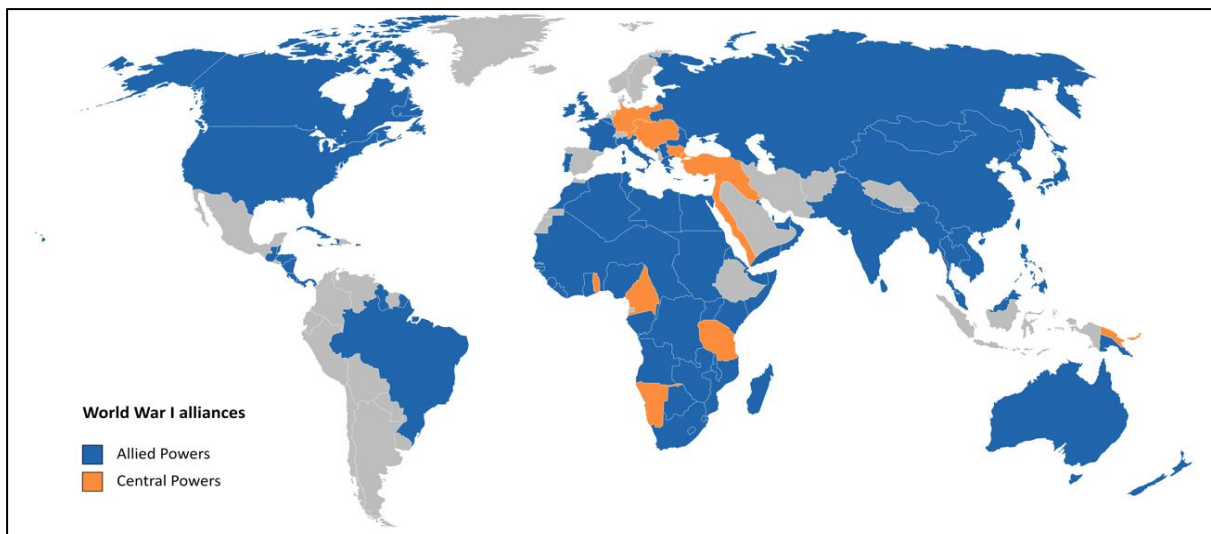


REASONS WHY WORLD WAR I BROKE OUT IMMEDIATE CAUSE

World War I



World War I, or the First World War (28 July 1914 – 11 November 1918), also known as the Great War, was a global conflict between two coalitions: the Allies (or Entente) and the Central Powers.

Major areas of conflict included Europe and the Middle East, as well as parts of Africa and the Asia-Pacific.

Reasons why World War I broke out

Nationalism

Nationalism is strong pride in one's nation.

By the end of the 19th century, European countries were competing to be the richest, most powerful and strongest European nation. Citizens became proud of their country's achievements and were prepared to go to war and fight for their country.

Nations believed war would prove their superiority.



Why it mattered:

Nationalist tensions made Europe unstable, particularly in southeastern Europe.

Industrial economies

Britain was the first country to become industrialised in the 19th century.

Britain had become very rich through manufacturing. But Germany had begun to catch up and was producing iron, steel, coal and cars.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Britain no longer had the economic lead in Europe.

European industrial powers such as Britain, Germany, and France competed intensely for:

Colonies in Africa and Asia

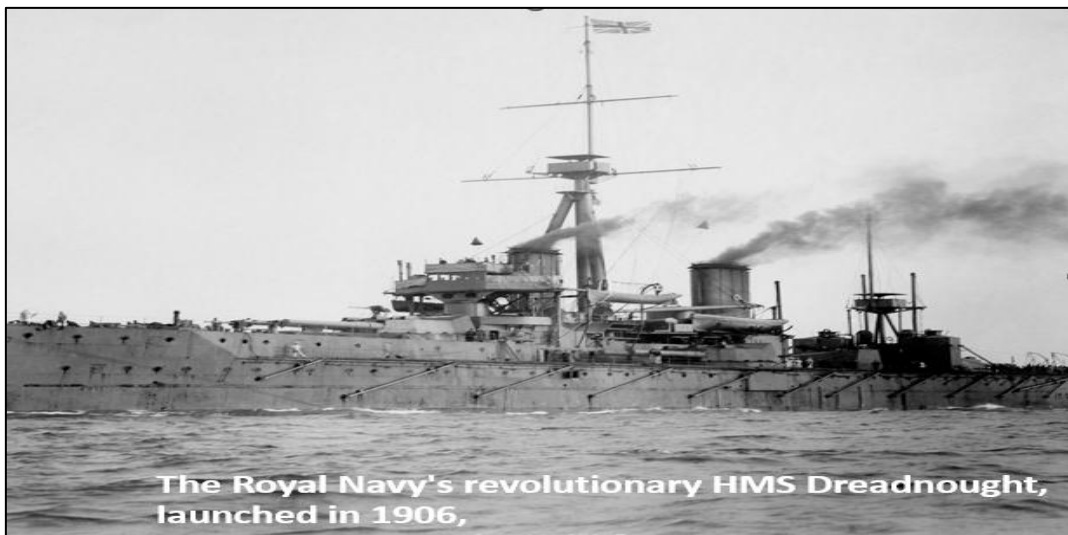
Trade routes and economic dominance

Why it mattered:

This economic rivalry increased tension and mistrust between nations, especially between Britain and Germany.

Control of the seas/Militarism

European powers built up large armies and navies, especially Germany and Britain (naval arms race).



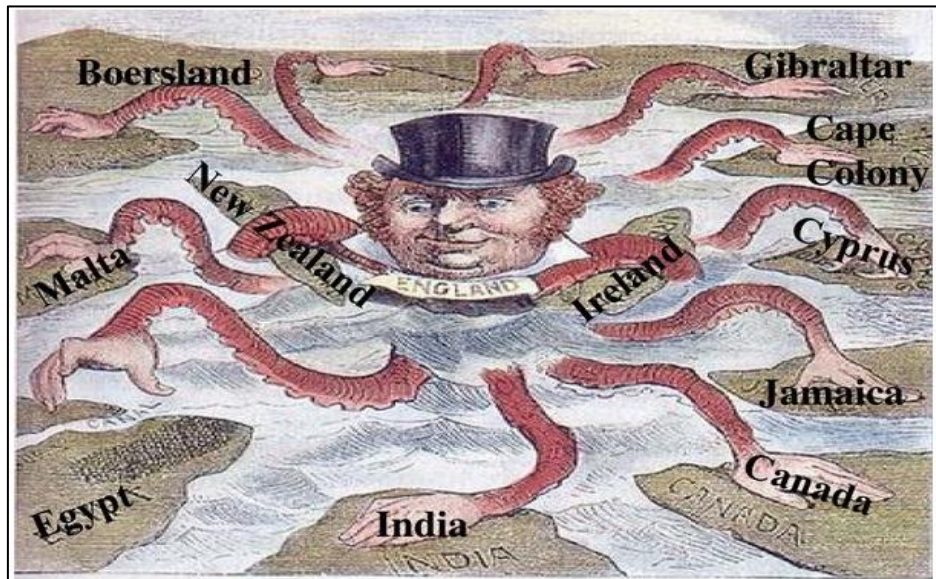
Military leaders gained significant influence over political decisions.

War plans (like Germany's Schlieffen Plan) encouraged quick military action rather than diplomacy.

Why it mattered: Once fighting began, countries were already prepared—and eager—to use their military power.

Imperialism

Imperialism is the policy of extending a country's power through colonization and competition for resources.



European nations competed for colonies in Africa and Asia.

This increased rivalry and mistrust, especially between Britain, France, and Germany.

Economic and political competition made diplomatic solutions harder.

Why it mattered:

Tensions over territory and global influence increased hostility among the great powers.

Immediate cause: Assassination of Archduke of Austria at Sarajevo

Balkans: a large peninsula in southeastern Europe containing the Balkan Mountain Range

Ottoman Empire: another name for the country of Turkey at the height of its power when it controlled other countries

Slav: a person from Eastern Europe who speaks a Slavonic language (do not confuse this word with 'slaves')



Tension in the Balkans

The following events in the Balkans in Eastern Europe led to the outbreak of WWI.

- The old Turkish or Ottoman Empire was collapsing.
- Serbia had broken free from Turkish control and had become an independent state.
- Austria was concerned about the growing power of Serbia in the Balkans and wanted to take control of Serbia.
- Serbia wanted to unite the whole Slav population in the Balkans.
- The Austrians decided that they would have to go to war with Serbia in order to destroy Serbia's independence.
- Austria was waiting for an excuse to attack Serbia.
- Austria was a large empire. The Austrian Empire was ruled by the Habsburg royal family.
- The leader of the empire at the beginning of the 20th century was Emperor Franz Joseph.
- His son died, and so his brother, Archduke Franz Ferdinand became the heir to the Austrian throne.



On 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist

What followed:

- The Austrians saw the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand as the perfect opportunity to destroy Serbia.
- Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia and declared war.
- Russia defended Serbia.
- Germany supported Austria-Hungary.
- France and Britain were drawn in through alliances.

Result: A regional conflict escalated into a global war.

Countries in Europe which fought: Allied Powers vs Central Powers

Allied powers

- **France**
- Sought to defend itself against German aggression
- Wanted to regain Alsace-Lorraine, lost to Germany in 1871

Great Britain (United Kingdom)

- Entered the war in 1914 after Germany violated Belgian neutrality
- Protected its empire and naval dominance
- Contributed land, air, and naval forces worldwide

Central powers

Germany

- The strongest Central Power
- Had a powerful army and advanced industry
- Fought on both the Western Front (against France and Britain) and the Eastern Front (against Russia)
- Supported Austria-Hungary after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

Austria-Hungary

- A multi-ethnic empire in Central Europe
- Declared war on Serbia in July 1914, starting the conflict
- Weakened by internal nationalism and military defeats during the war

Allied powers

- **The Allied Powers were a global coalition that combined military strength, industrial capacity, and manpower.**
- **Their cooperation eventually led to the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918.**

Russia (until 1917)

- Defended Serbia and supported Slavic nationalism
- Fought on the Eastern Front
- Withdrew after the Russian Revolution (1917)

United States (from 1917)

- Entered after German U-boat attacks and the Zimmermann Telegram
- Provided fresh troops, supplies, and financial support
- Played a key role in ending the war

Japan

- Joined to expand influence in Asia
- Attacked German possessions in the Pacific and China

Ottoman Empire (Turkey)

- Joined the war in 1914 Controlled key territories in the Middle East
- Fought against Britain, Russia, and Arab forces
- The empire collapsed after the war

Bulgaria

- Joined the Central Powers in 1915
- Wanted to regain territory lost in earlier Balkan wars
- Fought mainly against Serbia, Romania, and Greece

Central powers

- **The Central Powers were powerful but faced challenges such as economic isolation, internal instability, and fighting on multiple fronts.**
- **These problems contributed to their defeat in 1918, leading to the collapse of major empires like Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.**

Aspects of experiences in World War

Conscription and Propaganda in Britain

During World War I, the British government used conscription and propaganda to ensure it had enough soldiers and public support for the war.

These two elements worked together to maintain Britain's war effort between 1914 and 1918.

Conscription in Britain



Conscription is the compulsory enlistment of civilians into the armed forces.

Why was Conscription Introduced?

- At the start of the war (1914), Britain relied on voluntary enlistment.
- By 1915, heavy casualties on the Western Front caused a shortage of soldiers.
- Voluntary recruitment dropped as the war dragged on.
- To solve this problem, the government introduced conscription.

Military Service Act:

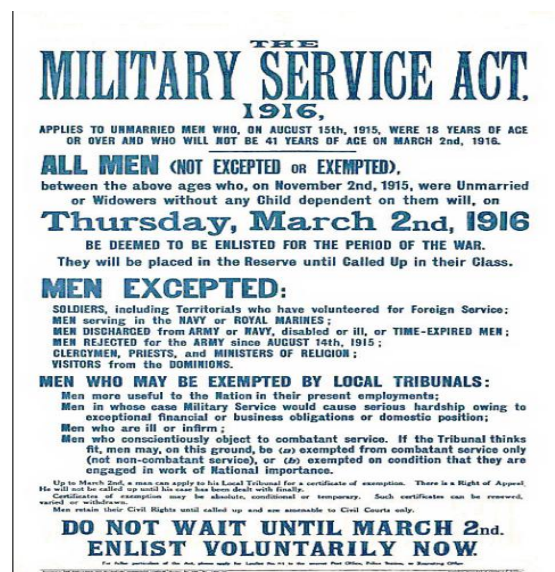
All single men aged 18–41 were required to join the army.

Later extended to married men.

Impact of Conscription

Greatly increased the number of soldiers

Ensured Britain could continue fighting



Propaganda in Britain

What is Propaganda?

Propaganda is the use of information (often exaggerated or emotional) to influence public opinion and behaviour.



The British government used propaganda to:

- Encourage men to join the army
- Support conscription
- Maintain civilian morale
- Create hatred of the enemy
- Justify the war effort

Methods of Propaganda

Posters; Newspapers; Pamphlets Films and Public Meetings



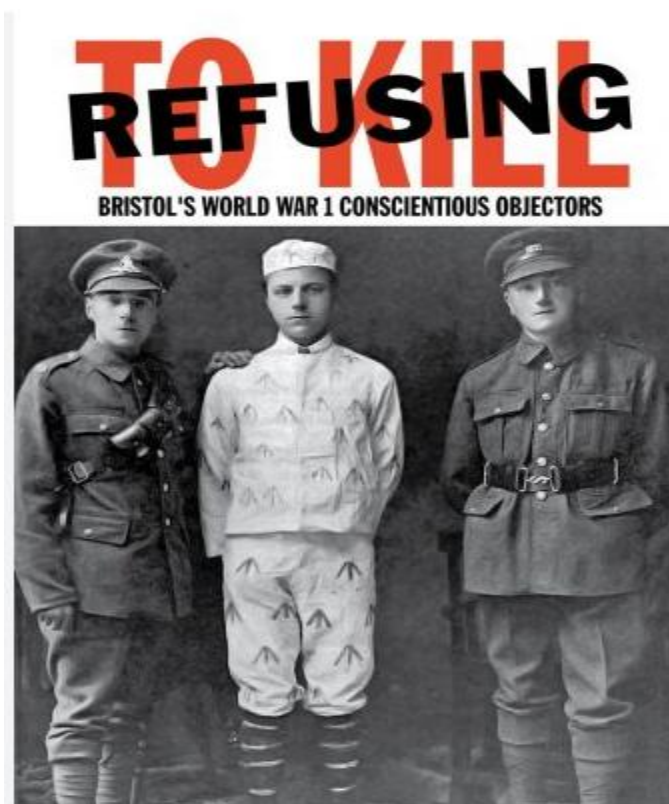
Controlled information to:

- Emphasise British victories
- Hide the true horrors of trench warfare
- Spread negative images of the German enemy
- War films showed bravery and heroism
- Speeches encouraged patriotism and unity.

Together, propaganda and conscription ensured that Britain had both the soldiers and the support needed to continue the war.

Conscientious objectors

people who refuse to serve in the armed forces on grounds of principles or sense of right and wrong.



About 16 000 men refused to fight in World War I.

These men were called conscientious objectors.

There were several types of conscientious objectors:

- pacifists who were against war in general
- political objectors who did not consider the government of Germany to be their enemy
- religious objectors who believed that war and fighting in a war was against their religion

Men who refused military service were often arrested and jailed.

Some were forced into the army despite objections.

Called cowards or traitors

A white feather was a symbol of cowardice.

Trench warfare on the Western Front



The many horrors in the war convinced people that there could never be another war like World War I.

One of the horrors was trench warfare.

Most of the big battles of World War I were fought on the Western Front, which was the border between France and Germany.

Here soldiers from both sides dug long holes or trenches in the ground to protect themselves from enemy gun shots.

Soldiers had to be careful to keep their heads below the top of the trench.

Otherwise, they could have their head blown off by enemy shells and bullets.

Soldiers with rifles were ready to shoot at an enemy soldier if he lifted his head above the top of the trench.

The trenches on the Western Front were about 2 m deep and 2m wide.

Each trench had:

- sandbags on top to protect the soldiers from enemy bullets
- duckboards on which soldiers walked to avoid the mud on the ground
- dugouts carved into the sides of trenches for soldiers to rest
- machine guns, placed at the top of the trench, which could fire 600 bullets in one minute
- barbed wire as thick as a man's thumb which was placed on the top of the trench on the side which faced the enemy.
- Between the frontline trenches of the Allies and the German troops there was an area called **No Man's Land**.
- No Man's land was the empty land between the fighting sides.

Life in the trenches



Narrow, muddy, and overcrowded
Often flooded with water, especially after rain
Poorly built, sometimes collapsing
Trench foot (caused by constant damp)
Lice (spread disease and caused irritation)
Rats, which fed on food scraps and dead bodies
Many soldiers became sick, even if they were not wounded.
Many soldiers suffered from shell shock (psychological trauma caused by constant stress and fear).

Music and poetry

Poetry of World War I

There are many books and poems written about the experiences of soldiers in World War I.
Many writers supported the war, and were proud to fight for their country.
But there were also many people who bitterly attacked those who supported the war.
'In Flanders Fields' is a poem written by a soldier who witnessed death all around him.
It tells of the dead soldier's sacrifice. It is not against the war, but encourages the fighting soldiers to fight on.

In Flanders fields

IN Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Music of World War I

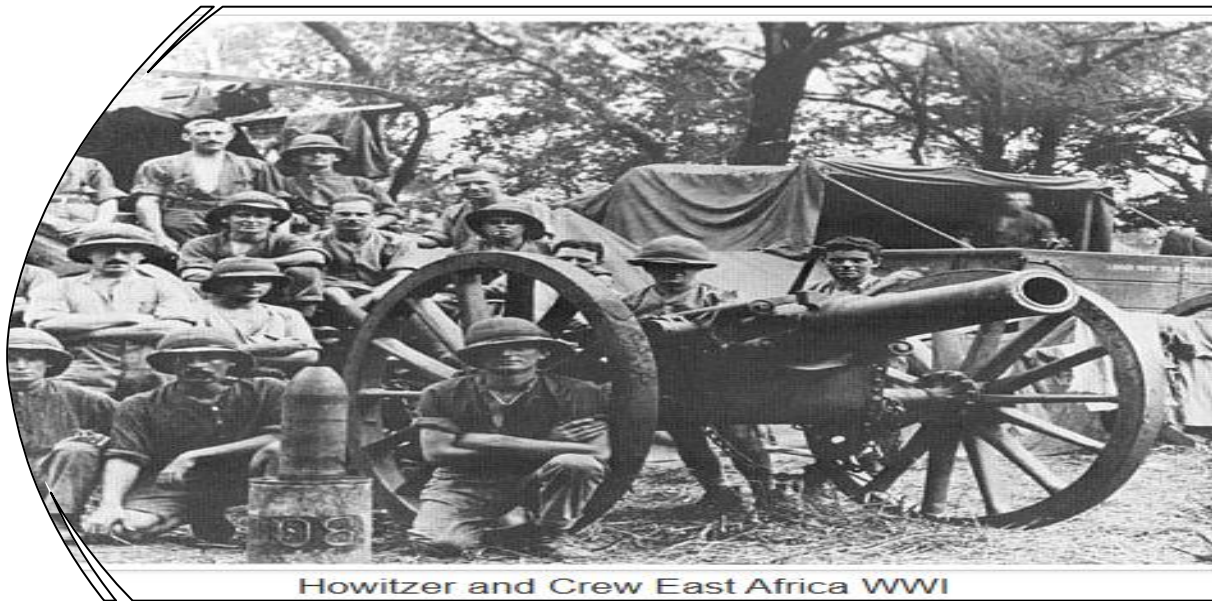


Music was played at home and on the battle fields. War songs with positive messages were played on the radio, and people bought records and listened to and sang along to war songs.

Popular music was also a way for the British government to send powerful propaganda messages about the war.

Music inspired pride and patriotism, and encouraged men to sign up and families to sacrifice for the war effort.

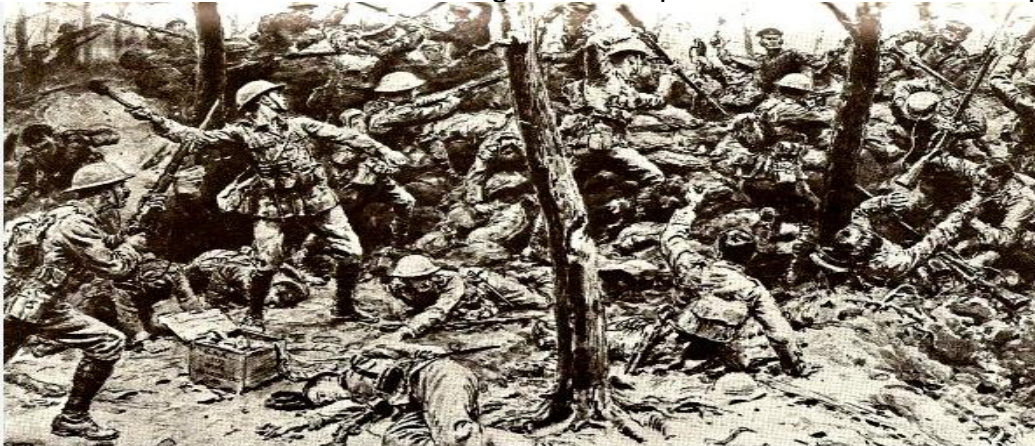
World War I and South Africa



When World War I broke out, South Africa (which was once a British Colony) sided with Britain and went to war against Germany. White and black men volunteered for service in the armed forces, but black men were forbidden to carry weapons. Black, coloured and Indian men served as non-combatants.

Battle of Delville Wood 1916

South African soldiers went on to fight in other parts of Africa and in Europe.



One of the most horrific battles of the war was fought at Delville Wood in France. 3 153 South Africans went into battle and only 755 men survived.

Extract from Walter Giddy's Diary

4th July 1916

Still lying low in Suzanne Valley. The artillery are quietly moving up. We shifted up behind our old firing line, where the advance started 2 or 3 days ago. The dead are lying about. Germans and our men as well, haven't had time to bury them. The trenches were nailed to the ground, and dead-mans-land looked like a ploughed field, heaps must be buried underneath.

Sinking of Mendi in 1917

The Mendi was a battleship that carried black South African non-combatant soldiers to the battle fields on the Western Front.

The soldiers on board the Mendi were from rural areas of the Eastern Cape. They were not allowed to fight with guns.

They were expected to dig trenches, carry stretchers, repair roads and carry out other hard labour.

The Mendi sailed from Cape Town for France on 16 January 1917, carrying troops of the 5th Battalion, South African Native Labour Corps.

It stopped in England before crossing the English Channel. But it did not make it to the Western Front.

The SS Mendi sank on **February 21, 1917**, after being rammed in thick fog by the SS Darro, a much larger cargo ship, in the English Channel near the Isle of Wight.

The collision occurred at approximately 5:00 a.m., cutting deeply into the Mendi's starboard side and sinking it within 25 minutes

Key Details of the Sinking:

The Collision:

The SS Darro was traveling at high speed in dangerous, foggy conditions and struck the SS Mendi almost at a right angle, rendering many lifeboats unusable.

Casualties:

The disaster killed over 600 people, including 607 Black troops from the South African Native Labour Corps, nine white officers, and 30 crew members.

The Aftermath:

The SS Darro initially failed to assist the sinking ship.

The Mendi sank quickly, with witnesses noting the calm, disciplined behavior of the soldiers, some of whom performed a "death dance" as the ship went down.

The sinking is regarded as the largest single loss of life for South Africans during the First World War

The last voyage of the SS Mendi

Rewind a century as men took to arms for the 'Great War'



16 January 1917

The SS Mendi sailed from Cape Town en route to La Havre in France, carrying the Fifth Battalion of the South African Native Labour Contingent.



21 February 1917

On a cold and foggy early morning, the SS Mendi was rammed by another ship - the SS Darro. With a deep gash in its side the Mendi sank in 20 minutes.

The South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC) was formed in 1916 in response to a request from the British Imperial Government for an African labour force to alleviate the labour shortage at the Western Front and in French ports.



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