World Wars - History Form 4 Notes

World War One

World War I or the First World War was a war fought by many countries, which is why it is called a "world" war. It started in 1914 and ended in 1918. 135 countries took part in World War I, and more than 15,000,000 people died in the war.

World War One - Causes

The First World War, which began in August 1914, was directly triggered by the assassination of the Austrian archduke, Franz Ferdinand and his wife, on 28 June 1914 by Bosnian revolutionary, Gavrilo Princip. This event was, however, simply the trigger that set off declarations of war.

The actual causes of the war were**;**

1)The System of Alliances

An alliance is an agreement made between two or more countries to give each other help if it is needed. A number of alliances had been signed by countries between the years 1879 and 1914. For example, the Dual Alliance signed by Germany with Austria Hungary in 1879 and later joined by Italy in 1882 to become the triple Alliance.

This system led to the division of Europe into two antagonistic power blocs. It led to fear and suspicion between nations. It transformed local disputes into a general conflict. The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy were directly opposed by the Entente powers of France and Russia and later included Great Britain to form the Triple Entente in 1907.

2) Imperialism

Imperialism is when a country takes over new lands or countries and makes them subject to their rule. By 1900, the British Empire extended over five continents and France had control of large areas of Africa. With the rise of industrialism, countries needed new markets. The amount of lands 'owned' by Britain and France increased their rivalry with Germany who had entered the scramble to acquire colonies late and only had small areas of Africa.

3) Economic rivalry

According to Marxism, the highest form of capitalism would ultimately lead to an inevitable war through economic rivalry. In the late 19th century, all European powers had industrialized or had started.

Therefore, to match the needs of economy and industry, nations sought to expand their territory through imperialism in order to gain raw materials and markets. This then led to the clash of imperial interest between nations and ultimately led to conflict and war.

4) Militarism

Militarism means that the army and military forces are given a high profile by the government. The growing European divide had led to an arms race between the main countries. The armies of both France and Germany had more than doubled between 1870 and 1914 and there was fierce competition between Britain and Germany for mastery of the seas.

The British had introduced the 'Dreadnought', an effective battleship, in 1906. The Germans soon followed suit introducing their own battle-ships. The German, Von Schlieffen also drew up a plan of action that involved attacking France through Belgium if Russia made an attack on Germany.

5) Nationalism

Nationalism means being a strong supporter of the rights and interests of one's country. The Congress of Vienna, held after Napoleon's exile to Elba, aimed to sort out problems in Europe. Delegates from Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia decided upon a new Europe that left both Germany and Italy as divided states. Strong nationalist elements led to the re-unification of Italy in 1861 and Germany in 1871.

The settlement at the end of the Franco-Prussian war left France angry at the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany and keen to regain their lost territory. Large areas of both Austria-Hungary and Serbia were home to differing nationalist groups, all of whom wanted freedom from the states in which they lived.

6) Moroccan Crisis

In 1904 Morocco had been given to France by Britain, but the Moroccans wanted their independence. In 1905, Germany announced her support for Moroccan independence. War was narrowly avoided by a conference which allowed France to retain possession of Morocco.

However, in 1911, the Germans were again protesting against French possession of Morocco. Britain supported France and Germany was persuaded to back down for part of French Congo.

7) Bosnian Crisis

In 1908, Austria-Hungary took over the former Turkish province of Bosnia. This angered Serbians who felt the province should be theirs. Serbia threatened Austria Hungary with war. Russia, allied to Serbia, mobilized its forces. Germany, allied to Austria-Hungary mobilized its forces and prepared to threaten Russia. War was avoided when Russia backed down.

8) The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

A secret society called Ujedinjenje Ili Smrt, ('Union or Death') or Black Hand was founded in Belgrade, an outgrowth of an older Serb nationalist group: Narodna Odbrana. When it was learned that the Heir-Apparent to the Austrian throne, Franz Ferdinand, was scheduled to visit Sarajevo in June of 1914, the Black Hand decided to assassinate him.

Three young Bosnians were recruited, trained and equipped: Gavrilo Princip, Nedjelko Cabrinovic and Trifko Grabez. The murders of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie brought Austro-Serbian tensions to a head. As Vienna took a hard line against Serbia, the other powers in Europe took sides. The wheels of war gained speed. The Crisis of July turned into world war, just over thirty days after Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were shot.

Special Coverage

The First Moroccan Crisis

The First Moroccan Crisis clearly indicated that Germany's relation with France was at best fragile. In 1905