

CHAPTER 21

EAST AFRICA AND WORLD WARS (1914-1945)

THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1918)

WHY EAST AFRICA GOT INVOLVED IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

1. The war broke out on 28th July 1914.
2. The war was fought between Britain, France, Russia, Serbia and all their supporters against German, Austria Hungary and all her supporters.
3. It was no doubt purely European war but because Germany and Britain had their colonies in East Africa, the war indirectly involved East Africans
4. East Africa became involved due to extended conflicts and suspicion of its colonial masters.
5. Since the King's African Rifles was a colonial force it's then no wonder it had to fight for its colonial masters.
6. The Germans deliberately provoked British Colonies with the aim of diverting British resources.
7. East Africa was strategically important and as such, it would help the British to protect their colonial interests in the Far East because of the war which was going on in North Africa and Middle East.
8. Both Germany and Britain had recruited the Africans in their armies.
9. East Africa got involved due to mistrust since the German colonies were just near to British colonies.
10. Some fighters from East Africa wanted to get military exposure and also to Adventure and know what was in Europe.
11. Britain and Germany lacked enough troops to fight on their sides hence involved East Africans.
12. East Africa wanted to assist her colonial masters who were directly involved in the war.
13. Poor East Africans were involved in this war out of ignorance. They never knew what the war was about but joined in blindly.
14. The East African people were strong enough to carry ammunitions, supplies like food and so on, hence their involvement was inevitable.
15. Even before the beginning of the war, several East African people were in their respective colonial forces, hence their participation was expected.

16. It must be noted that East Africans fully got involved in this war and actually did the following: They physically fought in the war, they supplied food to the forces, they carried supplies like food, they carried the wounded soldiers, they drove heavy tanks during the war, they carried very big guns because they were strong and other East Africans prepared food for the army.

HOW EAST AFRICA GOT INVOLVED IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

1. World War I was fought beginning on the 28th, July 1914.
2. It was the first major war that involved almost the whole world.
3. The war was fought between Britain, France, Russia, Serbia and all their supporters against German, Austria Hungary and all her supporters.
4. It appeared purely European war but because Germany and Britain had their colonies in East Africa, the war indirectly involved East Africans.
5. East Africa therefore joined to protect the interest of their colonial masters, Britain for the case of Uganda and Kenya, then Germany for the case of Tanganyika.
6. Both Germany and Britain had recruited the Africans in their armies.
7. The Germans used about 2750 soldiers in Tanganyika.
8. But Britain on the other had more forces in East Africa than the Germans.
9. In East Africa, the German forces were under the command of Lettow Von Vorbeck who attacked the British railway to weaken them.
10. Britain also responded by attacking the German soldiers at Tanga Port.
11. At the beginning of the war, the Germans defeated the British.
12. To counter the Germans, the British later brought some soldiers from South Africa, India, Rhodesia and Malawi formerly Nyasaland under the command of General Smuts.
13. They also hired the Belgian forces to attack the German forces in Tabora.
14. With these forces, Britain started repulsing and defeating the German forces. They pushed them as far as Kilimanjaro Mountains.
15. Towards 1918, the German forces were pushed towards the southern part of Mozambique.
16. By the end of 1918, Germany was finally defeated in East Africa. Peace finally returned in East Africa.

EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR I UPON THE PEOPLE OF EAST AFRICA

1. It led to economic decay in East Africa.
2. It also led to rise of nationalism among the East African people.
3. The East Africans who participated in the war learnt to be more militarism.
4. It led to several deaths of East Africans.
5. Germany lost her control over Tanganyika.
6. It led to creation of ex-African fighters or ex-service men.
7. African got employment opportunities during the war, for example they worked as cooks, and porters.
8. It made the Europeans who participated to lose their superiority complex over the Africans. The Africans had seen Europeans cry, die and hence they knew that they were just like any other human being on earth. They also discovered that in Europe there were beggars and those severely hit by poverty.
9. It created some unity among the East African people against the whites.
10. The German defeat forced her to quickly surrender her colonies to the League of Nations, a newly formed world body to maintain world peace.
11. Britain took over Tanganyika in 1920 to control it on behalf of the League of Nations.
12. Indirect rule was introduced in Tanganyika by the British.
13. Many people were wounded and made disabled.
14. It led to economic depression (decline) of 1930's in Europe that affected the East Africa people.
15. The East African attitude towards the whites changed greatly. They never saw the need to respect them any longer.
16. The East Africans who were involved in the war leant new skills of fighting.
17. Famine and starvation due to general decline in agricultural production broke out.
18. Exploitation of East African resources intensified as European powers wanted to rebuild their economies.
19. Ranks and even medals were awarded to the East Africans which even today several old men are proud of.
20. Critical thinking and evolution of new ideas was realized in East Africans.

21. European diseases like plague and meningitis were spread by the East Africans who were involved in the war.

Revision questions

- i. Why was East Africa involved in World War I?
- ii. How did East Africa get involved in World War I?
- iii. How did the war affect the people of East Africa?

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

WHY AND HOW EAST AFRICA WAS INVOLVED

1. World war II started in 1939 and ended in 1945.
2. It occurred in Europe among Germany, Italy, and their friends against Britain, France, Russia, USA and their friends.
3. Once again East Africa was unable to remain neutral in this war although this time there was no serious fighting in any of the three East African countries.

The reasons were:

4. East Africa was under one of the European warlords, Britain.
5. The Germans in East Africa supported Hitler, the war agitator, hence involvement of East Africa.
6. There was Britain in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania and her presence in East Africa made East Africa to get involved.
7. In the neighbouring countries of Somalia, Somalia, and Eritrea, there was Italy which was on the side of Germany against Britain.
8. Several soldiers of Kings Africa Rifles (KAR) were stationed on the Somali side.
9. Troops moved into Kenya and they were joined by others from Nigeria, Ghana and India.
10. East Africa also gave in large amount of money to meet the British war cost.
11. Italy attacked Britain in East Africa as one of the German friends.
12. Later when Japan joined the war on the side of Germany, Britain was forced to expand the number of her army, KAR in East Africa.
13. Thousands of East African soldiers went to India and Burma to fight on the side of Britain.
14. Others went as far as Madagascar.

15. The East African joined this war because of the old British and German conflicts.
16. The East Africans had a fear that East Africa will fall back under the German rule yet they hated the German rule.

EFFECTS OF SECOND WAR UPON THE PEOPLE OF EAST AFRICA

1. The war had both positive and negative effects.
2. The effects were also political, economic and social in nature.
3. The war disrupted internal and external trade.
4. It disrupted agricultural activities in East Africa leading to famine.
5. Many people lost their lives and many more were wounded.
6. African family system was distorted as many men left their homes to go and fight on the side on the colonial masters. Families remained without heads.
7. Nationalism developed in East Africa with many political parties being formed.
8. The Africans lost respect for the whites as they saw them cry, die and being defeated during the war.
9. In Kenya the Asians and the Indian shops were looted by the Africans because they hated them due to their privileged positions.
10. Labour shortage hit hard the European factories leading to low production of manufactured goods.
11. The Africans in Kenya were encouraged to grow cash crops for the first time.
12. The war veterans or ex-servicemen came back with venereal diseases and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases.
13. After the Second World War, Tanganyika became a trusteeship of the British under a UNO provision towards self rule.
14. It led to rise of militant African Nationalism like Mau Ma rebellion.
15. The war brought misery and suffering among the East African people.
16. The East African fighters met with other oppressed group from West Africa, and India. They shared their problems under colonial rule and discussed how to get independence.
17. The Second World War led to the formation of the United Nations Organization to maintain world peace and prevent any other war from breaking out in the World.
18. The Italians were defeated in East African region and this marked the end of their threats to East Africa.

19. Resettling of ex-service men became a problem because many of them had lost trace of their homes.
20. Britain was put under pressure by the UN to withdraw from East African countries.
21. The East African fighters learnt new fighting tactics which assisted them during the struggle for independence.
22. The Germans in East Africa who had threatened to fight the British were arrested and imprisoned.

Revision question

- i. Why and how was East Africa involved in World War II?
- ii. How did the war affect the people of East Africa?