

World War 1



Great War

Introduction

World War I, also known as the First World War, was a global war centered in Europe that began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918. In America it was called the European War. More than 9 million combatants were killed. It was one of the deadliest conflicts in history, paving the way for major political changes, including revolutions in many of the nations involved. The war drew in all the world's economic great powers. Which were assembled in two opposing alliances: the Allies (based on the Triple Entente of the United Kingdom, France and the Russian Empire) and the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Although Italy had also been a member of the Triple Alliance alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary, it did not join the Central Powers, as Austria-Hungary had taken the offensive against the terms of the alliance. These alliances were both reorganized and expanded as more nations entered the war: Italy, Japan and the United States joined the Allies, and the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria the Central Powers. Ultimately, more than 70 million military personnel, including 60 million Europeans, were mobilized in one of the largest wars in history.



Trench life

Trenches were long, narrow ditches dug into the ground where soldiers lived all day and night. There were many lines of German trenches on one side and many lines of Allied trenches on the other. In the middle, was No Man's Land, so-called because it did not belong to either army. Soldiers crossed No Man's Land when they wanted to attack the other side.



Soldiers in the trenches did not get much sleep. When they did, it was in the afternoon during daylight and at night only for an hour at a time. They were woken up at different times, either to complete one of their daily chores or to fight. During rest time, they wrote letters and sometimes played card games. The daily work they did is one third of men were on guard duty at any one time, another one third of men collected food, water, letters, ammunition, first aid and so on. Finally other one third of the men repaired the trenches.

The trenches could be very muddy and smelly. There were many dead bodies buried nearby and the latrines (toilets) sometimes overflowed into the trenches. Millions of rats infested the trenches and some grew as big as cats. There was also a big problem with lice that tormented the soldiers on a daily basis. The latrine was a board with a hole in it, laid over a pit.



Duckboards were used to cover the slippery, muddy trench floor. A periscope was useful for peering over the top of the parapet (top of the trench) to spy on the enemy. Sandbags were used to protect soldiers from bullets and bombs. The firestep was a raised step where soldiers stood to fire over the parapet. The dugout was a place for resting and sheltering for the soldiers.



Many soldiers had suffered from ill health- ulcers, boils, rashes, pneumonia, tuberculosis, dysentery and bronchitis. Spending days on one knee- deep in water could lead to trench foot, a painful condition where the foot swells up and develops open sores.



All soldiers were infested with lice, which are small insects which feed off blood. Some men shaved off their entire heads to avoid a dreaded nit infestation. Lice could also cause Trench fever, a blood bone infection caused by bacterium known as Bartonella Quintana. Frogs also made their way into the trenches and they were normally found in shell holes filled with water. They thrived in the base of the trenches and could cause a man to slip and fall. Normally this wouldn't be a problem, but if a fellow soldier just happened to be sharpening his bayonet and you slipped on a frog and fell on him, you could end up with a nasty case of stabbing.

Weapons

World War I weapons consisted of various types of weapons standardised and improved over the preceding period together with some newly developed types using innovative technology and a number of improvised weapons used in trench warfare. Military technology led to important innovations in weaponry, grenades, poison gas, and artillery, along with the submarine, warplane and the tank.



FIRST WORLD WAR



Modern grenades were by the British. Their version was the long-handed impact detonating grenade, which the French later improved upon with an antiquated ball grenade. The major grenade used by the German army was the impact-detonating 'discus' bomb and the M1913 black powder baller Kugel grenade with a friction-ignited time fuse. British forces however mainly used a different style of hand explosive that was at times more difficult to use, yet still useful in battle. This was the 'jam tin' which consisted of a tin filled with dynamite or cotton packed round with scrap metal or stones. To ignite, at the top of the tin there was a Bickfords fuse connecting the detonator, which was lit by either a cigar, or a second person. Hand grenades were being used and improved throughout the war, each side making attempts at more successful weapons.

Infantry weapons used by major powers were mainly bolt action rifles, capable of firing ten or more rounds per minute. German soldiers carried 7.92mm Gewehr 98Mauser rifles, which was good for accuracy and speed. The British carried the famous Lee-Enfield rifle. Rifles with telescopic sights were used for snipers, which were first used by the Germans. Machine guns were also used by the large powers; a favourite was the Maxim gun, created by Hiram Maxim, a fully automatic weapon, with a high volume of concentrated fire and its German adoption MG 08. The machine gun was **used** in stationary battle but was not practical for easy movement through battlefields, and was therefore often dragged or disarmed and carried. Near the end of the war more mobile and lightweight automatic firearms had been deployed by both sides, such as the MP 18 submachine gun and Lewis Gun.



The development of tanks in World War I was a response to the stalemate that trench warfare had created on the Western Front. In Great Britain, an initial vehicle, nicknamed Little Willie, was constructed at William Foster & Co, during August and September, 1915. The Germans, on the other hand, began development only in response to the appearance of Allied tanks on the battlefield. Whilst the Allies manufactured several thousand tanks during the War, Germany deployed only 20 of her own.



A bayonet (from French *baïonnette*) is a knife, sword, or spike-shaped weapon designed to fit in, on, over or underneath the muzzle of a rifle, musket or similar weapon, turning the gun into a spear. However, knife-shaped bayonets—when not fixed to a gun barrel—have long been utilized by soldiers in the field as general purpose cutting implements.



Propaganda



In World War I, British propaganda took various forms, including pictures, literature and film. Britain also placed significant emphasis on atrocity propaganda as a way of mobilizing public opinion against Germany. During most of the war, responsibility for propaganda was divided between various agencies, resulting in a lack of coordination. When the war finished, almost all of the propaganda machinery was dismantled. In Germany, military officials such as Ludendorff suggested that British propaganda had been instrumental in their defeat. Adolf Hitler echoed this view, and the Nazis later used many British propaganda techniques during their time in power.

Recruitment was a central theme of domestic propaganda until the introduction of conscription in January 1916. The most common theme for recruitment posters was patriotism, which evolved into appeals for people to do their 'fair share'. Among the most famous of the posters used in the British Army recruitment campaign of World War I were the "Lord Kitchener Wants You" posters, which depicted Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener above the words "WANTS YOU".



Britain's portrayal of Germany

WWI Poetry

For the Fallen

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables at home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day- time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Poem written by: Robert Lawrence Binyon

By
Usma
Shah