

IGCSE History: World War I – Why did Russia withdraw from the war?

Why did Russia join the war in the first place?

- Austria (supported by Germany) declared war on Russia's ally Serbia. Resulting in Russia joining the war on Serbia's side.
- Russia joined the war in August 1914.
- Russia also went to war to help France and Britain.
- Russia, France and Britain then formed the Triple Entente (Triple Alliance).

What happened?

- By the end of 1914 Russia had lost 1 million men.
- End of 1915, 13% of the Russian population (16 million people) was under German and Austrian control.

Early Stages of the Fighting:

Russians advanced 160km into Austria then split into two groups to enter East Prussia. German army trapped the second army at Tannenberg resulting in the Battle of Tannenberg (26th – 29th August, 1914):

- 70 000 Russia troops were killed.
- 50 000 Russia troops were taken prisoner.
- General Samsonov committed suicide because of this.

The first army, led by Rennenkampf, advanced to the Masurian Lakes leading to the Battle of the Masurian Lakes (5th – 9th September, 1914):

- 125 000 Russian soldiers killed and wounded.
- 45 000 Russian troops taken prisoner.

May 1915.

- Austro-German offence then drove the Russians back 480km to their own territories but it was ended by the extreme Russian winter which saved Russia from defeat.
- Then the Russian's counter-attacked with General Brusilov in the lead; this is known as the Brusilov Offensive (June 4th – September 20th, 1916).
- They retook much of the land they had just lost but the Germans counter-attacked and dealt one million casualties unto the enemy
- This counter-attack by Germany saved the Austrians from defeat.