

S4 World War I

World War I (WWI or WW1), also called the First World War, began on July 28, 1914 and lasted until November 11, 1918. Most of the fighting was in Europe, but soldiers from many other countries took part, and it changed the colonial empires of the European powers. Before World War II began in 1939, World War I was called the Great War or the World War. 135 countries took part in World War I, and nearly 10 million people died while fighting.

Before the war, European countries had formed alliances with each other to protect themselves. However, by doing this they had divided themselves into two groups. When Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated on 28 June 1914, Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia and declared war on them. Serbia's ally Russia then declared war on Austria-Hungary. This set off a chain of events in which the two groups of countries declared war on each other. The two sides were the Allied Powers (mainly Russia, France, and the British Empire) and the Central Powers (mainly Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire).

There was fighting in many different areas (fronts). The French and British fought the Germans on the Western Front in France and Belgium. Germany had tried to defeat France quickly, but were stopped in the First Battle of the Marne. After that, most of the fighting here was trench warfare. The Russians fought the Germans and Austro-Hungarians on the Eastern Front in Central and Eastern Europe. Fighting here was not

trench warfare but mobile warfare. The other main areas of fighting were in the Middle East, in the Gallipoli region of Turkey and between Italy and Austria-Hungary. Fighting also took place in Africa, China, and at sea as well as in the air. World War I was the first major war where tanks, airplanes, and submarines (or U-boats) were important weapons.

In 1917, the Russians had a revolution, which led to them leaving the war in March 1918. Also, in 1917, the United States entered the war, though it took a year for their main army to arrive. In the gap between when the Russians left and the Americans arrived, the Germans launched a huge attack in March 1918 to try to win the war, but it was not enough. In August-November 1918, the Allied Powers won a big victory against the Germans in the Hundred Days Offensive. Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire then agreed to stop fighting. The German government collapsed, and a new government agreed to end the war on November 11.

The war was ended by the signing of many different treaties, the most important being the Treaty of Versailles. It also led to the creation of the League of Nations, which was meant to prevent wars. People were shocked by the size of the war, how many people it killed and how much damage it caused. They hoped it would be the war to end all wars. Instead, it led to another, larger world war 21 years later.