



Copy out this mind map/spider diagram. As you read through the evidence below and from your own research, add details to your diagram to make it a useful revision tool on World War I as a total war. Also, add links between the different sections where you see overlap.

**The aims of the belligerents**

The aims of the powers involved in the fighting were 'total' and made any negotiated peace very difficult to achieve. Germany's aims in the September Memorandum have already been discussed on p.40. However, all the Great Powers developed ambitious war aims that they were reluctant to give up. France was determined to regain Alsace-Lorraine and both France and Britain had committed themselves to crushing 'Prussian militarism'. Propaganda on both sides reinforced nationalist sentiment, justifying the war and demonizing the enemy. Governments would have had to do a serious turn around in terms of public opinion if they were to seek a compromise. In 1917, there were several calls for peace, coming from such divergent sources as the Pope, Lenin (the new Bolshevik leader of Russia) and Lord Lansdowne, a British Conservative and former Viceroy of India and Foreign Secretary. Pope Benedict XV called for a return to the territorial status quo of 1914 and a renunciation of all financial demands. Lenin also called for a peace without annexations or financial demands. Lord Lansdowne made the point that the war was costing more in terms of human and economic resources than could ever be regained, even by victory. Yet both sides continued to believe that they could win. As P.M.H. Bell writes, 'Only victory would do, and only victory could justify the sacrifices made in the war' (Twentieth Century Europe, 2006).

**The use of weaponry**

As you will read, both sides used the full arsenal of weapons at their disposal and also developed new technologies for land, sea and air warfare to try to break the deadlock and achieve total victory. This pursuit involved, in the case of gas, breaking international agreements; the Hague Convention of 1899 had prohibited the use of poisons as weapons.

**The impact of the fighting on civilians**

As you have read earlier in this chapter, civilians were also affected by the actual fighting, and there were many casualties as a result of the new technologies available to both sides. Paris was shelled from a distance of 126km by the massive German gun known as 'Long Max', while first the Zeppelins, and later planes, made raids on Britain. British planes also inflicted severe damage on German factories and towns in the last year of the war. On the Eastern Front, civilians were actually caught up in the battles. Because there was relatively little movement on the Western Front, civilians, after the initial battles, were able to keep away from the actual fighting and casualties only resulted due to inaccurate artillery fire. By contrast, the great advances and retreats that took place on the Eastern Front meant that civilians were involved in the violence, sometimes accidentally and sometimes deliberately. For example, Jews - viewed with suspicion by the Russian military - were actively attacked by advancing Russians. Other minorities also suffered: Germans, Gypsies, Hungarians and Turks were all deported from Russia's western provinces during the war. Ethnic violence also took place in the Balkans. The lives of civilians in all countries were also affected by the huge losses of soldiers; all families and villages across Europe faced the consequences of the 'lost generation'. The enormous casualties in the early campaigns also led to the introduction of military conscription, in 1915 for France and 1916 for Britain. World War I also saw the 20th century's first genocide. Turkish propaganda at the time presented the Armenians as saboteurs and a pro-Russian 'fifth column'. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians died from starvation and thirst when the Ottoman Turks deported them en masse

from eastern Anatolia to the Syrian desert and elsewhere in 1915—16. There is dispute over the number of Armenians killed. Armenians say 1.5 million, while the republic of Turkey estimates the total to be 300,000. According to the International Association of Genocide scholars, the total was 'more than a million'.

### **The impact of economic warfare on civilians**

Both sides realized the advantages of cutting off supplies to their enemies. They tried to disrupt each other's trade routes, and prevent vital foods and raw materials getting through by laying minefields at sea or attacking merchant ships with submarines or warships. The British blockade had a devastating effect on Germany, causing desperate food shortages and contributing to Germany's defeat in 1918. The average daily calorie input for a civilian adult dropped from around 1,500 in 1915 to below 1,000 in the winter of 1916-17. Germany's use of submarine warfare also subjected British civilians to shortages, and Russia suffered from the blockade of the Dardanelles. Rationing was introduced in many countries.

### **Civilians as part of the war effort**

The war saw the rapid growth of industry in all countries as governments tried to keep up with the production demands of total war. In Britain, France and Germany, these demands also meant women joining the workforce as more and more men left to fight in the war. However, in all countries there was resistance to employing women, and it was not until 1915 that serious recruitment of women into industries began. Even then, there was little enthusiasm from employers and trade unions for women entering the workforce, and in Britain there had to be negotiations to reach agreements on women entering 'men's jobs' in munitions and engineering, e.g. that such arrangements were only to be temporary and that the women would not be trained up as 'fully skilled tradesmen'. Women were supposed to receive equal wages to men for similar jobs, but rarely did; their wages remained low, though higher than traditional women's work. This situation was despite the fact that the work in munitions in particular was extremely dangerous, with risks of TNT poisoning and accidental explosions. By 1917, one in four war workers was female, leading Joseph Joffre to claim that 'if the women in the war factories stopped for 20 minutes, we should lose the war.'

### **The growth of government power**

Other changes on the home fronts came with **increased centralization of power in the hands of the governments** of Britain, France and Germany. Citizens found themselves being subjected to much greater control from their governments as countries tried to ensure that maximum use was made of human and economic resources. In Britain, the government passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in 1914, which gave the government wide-ranging powers to police many aspects of people's daily lives, such as restricting the hours of pub opening, preventing the use of binoculars and limiting the lighting of bonfires. In France, a 'state of siege' was proclaimed by President Raymond Poincare, who placed eight departments of government under the control of the commander-in-chief, Joffre, and subject to military law. This number was later increased to 33 departments. In Germany, executive power was given to the deputy commanding generals of Germany's 24 military districts. The Tsar in Russia, meanwhile, used the pro-war atmosphere in 1914 as an opportunity to reassert autocratic powers and rule without the Duma (Russian parliament). **To control manpower** more effectively, conscription was introduced in most countries. In the UK it was introduced in 1916. This decision was taken not just because of the need for more men, but also because British industry could not afford to lose its skilled workers; so many miners had joined up, for example, that many had to be sent back in order to maintain the essential supplies of coal. The controlled direction of manpower was necessary to ensure that both industry and the armed forces were provided for; it has been estimated that it took three civilian workers to keep a soldier fighting in World War I. The government also took the lead in negotiating with the trade unions to get women to work in the munitions factories. **To increase the efficiency of production**, governments started to exercise more control over industry. In the UK, this involved nationalizing key industries such as coal mining and shipping and also regulating wages and prices to ensure that inflation did not get out of hand. In Germany, industrialist Walter Rathenau also tried to bring industry under the control of the War Boards to oversee production, but he was never as successful at achieving this as the British government, and faced frustrating interference from the German military. In Britain, involvement in the workplace by the government extended to intervention in areas such as canteens and child care, and the setting up of various committees such as the Health of Munitions Workers Committee. In order to motivate the home fronts and **keep up morale**, governments also spent a great deal of time and energy on wartime propaganda. At first, propaganda was used to emphasize the defensive nature of the war; each side produced propaganda to show that it was simply defending its soil and national pride. Later, propaganda became more important to justify the length of the war and to counter opposition to its continuation. Propaganda portrayed the enemy as an inhuman force that must be defeated at all costs. The British government also created a Ministry of Information, making propaganda a key element of its war policy. In order **to pay for the war**, Britain increased direct taxation. It also abandoned its 19th-century policy of free trade by adopting tariffs on certain types of imported goods. All countries borrowed immense sums to pay for the war. The Russians, French and Italians borrowed heavily from the British and the Americans; the British also borrowed massive amounts from the USA. The governments of all combatants borrowed from their own people through 'war loans', which would be paid with interest after the war.