarchy. It was a supranational state (several nations were combined in one country). It fought many wars on the Balkan to get influence.

Alliances: Every country was trying to get more influence. To protect itself from attacks by other countries alliances were formed.

Triple entente: Russia, Great Britain and France.

Tripe alliance: Germany, Austria Hungary (and Italy).

SARAJEVO

The direct cause for the Great War was the assassination of archduke Franz-Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria Hungary in Sarajevo. Franz-Ferdinand visited the capital of Bosnia on a military visit. He was shot by a Bosnian Serb, who wanted his country to form one a country with Serbia, rather than Austria Hungary.

Austria Hungary thought that Serbia was behind the attack and demanded in an ultimatum that it was involved in the research of the assassination. Serbia received support of Russia, Austria Hungary of Germany. It came to a declaration of war. Because Germany supported Austria Hungary it knew a war would mean a conflict with Russia. Therefore Germany declared war on Russia, and this automatically meant war with France. Germany had made a plan about what to do in such a case. In the Von Schlieffenplan an quick attack on France was anticipated so France would be defeated before Russia was able to attack (Russia was a poor country so Germany thought it had enough time to attack France). Because France had a defensive line all along the frontier with Germany, the German forces would swipec through Belgium. By attacking Belgium the Germans angered Great Britain, which also became involved.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GREAT WAR

First war that can be called world war	There was fighting all over the world because all European countries and their colonies were involved. Also Russia and the United States were involved.
Industrial war	New weapons could be invented and produced on a larger scale.
Trench warfare	Due to the large firepower of the armies soldiers had to protect themselves by digging trenches (= ditches in the earth). A whole network of trenches was formed with in between No Man's Land.
More propaganda	New methods of communication meant new ways to influence your own population.
Better medical care	New inventions in medical science allowed more soldiers to be helped with care for their injuries.
Total war	The whole of society of a country became target of the enemy. Everybody was involved with the war, by economy (making weapons for instance) or by shortages.

AFTER THE WAR

For four years the war waged all over the World, but no victor could be appointed. In 1917 Russia left the war and was replaced on Allied side by the United States. Due to new enemy soldiers and shortage in Germany, Germany had to concede the war. It had to sign the Treaty of Versailles (1919) in which stern conditions were made:

- ◆ Germany lost territories (all colonies, Alsace Lorraine).
- ◆ For the next 15 years the Sare would be supervised by the League of Nations. The revenue of coal from the Sare was given to France.
- ◆ German military was drastically cut. Germany had to allow the demilitarization of the Rhineland: no German troops were allowed there. The number of troops was not allowed to exceed 100000 professional soldiers. U-boats and an Air Force were strictly prohibited and the fleet could contain no more than 6 war ships. It was forbidden for the German industries to produce heavy weaponry.
- ◆ The last condition was that Germany was to pay reparations to France and Belgium because these two countries had suffered most from the war. The amount was set to 132 billion gold mark.

The Germans called it the Versailles Dictate (they were forced to meet its obligations). Because of its harsh conditions the German people grew bitter.