

# GCSE History

## Unit 4: Conflict and Tension 1894-1914

### Work booklet 3 – The End of War

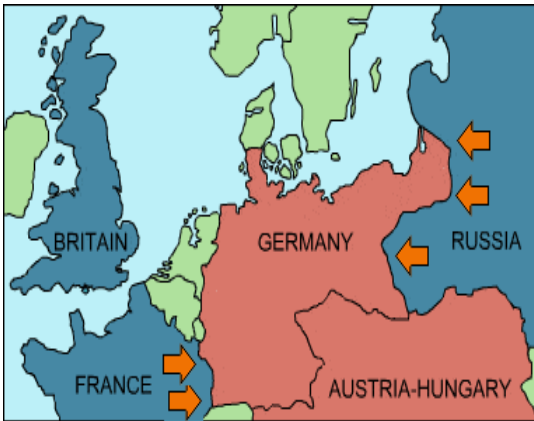
What do I need to know for this topic?

#### Part three: The Ending of the War

- Changes in the Allied Forces: consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution and the withdrawal of Russia on Germany strategy; the reasons for and impact of the entry of the USA into the war.
- Military developments in 1918 and their contribution to Germany's defeat: the evolution of tactics and technology; Ludendorff the German Spring Offensive; the Allied advance during The Hundred Days.
- The surrender of Germany: impact of the blockade; abdication of the Kaiser; armistice; the contribution of Haig and Foch to Germany's defeat.

## Part 1 - How and why did the Allied forces change after 1917?

### Reason 1 – The Russian Revolution and Russia's withdrawal from the war.



Since the start of the war Germany had faced 'a war on two fronts' – fighting Britain and France in the West and Russia in the East. However, in March 1917 the Tsar was forced to give up his throne. A temporary (Provisional) government took over. Although its policy was to keep Russia in the war, its armies became less and less effective. Then, in November 1917, a second revolution in Russia brought in a COMMUNIST government under Lenin. It immediately declared that it was not going to continue to fight and opened negotiations with Germany.

In March 1918 the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed between Russia and Germany. The terms of the treaty were harsh, with Russia being forced to lose substantial areas of territory which provided food and raw materials for industry.

As a result of these events Germany could now transfer hundreds of thousands of troops back to the Western Front. The German armies had the opportunity to attack on the Western Front before American troops and equipment arrived in any decisive numbers.

Things may have looked bad for the Allies but the German situation was also desperate by early 1918. Despite the good news of the Russian surrender, the Allies' blockade of German ports had starved the economy of raw materials and the population (including the soldiers) of food. Worse still, the USA was by now sending resources, weapons and soldiers into France. Above all, the German army was not the quality fighting machine it had been. Germany needed a quick victory and the surrender of Russia gave the Germans one last opportunity to achieve a military breakthrough and end the stalemate before American involvement could impact upon the Western Front.

### Reason 2 – The USA enters the war

For the first few years of the war, the USA was officially neutral. However, the DEMOCRAT government of Woodrow Wilson was supplying loans and equipment to the Allies. In 1915 Germany, angered by US help to the Allies, started a policy of 'unrestricted submarine warfare' and began attacking shipping in the Atlantic that was thought to be carrying war materials to Europe. In May 1915 a German U-boat sunk the passenger liner, the *Lusitania*, which was travelling from New York to Liverpool, with the loss of over 1,000 lives, including 128 Americans. Although the Germans were breaking accepted international codes of practice by attacking a passenger ship, the Allies were also in the wrong – the ship was indeed carrying much war cargo, which is why a second internal explosion was responsible for sinking the ship in 18 minutes. The British denied that the ship was carrying illegal cargo, and the Germans wanted to avoid war with the USA, so from then on the policy of attacking shipping was strictly controlled.

However, in February 1917, when the situation for the Germans was desperate, they restarted their campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare, attacking and destroying many American ships which they suspected of carrying supplies to the Allies. This, coupled with the discovery that Germany hoped to ally with Mexico against them, was the final straw. The USA declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917.

Germany was dismayed; psychologically it was a big blow. The US navy was the third largest in the world after Britain and Germany. Its destroyers could be used on convoy duty to protect merchant shipping



## **Part 2 - What were the key military developments of 1918 and what impact did they have on the war?**

### **1) New technology and tactics in 1918**

- a) The Allies had increasing numbers of tanks, many of which were provided by the USA, that were able to deal with the terrain more effectively. By 1918 military tactics had developed since 1916, replacing a rigid trench warfare mentality with more attacking and innovative tactics, utilising the latest technology.
- b) New technology prevented German aircraft from attacking targets in England effectively, as the government used better searchlights, anti-aircraft guns and planes. The ensuing success over land encouraged the navy to use aircraft against enemy submarines. By October 1918 there had been a huge increase in the size of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) which had over 20,000 aircraft.

### **2) The German Spring Offensive of 1918 (The Ludendorff Offensive)**

In March 1918 the German Commander Ludendorff launched the great gamble to win the war. It started with the typical huge bombardment and gas attacks. However, Ludendorff decided on a new tactic to follow these bombardments - instead of the usual 'wave' of infantry, he followed up with attacks by smaller bands of specially trained and lightly equipped 'storm troops' who struck during a heavy fog along the entire front line. The idea was to stop the Allies massing their defence in a single place. The Germans broke through the Allied lines in many places, advanced 64 km and Paris was now in range of heavy gunfire.

To begin with the 'Ludendorff Offensive' went very well. A German victory seemed to be a real possibility. However, the German army lost 400,000 men in making this breakthrough and they had no reserves to call on. The troops of 1918 did not compare well with those of 1914. Their discipline was poor and they were badly fed and supplied. Many of the planned German advances were held up as troops stopped to loot food and supplies from captured trenches or villages. They also came up against well-led and well-equipped Allied forces.

Between May and August 1918 the Germans made no further progress and it was clear that they had run out of time and resources. The Germans had ended trench warfare but it was the Allies who eventually gained the benefit. By now, they had large numbers of well-fed and well-equipped troops, much of the equipment and manpower coming from the USA. These troops were supported by tanks, aircraft and improved artillery. By 1918 the big guns were capable of hitting targets with impressive accuracy as well as laying down smokescreens or giving covering fire for attackers.

On 8 August the Allies counter-attacked along much of the Western Front. This later became known as the German army's 'Black Day'. It was now just a matter of time before the Allies defeated Germany. By late September they had reached the Hindenburg Line (the last line of German defences on the Western Front. Built in late 1916, it was a heavily fortified zone running several miles between the north coast of France near the border with Belgium. By September 1918, the formidable system consisted of six defensive lines, ribbed with lengths of barbed wire and dotted with concrete firing positions)

By October the Germans were in full retreat. This period has become known as the 'Hundred Days'.

### 3) The role of Sir Douglas Haig and Marshal Foch

<p><b>Marshal Foch, 1851–1929</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Born 1851.</li> <li>☐ Distinguished military career before 1914.</li> <li>☐ One of the leading French generals in the early years of the war.</li> <li>☐ Late 1916, after the failure of the Allied offensives, he was removed from his position as the French commander of Army Group North.</li> <li>☐ In 1917 he was recalled to become Chief of the General Staff.</li> <li>☐ Spring 1918, appointed as Commander-in-Chief of all the Allied armies. Spearheaded the planning that halted the German Offensive at that time.</li> <li>☐ Summer 1918, given the title of Marshal Foch, and planned with Haig the grand offensive against Germany from August 1918 onwards.</li> <li>☐ His exact contribution has been a matter of debate, and the evidence made less clear because of disputes during the war involving the French government and other military leaders.</li> <li>☐ After the war he received many decorations and honours from Allied countries.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sir Douglas Haig, 1861–1928</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Born 1861.</li> <li>☐ Commanded British armies from 1915 to the end of the war.</li> <li>☐ His reputation was adversely affected by the huge casualties at the Somme in 1916.</li> <li>☐ Overall strategy proved successful in 1918.</li> <li>☐ Actively promoted new strategies and technologies which helped the Allied victory.</li> <li>☐ Spring 1918, led determined resistance against the German Offensive.</li> <li>☐ In August 1918, working under the overall control of Marshal Foch, led the British army against the main German armies.</li> <li>☐ Captured nearly 200,000 prisoners and nearly 3,000 guns.</li> <li>☐ In spite of huge British casualties (greater per day than at the Somme), Haig was decorated after the war, and seen as a war hero.</li> </ul>
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Write definitions for these keywords

The Hindenburg Line	
'Black Day'	
The Hundred Days	

Explain why the Ludendorff Offensive was so significant.  
(Explain its significance for both Germany and the allies)

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### **Part 3 – Germany surrenders**

By November 1918 Germany's allies were surrendering. In the northern ports German sailors mutinied. In Berlin crowds marched through the streets.

**SOURCE 1**

**A member of the German government, October 1918.**

We have no meat, potatoes cannot be delivered because we are short of 4,000 trucks a day. Fat is unobtainable. The shortage is so great it is a mystery to me what the people of Berlin live on. The workers say 'Better a horrible end than an endless horror'.

**SOURCE 2**

**A letter from General Hindenburg to the German government, early November 1918.**

The supreme commander [Hindenburg] demands an immediate dispatch of a peace offer to our enemies. There no longer exists any hope of forcing peace on our enemies. The enemy can bring in new and fresh reserves. The German army holds fast and repulses all attacks with success. But we must stop fighting to save the German people from further useless sacrifices.

**Source 5**

**German civilian deaths as a result of poor diet.**

1915	88,000
1916	120,000
1917	260,000
1918	294,000

Riots spread across Germany from the Kiel naval base to many German cities. The army generals, realising that there was no hope of winning the war, wanted the Kaiser to give more power to the politicians so that they could negotiate a fairer end to the fighting. It was widely believed that the Kaiser was standing in the way of achieving peace and he did not appear to want to agree to ending the war. The only option seemed to be the Kaiser's abdication. On 9 November 1918 Germany became a REPUBLIC, that is, a country with no monarch but an elected President. The Kaiser had been forced to agree to abdicate.

The German government had already begun to negotiate an armistice before the Kaiser's abdication. Germany was willing to proceed with negotiations to end the fighting, on the basis of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. However, after the abdication of the Kaiser, the situation was critical. Friedrich Ebert, a Social Democrat, became Chancellor. German delegates were driven across the front line to Marshal Foch's private train parked in a railway siding. The Germans were given a list of the Allied demands. There was to be no negotiation, and the list did not fully reflect Wilson's fair-minded Fourteen Points. The Allied



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**Task 2 – In the space below produce a timeline of the events of 1917 and 1918. Make sure you record all of the events in this booklet on your timeline in the correct chronological order.**



## Paper 1 exam technique

The final question on your Paper 1 exam will be worth 16 marks. Just like the 16 mark question you already know how to answer for the medicine topic this question will require you to write an essay which considers the factor in the question and other factors before giving your own conclusion.

An example of a 16 mark question is given below.....

To help you decide if America's entry into the war was the main reason for Germany's surrender you need to also consider the other factors that caused Germany to surrender – write about at least 2 other factors in your answer. Explain how important these other factors were.

**Q4 'The main reason for the German decision to surrender in November 1918 was the entry of the USA into the war.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (16 marks)**

The question requires you to write about America's entry into the war and consider how important this factor was when explaining Germany's decision to surrender.

At the end of your answer give your opinion on how far (how much) you agree that America's entry into the war was the most important reason – think about the importance of the different factors compared to each other. Is one factor more important or is the decision to surrender the result of a combination of factors?

Use this writing frame to have a go at writing an answer to this question:

When the USA entered the war.....

This was a problem for Germany because ...

However, America's entry into the war did not have an immediate impact because .....

Although it forced Germany to ....

By the Spring of 1918 American involvement was more important because....

As a result .....

However, there were other factors which forced Germany to make the decision to surrender. The Naval Blockade of Germany was important because .....

As a result of the blockade .....

The blockade forced Germany to surrender because ....

Furthermore, changing military tactics by 1918 were also important because .....

The allies were making better use of new weapons such as ....

As a result of this .....

In conclusion .....