

Brief History of the World's Greatest Conflict

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Conflict Begun in Spirit of Aggression and Lust for Conquest, Carried On with Brutality Unknown for a Thousand Years, Ends in Abject Submission.

The great war is over. A conflict which has shaken the world for more than four years has ended in the triumph of democracy and civilization over autocracy and barbarism. Its results will be incalculable benefit to mankind. If the statesmen of to-day can guard against the recurrence of any similar cataclysm and assure lasting peace among the nations it will be worth all it has cost in blood and treasure.

One cannot yet visualize the effects of the victory of right over might. The peace settlements will take a long time and many of the problems presented, especially in the East, are very complex. It is too early to look forward to what may be accomplished, and the task of looking backward over the campaigns of the last four years is by no means easy. For years historians will be engaged in wordy battles over the conflicts in the field and therefore only the briefest view, limited to facts and figures, can be given now.

Looking broadly at the military operations one may classify them as western, Franco-Belgian; southern, or Italian; eastern, or Russian; the Balkan, Asiatic, African and naval campaigns. The entry of the United States in the war on all fronts was a major influence in the final decision and this country will undoubtedly have a large share in framing the conditions of peace. The western front from the beginning has been the vital field of the struggle, although the original impulse to war arose in the east, in a Balkan question, growing out of Pan-German ambition in the direction of the Orient.

The Western Front.

Incited by Germany, Austria, on July 6, 1914, declared war on Serbia, thereby inaugurating the most tragic drama of human history. Declarations followed fast throughout August. Luxembourg was overrun by the Germans in a day and Belgium invaded, the Huns meeting their first resistance from the forts of Liege, which held up their advance several days. After the last fell the Germans moved across Belgium in an irresistible flood, occupying Brussels on August 20, and burning Louvain on August 25.

British troops, hurriedly landed, tried to oppose them, but were brushed aside, and the Germans drove straight for Paris. Then, on September 4, followed the battle of the Marne, and the Germans were pushed back to the Aisne.

Then there was a race for the sea, British troops moving north, trying to outflank the Germans, who kept pace with them, until finally the allied front was established from the North Sea to Switzerland. The British on November 4 occupied Ypres, against whose successive waves of Germans dashed in vain for four years. Even the attack of April 22, 1918, in which gas was used for the first time, failed to break the British hold.

During the rest of the year 1918 the western nations stood still, watching the great Russian campaign, but in 1918 the British extended their line on the Somme and on July 1 a joint Anglo-French attack was begun. The British extended it north toward the Aisne, capturing Thiéval on September 26 and Beaumont-Hamel in November, and driving the Germans to retreat along their whole line from Arras to St. Quentin, while the French in the south drove them out of the Noyon salient. The battle of the Meuse, one of the decisive points of the war.

The situation then remained quiescent until February 23, 1917, when the Germans began a retreat back toward the Meuse. The British followed them up capturing Bapaume on March 17 and Arras on the next day. On April 9 the Canadians took Vimy Ridge. The British launched an offensive in Flanders against the heights southeast of Ypres. They blew up the Messines-Wytschaete ridge and drove a wedge toward the heart of the German positions in Belgium, threatening both the submarine bases on the North Sea coast and the German communications at Lille. Passchendaele, four miles from Roulers, was captured on November 6.

Verdun.

Before the battle of the Somme in July 1916, which was intended to put the Germans on the defensive, the German Crown Prince began a drive on the fortress on February 21, which culminated on June 23 and lasted into December, which time the French and British pushed back a million men, so that Verdun came to be known as "the Allies' slaughterhouse."

Fort Douaumont fell on February 25. The Germans had gained Thiaumont and Fleury, which was the nearest point ever got to Verdun. Then the French recaptured Fleury and by October 21 had regained Thiaumont and Douaumont fort and village, taking 6,000 prisoners. On November 2 the Germans evacuated Fort Vaux.

On April 16, 1917, the French began an offensive over a twenty-five mile front between Soissons and Rheims. Aubeville was taken and a bridgehead south of the Aisne at the junction of the Vesle, which the Germans had held ever since the battle of the Marne, was obliterated. Fort Condé, opposite, fell on April 28, and the Germans retired to the crest of the Aisne heights, along which runs the Chemin des Dames. On May 4 Craonne was taken and the French began a new offensive by which the Germans were finally pushed back to the northern bank of the Ailette River. Here they remained until the drive to the Marne was begun.

PRINCIPAL DATES IN THE GREAT WAR

1914.
June 28—Austrian Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, murdered at Sarajevo.
July 23—Austrian ultimatum to Serbia.
July 28—Austria declares war on Serbia.
August 1—Germany declares war on Russia and invades Luxembourg and Belgium.
August 3—Germany declares war on France.
August 4—Great Britain declares war on Germany.
August 20—Germans occupy Brussels.
August 22—Germans burn Louvain.
September 3—Russians capture Lemberg.
September 5—Great Britain, France and Russia sign agreement to make no separate peace, Japan and Italy adhering later.

September 6—Battle of the Marne, in which the French turned back the tide of invasion and forced the Germans to retreat to the Aisne.
September 11—Australians capture New Guinea and Bismarck archipelago.
September 16—Russians under Rennenkampf retreat from Riga.
September 22—British cruisers Aboukir, Hogue and Cressy sunk by submarines in North Sea.
October 3—Germans occupy Antwerp.
October 14—Allies occupy Ypres, halt Germans on the Yser.
November 1—British cruisers Grafton and Good Hope sunk in action off the Chilean coast.
November 6—Great Britain declares war on Turkey and annexes Cyprus.
November 7—Japanese capture Tsingtau.

November 10—German cruiser Emden captured and destroyed at Cocos Island by British.
December 2—Austrians capture Belgrade.
December 11—British naval victory off the Falkland Islands—South African rebellion collapses.
December 14—Serbians recapture Belgrade.
December 17—Egypt declared a British protectorate.
December 24—First German air raid on England.

1915.
January 20—British naval victory in North Sea off Dogger Bank.
February 17—Second battle of Ypres begun.
February 18—Anglo-French squadron begins attack on Dardanelles.
March 11—British order in council issued to prevent commodities of any kind reaching or leaving Germany.
March 17—Russians capture Przemyśl.
April 1—Germans capture Ypres.
April 2—Allies land in Gallipoli.
May 2—Russians, defeated in battle of the Dunaevic, begin retreat in Galicia.
May 7—The Lusitania sunk by submarine.
May 22—Italy declares war on Austria.
June 2—Italy declares the Isonzo.
June 3—Austro-Germans retake Przemyśl.
June 22—Austro-Germans recapture Lemberg.
July 1—Conquest of German Southwest Africa completed.
August 4—Germans capture Warsaw.
August 19—The Arabic sunk by submarine.

British troops were rushed to the northern Italian front in forty-eight hours to hold the mountain passes while Italians garrisoned the Piave line. Allied statesmen met in London and declared a Supreme War Council, to have charge of all military affairs in the west. This council, in which America is included, during the Somme drive, issued the independent order of heroes of the Marne, generalissimo of all allied forces. The effect was immediately apparent. The result in France is noted above.

In Italy the Austrians, at Germany's dictation, on June 15 began a drive across the Piave, reaching a small fringe of territory in the western front. They were checked immediately and thrown back across the eastern bank. Their enormous losses seriously crippled Austria's fighting power for the rest of the year. Italy began a counter offensive on October 23, driving the Austrians from the Piave region, retaining almost all the territory they had lost and forcing Austria to beg for an armistice, which was granted on November 2, to take effect next day.

Russia in and Out of the War.

Russia was the first of the great powers to enter the war, and the first to leave it. Her participation throughout was most spectacular. She replied to Germany's declaration of hostilities on August 1, 1914, by invading East Prussia. General Rennenkampf's troops were treacherously led to disaster in the Masurian Lake region, they were defeated near Tannenberg and literally cut to pieces or drowned in the marshes.

Success attended the Russian advance south. Grand Duke Nicholas crossed the Galician frontier on September 2, which the Russians were destined to hold for nearly three years. Sweeping forward, he captured Lemberg, capital of Austrian province, on September 2. He crossed the Pruth River on September 11, invaded Przemyśl three days later. Lemberg was taken on October 2.

Then the Russian advance was checked by heavy Austrian reinforcements from Poland. They had reached the outskirts of Warsaw, when they were defeated and driven back to the Pruth, where they were defeated on October 24. The Russians pursued them and recaptured Lvov, and Radom. The Germans were out of Poland by November 10, and the Russian armies reached Pleschan, in Silesia, 185 miles from Berlin, the nearest that any of the Allies have gotten to the German capital.

The Russians renewed their Galician campaign in the spring of 1915, capturing Przemyśl on March 17 after a six months' siege. Lupkow Pass, in the Carpathians, the strongest fortress in Russia, fell two days later, forcing the evacuation of Dret-Litovsk on August 23. Grodno and Vinnitsa fell on September 2.

A few months later the Germans had invaded the Russian Baltic provinces. They captured Libau on May 9 and reached the Gulf of Riga, where they established themselves on the line of the Dwina River from the marshes between Riga and Mitau, remaining inactive until 1918. In January of that year the Russians renewed their offensive in Pskov, which they captured on July 1 and by the end of the month had overrun all Bukovina and reached the borders of Poland. The Russian troops were over-looked and threatened Lemberg. Their drive was stopped by a defeat before Grodno, which was held until the fighting ceased until the spring of 1917.

August 20—Italy declares war on Turkey.
September 2—Turks defeated at Kut-el-Amara.
October 5—Allies land at Salonica.
October 11—Bulgarians invade Serbia.
October 12—Nurse Cavell shot by Germans.
October 13—Great Britain declares war on Bulgaria.
November 22—Battle of Coesighen in Mesopotamia.
December 2—Fall of Monastir and Austro-German conquest of Serbia completed.

1916.
January 8—Allies evacuate Gallipoli.
January 13—Austro-Germans capture Cotter.
February 15—Russians capture Erzeroum.
February 18—The Cameroons surrendered.
February 21—Battle of Verdun begun.
March 16—Germans declare war on Portugal.
April 13—American ultimatum to Germany threatening to break off relations unless Germany modified her submarine policy.
April 29—General Townshend at Kut-el-Amara surrenders to Turks.
June 2—Third battle of Ypres begun.
June 5—Lord Kitchener drowned.
June 21—Grand Sheriff of Mecca proclaimed and the empire was overthrown.
July 17—Russians capture Czernowitz.
July 2—Battle of the Somme.
July 3—German submarine merchantman arrives at Baltimore.
July 17—Austro-German war on the side of the Allies; Italy declares war on Germany.

September 16—British capture Courcellette and capture of the banks of the Somme.
September 22—Venizelos forms a provisional Greek government at Salonica.
November 13—French capture Monastir.

1917.
January 31—Germany announces unrestricted submarine warfare.
February 23—United States severs diplomatic relations with Germany.
February 24—British capture Kut-el-Amara.
March 17—British capture Baghdad.
March 12—Revolution begun in Russia; Tsar abdicates.
April 6—United States declares war on Germany.
May 7—French gain the Chemin des Dames.
June 17—British capture Messines Ridge.
June 26—First American troops land in France.
June 29—Greece enters war against Germany.
July 13—Kerensky becomes Russian Premier.
July 23—Russians retreat in Galicia.
August 19—Italians begin drive on Isonzo front.
September 2—Germans capture Riga.
October 10—Italians driven back from Isonzo line.
November 7—Kerensky overthrown; Bolsheviks seize power in Russia; British and Allies declare war on Germany.
November 9—Italians reach the Piave line.
November 30—General Byng attacks and captures the German base at Beersheva.
December 10—Jerusalem captured by the British.

Then revolution swept over Russia. On March 12 the Duma resented an order of the Tsar for his dissolution. Nicholas was forced to abdicate and a provisional government, headed by Prince Lvov and Professor Milukov, was formed. The Russian army, however, took advantage of the situation to make a peace drive, beginning by destroying the morale of the Russian army. Socialist pamphlets were circulated at the front and the German soldiers fraternized with the Russian troops. Communication began, and every racial unit in Russia attempted to set up independent governments.

Alexander Kerensky, Minister of War, took the lead in the revolution. He himself at the head of the Russian troops, and on July 1 began a drive against Lemberg, from the direction of Tarnopol. General Brusilov's troops were treacherously led to disaster in the Masurian Lake region, they were defeated near Tannenberg and literally cut to pieces or drowned in the marshes.

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March 21—Germans drive on the Somme begun to separate British and French armies.
April 5—Japanese, American, French and British marines land at Vladivostok.
April 14—General Foch appointed commander in chief of allied armies.
April 22—British naval force raid Zebrugg and Ostend, blocking submarine harbors.
May 1—Germans occupy Sebastopol and seize Russian Black Sea fleet.
May 2—Ostend again raided and the Vladivostok sunk at sea.
May 27—Germans drive on the Aisne begun, reaching the Marne.
June 6—American attack at Chateau-Thierry.
July 1—Austrians capture Vaux.
July 18—Tsar Nicholas reported murdered.
July 18—Foch begins counter offensive before allied drive from Macedonia.
August 2—French recapture Soissons.
August 4—Allies cross the Vesle.
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September 4—Germans evacuate Lens.
September 12—American begin action, wiping out St. Mihiel salient in three days.
September 13—Bulgarian front crumbles before allied drive from Macedonia.
September 22—British defeat Turks, capture Nazareth.
September 20—Bulgaria surrenders.
October 1—British take Damascus.
October 17—Belgians enter Ostend and Bruges; Lille taken; British in Douai.
October 20—French reach the Danube; Germany asks President Wilson for armistice.
October 21—Czechoslovaks recognized as a nation and army joins Allies.
October 28—Italy begins counter-offensive, driving the Austrians from the Piave.
October 29—General Allenby captures Aleppo.
October 29—Austria asks for separate peace, accepting all of President Wilson's terms; American long range guns shell Longouy.
October 30—Italians drive Austrians out of Piave line.
October 30—Turkey surrenders, signs armistice.
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October 30—Turkey surrenders, signs armistice.
November 2—Americans rout Germans in the Argonne.
November 3—Austria surrenders, signs armistice, effective three P.M., November 11; Serbians re-enter Belgrade.
November 4—Allied Supreme War Council agrees on terms of armistice to Germany.
November 6—Germany breaks relations with Bolsheviks.
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