**What was the most important reason why the 20th century was so full of conflict?**

The Russian Revolution

Narrator: The year is 1905. Russia is fighting a war against their tiny neighbour, Japan, a war that everyone expected them to win easily. But they weren’t, they were losing. And they weren’t only losing on the battlefield, back on the home front, most people were living in extreme poverty. In 1891 and 1901, there had been famines, the Tsar, the big boss guy of Russia, had done nothing about them, and now he was spending all Russia’s money on the war, which was going incredibly badly. One Sunday, the people of St Petersburg decided that they’d had enough. They wrote a petition and marched to where they thought the Tsar was in order to hand over the petition in a peaceful protest. Instead of finding the Tsar, however, they found the Russian army, who started firing at the crowds, and many civilians died. This became known as ‘Bloody Sunday’. While the Tsar almost definitely had no influence on the attack, since he was not where the protest was, he was still blamed by the people for attacking people carrying out a peaceful protest. The peaceful protest turned into a full-on rebellion. But there was a problem with the rebellion. The opposition was split. Moderates wanted some mild reforms, but the more radical revolutionaries wanted to remove the Tsar completely, and the Tsar used this to his advantage. He published the ‘October Manifesto’, which basically promised more civil liberties, such as freedom of the press and freedom of speech, as well as an elected Duma. The moderates now supported the Tsar and the remaining revolutionaries were defeated. However, after the revolution died down and there was no longer an imminent threat, the Tsar started to reverse the promises made in the October Manifesto. He did not allow freedom of the press or freedom of speech, and the Duma served only in an advisory role, and the Tsar changed the electoral system so that members of the aristocracy would always get a big majority.

During this time, the Russian Prime Minister was a man called Stolypin. He tried to reduce the threat of rebellion by making life better for the peasants, but he was assassinated in 1911. There was also a monk called Rasputin, who had several lovers, including, if the rumours are to be believed, the Tsarina and her two eldest daughters. Rasputin gained more and more influence over the Tsar after he healed their son.

The main causes of the 1905 revolution were the Tsar not doing anything about the famines in 1891 and 1901, the war loss against Japan, and the Bloody Sunday massacre. Without these 3 things, life in Russia would have been far from perfect, but the Russian Revolution of 1905 probably wouldn’t have occurred without them.

By 1914, things seemed to have settled down. There is some debate about whether and how imminent another revolution was in 1914, but the Tsar’s regime seemed to be holding steady for now. Let’s have a war.

World War I

Narrator: In 1914, everyone knew a big war was coming. France had lost some stuff to Germany in the 1870/71 war and wanted it back (Alsace-Lorraine), Germany wanted more of everyone’s stuff, there were tensions between Britain and Germany because of Britain’s superior and Germany’s growing navies, and the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires thought they were really cool, but many people living within those empires didn’t think they were so cool. Everyone distrusted each other, and military technology had come a long way since the last major war, so everyone was ready to show that they were superior.

Several countries had gained independence from the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires with the help of Russia. One of these areas was Bosnia, who gained independence from the Ottomans but was quickly taken over by the Austro-Hungarians. There were Serbs and Bosnians living in that area who hated living in Austria-Hungary, so the Austro-Hungarian arch duke Franz Ferdinand decides to go there for a drive in an open-top car with his car’s route published in advance, and that went about as well as expected. Some assassins were waiting for him and threw bombs at his car, but they missed and blew up some officers behind him instead. So the archduke goes into hiding, leaves Bosnia and the whole war never happened. Except no.

Franz Ferdinand goes back out in the open top car to visit some of the wounded officers in hospital. The driver took a wrong turn and, by coincidence, arrived in the same spot as one of the failed assassins, who had left the other failed assassins to get a sandwich. And the assassin shoots him.

Austria-Hungary is understandably annoyed at all this, and suspects the Serbian government had something to do with it, which they might have. So they go to Germany, and say:

Austria: Hey Germany, we’re going to declare war on Serbia.

Germany: Go for it.

Narrator: So Austria-Hungary send a long list of impossible demands to Serbia and, when they refuse, they declare war.

Austria and Germany are friends, and Serbia is friends with Russia, who is friends with France, so they all declare war on each other. France and Britain also have a ‘kind of friends’ alliance, and when the war broke out, France said:

France: Yo Britain, you got my back?

Britain: …maybe?

Narrator: And then they decide to stay out of it, which is great for Germany, because they have a plan. They know that Russia is so big and clumsy it would take them a while to get ready for war, so, to avoid a war on two fronts, they send all their troops into France at lightning speed, take Paris, put all the German soldiers on trains to the east coast, beat Russia, and then we all speak German and ear German sausages. But there was a problem. Since the 1870/71 war, Germany and France had been involved in an arms race, and there were loads of defences on the on the German/French border and Germany can’t waste any time fighting them, so they decided to go around them through Belgium.

Belgium was neutral, but Germany wanted to march 750 thousand troops through it to get around France’s defences, and they’re hoping Belgium would just sit down and shut up. But they don’t, they fight back, and they’re pretty good to so, while they stand no chance of actually defeating the Germans because of how outnumbered they were, they slow the Germans down. What’s worse for the Germans is that Britain shows up. They’re pretty annoyed that Germany is invading neutral countries, so now Britain declares war on Germany.

Germany pushes on through Belgium and commits some atrocities along the way, which Britain use in a propaganda war against them, and this has an influence around the world, particularly in America. There was a large population of ethnic Germans living in the US, and when war first broke out, they were like “yay Germany!” But now they’re committing atrocities in Belgium, they’re less enthusiastic.

All the countries went into the war with old school mentality and had to upgrade their uniforms and tactics as this was war was going to be like nothing anyone had seen before.

Oh no, Russia’s ready for war way earlier than anyone expected.

Germany: Hey, Austria-Hungary, can you deal with that?

Austria: Oh yeah, we’ve got this, NOPE!

Narrator: So, Germany had to send some troops back to the east to defend against the Russians, meaning they no longer have enough troops in France to carry out their initial plan of taking Paris and outflanking the French army, but instead have to stop short of Paris and are in danger of being outflanked themselves.

Austria-Hungary turn out to be not the best military force. They often ignore German advice, but then come running back for help. They even get beaten by tiny Serbia, who repel all their invasion attempts at the start of the war. It’s better news for Germany in the north, as they almost completely wipe out Russia’s second army.

Back on the western front, the Germans continue to advance and are in sight of Paris. The British and French know something had to be done, so they stopped retreating. In the battle that followed, a gap opened up in the German forces, meaning that the British and French could go through it, outflank the Germans and cut off their supply line, so the Germans have to retreat. The allies launch a counterattack and the Germans dig trenches to make defensive positions. The allies do the same, and soon there are trenches from the sea to Switzerland.

Trench warfare had been affective before but, with modern warfare, you would lose thousands of lives only to gain a few metres of land. It soon became clear that the western front was not going to be about gaining territory, but a war of attrition, simply wearing your opponents out. Neither side wanted a long gruelling war, though, so they both thought of ways to break the deadlock. Idea number one was new frontiers.

Australia quickly took German New Guinea at the start of the war, and the British and French took German colonies in Africa. The allies also got two new friends in Japan and Italy. Japan was building an empire, so it was happy to take German colonies in East Asia. Italy was in the Central Powers alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary before the war, but tense relations, and the allies promising to give the Italians some of Austria-Hungary’s stuff, the Italians switched sides.

The Central Powers’ new friend was the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans were divided on whether to join the war or not, and some pro war politicians went out on their own, fired some shells at Russia, and said “whoops, looks like we’re at war now”. The Ottoman entry was a major concern for the British, since the Middle East was full of oil, and Britain wanted all that oil, and the Ottomans could also take the Suez Canal, which was essential for Britain to get to their empire in Asia. To combat this, Britain made different mutually exclusive promises to 3 different groups. Remember this. It’s important later.

Aware that the allies had more men and supplies than them, Germany knew it was up to them to break the deadlock on the western front. Before the war, there was a big conference that set out the rules for modern warfare. Germany held a meeting and decided to ignore these rules, using chemical weapons, bombing civilian cities and sinking civilian ships. One of these ships was the Lusitania, which had 159 Americans on board when it was sunk, further swaying US opinion against the Germans. To be fair to the Germans, though, the allies also engaged in chemical warfare soon after, and they had been smuggling war equipment and anti-submarine weapons on their civilian ships.

Everyone was getting some more friends again. Austria-Hungary still hadn’t dealt with Serbia and wanted some help. Bulgaria wished to be bigger so, when Austria-Hungary and Germany said they could make their wish come true, they helped them to invade Serbia. Portugal had been getting friendly with the allies, so they joined the war as well. After Russia launched the Brusilov offensive and seemed to be doing well, Romania decide it would be a good time to join in on the allies’ side, but they lose most of their territory to Austria-Hungary. The Greeks were fighting amongst themselves whether to join the war or not. The King was descended from Germans and liked the Central Powers, but the Prime Minister liked the allies, and, after the country was briefly split in 2, the King abdicated, and it was reunited on the allies’ side, and launched their own offensive with help from the allies.

It’s 1917, and everyone is exhausted. There were mutinies in the French army, the German people were starving, and the war had drained all of Russia’s resources. The question was who was going to break first. And the answer was Russia. There was no food for civilians, a crazy magic homeless monk seemed to be running the country, the Tsar had gone off to lead the Russian army despite having no military experience, and the Tsarina, who was German, was left in charge. Riots in Petrograd in February turned into a full-scale revolution which overthrew the Tsar. The new democratic regime lasted 8 months. The provision government, as it was called didn’t want to end the war as no one wanted to lose to Germany. The Germans helped Lenin, an exiled Bolshevik, back into the Russia hoping he and his mates would create an internal crisis and create an internal crisis they did. They turned the country Communist and pulled out of the war.

Russia pulling out of the war was great news for Germany as they now only had to focus on the western front, but there was still one problem: The United States of America was looking increasingly likely that it would join the war. America had been selling supplies to the allies throughout the war and was getting super rich because of it, meaning it was dangerous to the Germans. Germany responded by sending a telegram to Mexico.

Germany: Wouldn’t it be crazy cool if you guys attacked America, and we’ll help you win back land lost in the American Mexico war.

Narrator: But the British intercepted the telegram, showed it to America ad that was the final straw. America started sending troops to Europe. Germany knew their only hope now was to force France and the UK to surrender before the US got there. They launched a new offensive which, despite having initial success, failed.

The Central Powers were now being pushed back on all fronts. Bulgaria collapsed first, followed by the Ottoman Empire, followed by Austria-Hungary, and then, finally, on 11th November 1918, at 11 o’clock, Germany surrendered. At the peace treaty, Germany was forced to reduce its military, accept war guilt, and pay the bill for the war.

In the film ‘Goodbye Christopher Robin’, AA Milne said ‘the death of one archduke lead to the deaths of 17 million non-archdukes. While this was true, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand only served as a short-term trigger. There were many long-term reasons the war happened: tensions between France and Germany after the 1870/71 war; tensions between Serbia and Austria-Hungary; and tensions between Britain and Germany’s navies. After indescribable suffering and millions of casualties, the world learned its lesson and never had such an awful war again. At least for 21 years.

World War II

Narrator: In 1902, a young man called Benito Mussolini moved from Italy to Switzerland to avoid military service. He got into socialism, working for trade unions, writing for socialist newspapers and advocating a violent overthrow of European monarchies. This gets him arrested by the Swiss police, he gets sent back to Italy, gets set free, goes back to Switzerland, gets arrested again, goes back to Italy again, completes his military service after previously avoiding it, and then after a brief career as a primary school teacher, goes back to work as an avid socialist. He was anti-war, so when Italy colonised Libya in 1910, he rioted. And got arrested. He protested Italy’s involvement in World War 1, before thinking:

Mussolini: Hang on, this war could create the perfect social climate needed to overthrow European monarchies and bring about the socialist revolution everywhere.

Narrator: And suddenly, he was pro war. But other socialists didn’t like his new attitude and kicked him out of the party. He responded with this:

Mussolini: You know what, I’m done with socialism. We need something new, based on unity through nationality, not based on class divisions tearing us apart. I’ll conquer the Mediterranean and reunite all Italians. I’ll call it ‘Fascismo’ (Fascism), and it will guide the Italian nation to greatness.

Narrator: Italy had been on the winning side in World War 1, but they felt cheated. They got a lot less out of it than they expected. A bad economy and weak governments meant that Italian people were unhappy, so when Mussolini showed up saying he could fix everything, the Italian people gave him their support. In 1922, he became Prime Minister, and then went about establishing a dictatorship. Europe had its first fascist dictator. Next was Germany.

Germany had been on the losing side in World War 1, and they were absolutely wrecked because of it. They had a bad economy, had to give up a lot of land, had to pay lots of money they didn’t have to make up for the war and had to reduce their army to 100,000 men. They were starting to get their economy stabilised thanks to loans from America.

Meanwhile, in New York.

American 1: Buy, buy, buy! Man, this is great! The market will continue to grow forever!

American 2: But what if it doesn’t?

American 1: Oh no, I never thought of that, sell! Sell!

Narrator: And the stock market crashed, which led to economic downturn, which meant that banks wouldn’t lend anyone money, which led to more economic downturn, which meant everyone stopped buying stuff, which led to more economic downturn, and hey, what if all the crops in the Great Plains were destroyed in a drought and then a big dust storm engulfed the area? You’ve guessed it, more economic downturn. In an effort to combat the crisis, America began imposing tariffs on foreign imports, which made the economic downturn go global, and the earth got really depressed. It was during the Great Depression that Lin Manuel Miranda did a complete 180, after hating the English as one of the singing/rapping founding fathers of America in the 1770s and 80s, now, working as a lantern lighter in the 1930s, he says that London has a lovely sky.

Back to Germany, America started asking for the money they loaned to Germany back, and the German economy collapsed again. This, along with weak governments, meant that when a small, angry man with a silly moustache came along and said he could fix everything, the German people gave him their support. In 1933, he was made chancellor of Germany and went around establishing his power. When President Hindenburg died in 1934, he had a dictatorship. Europe had Fascist Dictator Number 2. Hitler and Mussolini had a lot of the same ideas but, more importantly, they had the same enemies, so they formed an alliance.

Germany: Anyone else want to be friends?

Italy: Franco?

Germany: No?

Italy: You good?

Japan: I do.

Germany: Who’s that?

Japan: It’s Japan.

Narrator: And they’ve taken over northern China. Let’s rewind a bit. The western powers had previously installed a lot of ‘unequal treaties’ on Japan which had left the Japanese economy bust. They had no natural resources, so decided to go get some. They went to war with China to gain a sphere of influence over Korea, and they took a bunch of China’s stuff. But then the west came and said:

West: Hey, cut that out.

Narrator: And since Japan couldn’t take on the west, they said:

Japan: Ok, I guess I’ll just go home, WAIT A SECOND! What are you doing?

West: Taking advantage of a weakened China and setting up spheres of influence.

Japan: But I was the one who weakened them!

West: We know.

Japan: And you guys didn’t let me have anything!

West: We know.

Japan: That seems unfair.

West: We don’t think so. Ok, see ya.

Narrator: So Japan went to war with Russia, and stunned everyone by actually winning, and then they fully annexed Korea, but they didn’t stop there. In World War 1, they took Germany’s colonies and islands in Asia, and then in an incident that was maybe (PROBABLY) staged by the Japanese army, a bomb blew up a Japanese train in Manchuria, giving them an excuse to launch an invasion and take over.

So, here’s the situation: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan all believe that they’re racially superior, all feel hostility to the Allies, and all want to militarise and take more stuff. And so, they did. Let’s start with Germany.

Hitler hated the Treaty of Versailles, and now he was ready to begin undoing it. In complete violation of the treaty, the first Luftwaffe squadrons were set up, conscription was introduced, and he grew his army. The Allies did nothing. Then Hitler sent his army back into the demilitarised Rhineland, with the orders to retreat immediately if the French showed up. The Allies did nothing. With his military strengthened, he could now move on to step 2. He wanted to rapidly increase the Aryan population, and to do so, he needed lebensraum (living space), or in other words, he would have to take over the world, but for now, a good portion of Europe would do, and he began eyeing up his neighbours. The Allies finally started to get worried, so they implemented a fairly useless diplomatic strategy called appeasement, which went a little something like this.

Germany: I want that thing (point to Austria).

Britain: You can’t have that thing… (Germany takes it) …ok you can have that thing but no more.

Germany: I want that thing (points to Czechoslovakia).

Narrator: And repeat.

In 1938, Hitler’s army marched into Austria, and just took it, with no resistance. Boom. This is Germany now. Next, he demanded to be given the Sudetenland, an area of Czechoslovakia with many ethnic Germans. The Allies held a meeting with Hitler in Munich and said:

Britain: Ok, we’re going to give you…

Czechoslovakia: Hang on, this meeting is about my territory, shouldn’t I come to the meeting to?

Britain: Anyway, we’re going to give you what you want.

Germany: Really?

Britain: Really.

Germany: Just like that?

Britain: Just like that.

Germany: What’s the catch?

Britain: Just sign this piece of paper saying you won’t invade the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Germany: Ok.

Narrator: Then Chamberlain returned home victorious, waving his signed piece of paper in the air, declaring a crisis has been averted, and the continuation of World Peace, and we built a statue of Chamberlain in his honour, and every day on the 30th September we celebrate Chamberlain day and…

France: Hitler’s invading the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Britain: What?

France: He’s invading the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Chamberlain: Oh. You lied to me!

Hitler: What do you expect, I’m Hitler!

Narrator: Mussolini was also getting in on the action. He thought to himself:

Mussolini: Isn’t there a not yet colonised country that is so underdeveloped that the people would be defending themselves against our tanks with literal bows and arrows and wooden spears? Oh, there is? Abyssinia? Fantastic!

Narrator: And so, he took it. They also occupied Albania to control the entrance to the Adriatic Sea.

Then, in another incident that was MAYBE (probably) staged by the Japanese, gunfire was exchanged between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge, and the Japanese launched yet another invasion against China. They took Beijing and Shanghai, and then marched on China’s then capital, Nanking.

Back in Europe, Germany and Italy made their relationship status official, by signing the Pact of Steel. Then, Hitler looked towards Poland, and the Polish Corridor that split Germany in two. At this point, the Allies really had to put their foot down, and warned Germany that an invasion of Poland would mean war. Hitler had planned to continue his advance eastward, but didn’t want to fight a war on two fronts, so, for now, he made an alliance with Stalin, saying:

Hitler: How about we both invade Poland and split it between the two of us, and I definitely won’t not refrain from not betraying you sometime in the future.

Stalin: Sounds…good.

Narrator: This new alliance stunned the west. On 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The Poles fought hard but were no match for the two giants crashing down on either side.

Both Britain and France wanted to avoid a repeat of World War 1, so they did very little to attack Germany over the winter.

Neutral Sweden had been exporting iron ore to Germany via neutral Norway, so the Allies asked them if they could please stop. They said no. Then, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, so the Allies said:

Allies: How about we land troops in Norway, and move them across Sweden to go help out your good pal Finland? And on the way maybe take control of all your iron fields.

Narrator: But Norway and Sweden still said no, so the UK mined the waters around Norway to force any transport ships into international waters, and they also attacked a German tanker they found in the area. Hitler realised what the Allies were up to, and he quickly moved to secure his supply of iron ore, and invaded Denmark and then Norway. The Allies rushed to land troops at ports along the coast, but Germany had already taken control of Norway’s airfields, and their air superiority decided the contest. After this defeat, Chamberlain resigned, and he was replaced by Winston Churchill.

Hitler then turned his attentions towards France. The French had left the Ardennes, an area filled with hills and forests, under-defended, as they thought it was naturally impenetrable. Well, the Germans were about to penetrate it with everything they had. They moved the German army through, circled the allied forces in Belgium, and many allies escaped by sea back to Britain at Dunkirk. With the British and the best French forces depleted, the Germans breezed through and France fell. What Germany hadn’t managed to do in World War 1, Hitler had done, just like that.

Germany, Italy and Japan signed the ‘Tripartite Pact’, bringing their alliance even closer. Mussolini, seeing Hitler’s successes, tried to take more land. He tried to take British Somaliland, which went pretty well. He then tried to take Egypt, and that went less well. He then tried to take Greece, and that went really badly. Churchill began referring to Italy as ‘Europe’s soft underbelly’ and began to favour a military campaign from the south through Italy. All of this concerned Hitler. He had been getting friendly with Hungary and twisted their arm into signing the Tripartite Pact. Romania also joined for protection against the Soviet Union.

When war first broke out, American public opinion was strongly against joining in. In the 1940 election, Republican candidate, Wendell Willkie, said:

Willkie: I will not send any young Americans to die in Europe.

Narrator: The sitting president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, said:

Roosevelt: I will also not send any young Americans to die in Europe. Unless I have to. Then I might.

Narrator: And Roosevelt won.

Churchill: Can you please join the war?

Roosevelt: Sorry, Winston. No can do. But here, have some weapons.

Narrator: When the allies continue to push Italy back in Africa, Hitler realised he would have to do something. He went to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and said:

Hitler: I’m going to move troops through to you to get to Greece, so either join us or, you know, be invaded.

Narrator: Bulgaria chose to join them. Yugoslavia chose to be invaded. Greece then fell to a joint German-Italian invasion. The axis powers then pushed Britain back in Africa to Egypt, and the Brits didn’t seem like any real threat for now.

Hitler: Hey, Soviet Union, look out.

Narrator: Both Churchill and Roosevelt had warned Stalin that a German invasion was coming, but Stalin chose to ignore them.

Germany’s initial victories in Russia were staggering, and Japan didn’t want to miss the victory bus. Their war in China had come to a standstill, but they wanted to keep expanding their sphere of influence and getting raw materials, so they started making plans to expand southward, but there was one problem. South-East Asia was heavily colonised by America and Great Britain. It was also full of ocean, and ocean meant naval combat, and their navy was no match for the US and the UK. So they thought:

Japan: Wouldn’t it be nice if we could destroy their navies before we begin our conquest?

Narrator: So they attacked the US navy in Pearl Harbour. In response to this attack, Roosevelt and Churchill declared war on Japan. Hitler then declared war on America, even though he didn’t have to, so he kind of shot himself in the foot there. Just the foot for now.

Japan took many islands shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbour, threatening India and Northern Australia, but their victories had been based on speed, not power, and power would eventually catch up with them.

The Germans were getting pushed back on the eastern front, the Italians and Germans were squeezed out of Africa, and the Americans were taking back many islands that Japan had previously taken. Mussolini was removed from power when America and Britain launched an invasion into southern Italy, and Italy started trying to make peace. Hitler wasn’t surprised, and invaded Italy to meet the invasion from the south. Everything came to a halt when winter set in.

The Germans knew an allied invasion of France was coming, but they didn’t know where. Thanks to ally and resistance deception tactics, they thought there was a pretty good chance it would come in Calais, but actually, they were going to land in Normandy, because it was less fortified, and the beaches were nicer. On 6th June 1944, American, British and Canadian troops landed on French beaches in Normandy, and they began moving southward. In August, allied troops landed in the south of France to little resistance. On one beach, all they found was French man handing out champagne.

The Germans were soon pushed out of France, and the allies started to push the Japanese out of Burma. After a last ditch attempt to push his forces through the Ardennes failed, the German army promptly collapsed. In his bunker, Hitler realised all hope was lost, and committed suicide. Berlin fell, and with it, Hitler’s dreams of a great German empire. Japan surrendered soon after when the Americans dropped 2 atomic bombs.

The war had been caused by the Great Depression, meaning Hitler was elected, and the Treaty of Versailles, which all Germans hated. The Second World War had been more destructive than the first. In its aftermath, two very powerful superpowers with two very different ideologies had come out victorious, and the tension between the two of them would create a new kind of war. A very cold one.

The Cold War

Narrator: Back in 1917, the Germans put Lenin on a train to Russia hoping that he and his mates would create an internal crisis and create an internal crisis he did. He overthrew the government and Lenin was in charge. He pulled out of the first world war, made the country communist, started a 3 year long civil war, got shot, broke the economy, caused a famine, and then he died. On his deathbed, he said:

Lenin: Tell whoever I put in charge of giving people jobs not to let that Stalin become the next leader. By the way, who did I put in charge of giving people jobs?

Russian Man: That would be Stalin, sir.

Narrator: And then he died. Stalin still had some opponents in the Communist Party, but conveniently, all of them were either arrested or disappeared, so that was lucky. Then a short man with a silly moustache tried to take over the world and pushed the Russians all the way back to Moscow, before the Russians, aided by their faithful ally, the winter, pushed the Germans all the way back to Berlin. Being allies, the Soviets, Americans and British were friends and held a couple of conferences towards the end of the war to decide what would happen next.

Truman: Stalin, you’re in charge of Eastern Europe. Now, we want you to let them all hold elections.

Stalin: Oh yes, of course, elections!

Truman: And these elections will be free and fair, right?

Stalin: Oh yes, certainly, free and fair, definitely free and fair.

Communist, Communist, Communist, Communist, Communist, Communist. If that’s not free and fair, I don’t know what is.

Narrator: Soviet puppet governments were established in Eastern Europe as a buffer zone between the USSR and the west. Churchill gave a speech in America saying that an ‘iron curtain’ had divided Europe in two. This was crucial. After World War 1, America had gone into isolation, but this speech made sure that they didn’t go into isolation again. The relationship between the old allies was deteriorating fast.

Britain and America intervened in the Greek civil war to prevent the Communist take-over, and Truman announced the Truman doctrine, which basically said:

Truman: Those guys are not cool, cannot be trusted, and we will do everything in our power to prevent the spread of Communism around the world.

Narrator: Many view this moment as the official declaration of the Cold War. Stalin wanted the west out of West Berlin so East Berliners couldn’t see the prosperous west, so he said:

Stalin: Hey, guess what, I’m blockading all of your supply routes to West Berlin. What are you gonna do about it?

Truman: I guess we’ll just fly the stuff in.

Stalin: …alright, Truman. You win this round.

Narrator: Stalin’s aggressive scared the west, but not as much as the Soviets getting their own A-Bomb in 1949, a couple of decades before America expected them to. The USA no longer had a nuclear monopoly, and the world knew that if a major war broke out between the two superpowers, it would be more destructive than anyone could imagine, so it was comforting when Stalin came out and said that war between the Soviet Union and the west was unlikely. Oh wait, inevitable? He said it was inevitable.

USA: Hey, you know who I haven’t checked in on in a while? My good friend China! Woah! What happened to you?

Narrator: What happened to them was a civil war that had been going on since 1927, and the Communists won. The now communist China and the Soviet Union signed a mutual defence treaty.

The Soviets and America mostly refrained from direct conflicts against each other, but rather influencing other wars, such as the Korean war in 1950, where the Soviet supported north fought against the American supported south. In 1952, Eisenhower won the US Presidential Election, and, in 1953, Stalin died and was replaced by Nikita Khrushchev. He held a meeting where he said:

Khrushchev: Hey, you know how Stalin was killing and imprisoning us for doing basically nothing? Yeah, he was kind of mean.

Everyone: \*gasps\*.

Khrushchev: I really don’t know how this is news to you.

Narrator: What followed was a period known as the ‘Khrushchev Thaw’. Many hoped that he would bring about the end of the Cold War. How did that work out? Well, an uprising in East Germany was brutally suppressed, a revolution in Hungary was brutally suppressed, and demonstrations in Poland was brutally suppressed, although he did allow some mild reform.

In 1960, an American U2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union, and Khrushchev was furious.

Khrushchev: Who’s this?

Eisenhower: He’s a…high altitude weather enthusiast, who flew off course.

Khrushchev: Ok, that sounds plausible, wait a minute! Why does he have a gun and a poison needle?

Eisenhower: Because…he’s a…very naughty high-altitude weather enthusiast.

Narrator: Much to America’s concern, the Soviet Union seemed to be ahead in the Space Race, and there seemed to be a missile gap in the Soviet’s favour. Tensions increased further when both sides upgraded their atomic bombs to hydrogen bombs. John F Kennedy was elected as US President in 1960.

East Berliners were still freely allowed to travel to west Berlin and see how prosperous it was. Many, often the brightest and the best, were deciding to stay there. The Soviets wanted to stop the ‘brain drain’, so Khrushchev announced this:

Khrushchev: We’re going to build a wall, and it’s going to be a beautiful wall, and it’s going to keep out all the Mexicans.

Advisor: \*whispers\* No, sir, it’s going to keep in all the East Berliners.

Khrushchev: Oh, sorry, it’s going to keep IN all the Mexicans.

Advisor: \*face palms\*

Narrator: On August 13th, 1961, Berliners woke up to find their city divided in 2. A barbed wire fence was erected, and, over time, a wall was constructed.

The following year, the world nearly came to an end with the Cuban Missile Crisis. Cuba had a ruthless dictator, which the Americans did nothing about as he was anti Communist. Cuba fell to a socialist revolution and America got worried. So, the US started training Cuban exiles to remove the socialist system, but Kennedy wanted to hid US involvement, so scaled back US air support, and the Bay of Pigs invasion failed. Castro, the Cuban leader, was still worried about a US attack. Meanwhile, Khrushchev had several medium-range nuclear missiles that couldn’t reach America but could if they were placed in Cuba. The US set up a blockade around Cuba, and US military was set to Defcon 2, Defcon 1 meant war. The Soviets shot down a US spy plane over Cuba, and a Soviet nuclear submarine in the Caribbean mistakenly believed war had already broken out, and two of the senior officers gave the go ahead to fire its nuclear torpedo, but the third, Vasili Arkhipov, refused to authorise the decision. The day before the US was due to set the date of the Cuban invasion, Khrushchev said:

Khrushchev: You know if you removed your missiles from Turkey, we’d remove ours from Cuba.

Kennedy: Yeah…yeah that sounds good to me.

Narrator: The following year, on 22nd November 1963, the day before the first episode of Doctor Who aired, President John F Kennedy was assassinated and, for some reason, everyone thought that was more important than Doctor Who. Khrushchev was also removed from power after it was seen that the Soviets ‘lost’ the Cuban Missile Crisis, and he was replaced by Brezhnev. America worked out that it was in fact America that held the nuclear advantage. The main reason that war never broke out was MAD (mutually assured destruction): if both sides knew they would be completely destroyed in a nuclear war, neither would risk starting one.

In 1966, two planes collided mid-air, and four hydrogen bombs were fell near the Spanish town below. This was the fourteenth time America had lost a nuclear bomb since 1950. No one knows how many bombs the Soviets lost. So sleep well tonight.

Along came the Vietnam War. Similar to the Korean war, it had a Soviet supported north against a US supported south. America had been sending troops to help the south, but, in 1968, Nixon called the troops home and, 2 years later, the south fell.

Both America and the Soviet Union needed to reduce military spending to improve their economy, so détente started. A number of treaties were signed between Brezhnev and Nixon, including the 1972 SALT agreement that limited nuclear weapons. Everything was going great for Nixon, until it was discovered that back home, he was being a very naughty boy and violating Constitutional Protocol.

Nixon: I’m announcing today my resignation as President, and I’m passing the office to my vice president, Gerald Ford.

Brezhnev: Wow! You mean in America the people can actually remove their leader when he breaks the law? Why not just rule by force? Where’s the corruption?

Ford: And my first act as President is to pardon Nixon.

Brezhnev: Ah, there it is.

Narrator: Carter won the 1976 election, and he met with Brezhnev in Vienna where they signed another Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. But the Soviets were still putting down attempts at reform in the Eastern Block. America were scared that policy to the Soviets had become too soft, and, in 1980, they elected Ronald Reagan. Reagan restarted the arms race, and the Soviets saw this as America preparing for war. They felt especially threatened as their relationship with Communist China had deteriorated. It looked like the world was going right back to mid-20th century tension. But then Brezhnev got really old and died, and he was replaced by a really old guy who died, who was replaced by another really old guy who died, and he was replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev. He allowed people to criticise the government, people could enjoy western culture, the media interviewed Margaret Thatcher, but, most importantly, the Soviet people could now enjoy Pizza Hut. The INF treaty saw all intermediate-range missiles eliminated. Reagan’s tone towards the Soviet Union began to soften.

Gorbachev allowed the Eastern Block to reform, and the Hungarian leaders began planning free, multi-party elections. Poland came next, and the anti-Soviet party won 99 of 100 seats. Demonstrations in East Germany led to the removal of a hard-line Stalinist leader and the government made an announcement on 9th November 1989 that the travel ban between the East and the West was being lifted. The change wasn’t supposed to come into effect until the next day, and the guards were still ordered to shoot anyone who tried to cross, but, that night, huge crowds gathered at the crossing points and they were allowed to cross. Some climbed the wall and began to break it down. Elections in Bulgaria, a peaceful revolution in Czechoslovakia and a violent on in Romania ended Communist authority in the Eastern Block. America decided to stay away and let the changed happen.

Gorbachev had given the people freedom to demonstrate, and Russians demonstrated for an end to Communist single-party rule. In 1989, an election was held, in which Boris Yeltsin led a growing democratic movement. Yeltsin was elected President of Russia, and what followed was a power struggle between Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

Communist hardliners were horrified at what Gorbachev was allowing, so they briefly kidnapped him and tried to set up their own emergency government, but Yeltsin and his supporters went to the hard-line Communists and were like:

Yeltsin: No, we have a tank.

Narrator: And so, they let Gorbachev go.

Gorbachev: That was a close one, thanks Boris.

Yeltsin: No problem, and thanks for all the great freedom you’ve given us.

Gorbachev: Any time, pal.

Yeltsin: And just so you know, I’ve used that freedom to go behind your back and make a deal with Ukraine and Belarus to dissolve the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev: Dude. Uncool.

Narrator: And so it was, the Soviet Union was dissolved, and the country was officially called Russia again. The Cold War had come about after the Soviets and America had emerged as superpowers after World War 2, and both sides wanting to stamp out the other side’s ideology and promote their own. During the Cold War, the two superpowers influenced wars that would have been brutal enough without them, and one of these was the Arab Israeli conflict.

The Arab Israeli Conflict

Narrator: About 2000 years ago, the Romans invaded a lot of Europe, a bit of Africa and a bit of Asia. Some people, like the English, didn’t put up too much fight after they were initially invaded as we saw the benefits of the Roman roads, but others, like the Jews, didn’t like the Romans occupying their land, so rebelled many times. The Romans didn’t seem to like this all that much, so they scattered the Jews around their empire to prevent them uprising.

In the 19th century, there was a strong feeling of nationalism everyone, including nationalism for the Jews, which was called ‘Zionism’. In the 1800s and early 1900s, the idea of Zionism, at least on the land that was supposedly promised to the Jews by God, as that land now Palestine, which was under Ottoman control. The area included Jerusalem, which was incredibly holy for both the Jews and the Arabs, and the Ottomans were Arabs, so weren’t going to give up their third holiest city to the Jews.

Then came the 3 contradictory promises Britain made. They made a deal with the Palestinian Arabs saying they would gain independence if they rose up against the Ottomans, they made a deal with France that they would split the Ottoman territory between them once the war was over, and promised the Jews to help them get Israel for their own.

When the Ottoman empire fell, the British got a mandate of Palestine. Jews began moving in, and the Palestinians saw that Ottoman rule had been exchanged for British. They also felt that the British favoured the Jews, and so set up terrorist groups to defend their land.

After World War 2, the British handed over control to the UN, and they favoured a 2-state solution. When Israel existed, surrounding Arab countries invaded. They started well, but, with Soviet help, Israel managed to repel their attacks, and the Arab countries stopped their invasion. Palestine ceased to exist, as Israel had expanded their borders, and Arab countries kept the areas they had marched through for themselves. Over the course of the next 40 years, there were several Palestinian terrorist attacks and wars between Israel and Egypt, with USA supporting Israel and the Soviets supporting Egypt. Israel won all of these wars.

The Arab Israeli conflict was caused by several things, the Romans banishing the Jews, the Ottoman empire collapsing after the first world war, and the holocaust creating international sympathy for the Jews.

The Important Wars

Narrator: You’ve heard about the two world wars, the most destructive and brutal of their time, you’ve heard about the war that nearly destroyed the planet, you’ve heard about the revolution that installed a Communist regime, and you’ve heard about the conflict based on religious divides. But those don’t matter. We’re now going to get onto the important wars. The wars that everyone cares about.

The Football War

Narrator: Quick, you have 2 seconds to name the two countries involved in this war.

You’re wrong, unless you got it right, then good job. They are, of course, El Salvador and Honduras. One thing these two countries have in common is that they are both fanatic about football. But do they love it so much that they would go to war over it? You bet.

If you look at the two countries on a map, you’ll notice that Honduras is bigger than El Salvador, but El Salvador actually had a larger population, mostly made up of farmers, and there wasn’t enough land for them to live and work on, so they started moving from El Salvador to Honduras in search of land, and by the 1960s, a huge number of illegal immigrants had crossed over the border from El Salvador.

Meanwhile in Honduras, it’s 1963 Arellano has just staged a military coup to prevent the rise of Communism and is now the military leader of the country. But he’s a little insecure about the legitimacy of his leadership, so he holds an election, and wins, but his opponents say:

Opponents: Hey man, that election was clearly corrupt, and also, you’ve been bribed by the rich American banana companies who are taking all of our bananas tax-free, and now our economy is in ruins.

Narrator: And everyone started to get mad at him. Now, if you ever find yourself the barely legitimate military leader of a corrupt Central American country and you start getting into hot water, here’s a bit of advice that has been tried and tested throughout the centuries. Blame something else.

So he blamed the Salvadoran immigrants for stealing the land and all the jobs and ruining Honduras. The immigrants found themselves under attack by the hostile locals. Egged on by the rich American banana companies who wanted all the bananas for themselves, the Honduran government began evicting Salvadoran immigrants, who had been living on the land for generations, and started sending them back to El Salvador. The Salvadoran elite were furious and protested, citing moral reasons, but really, they were just getting a little too crowded. So tensions were about as high as they could be, but then

FOOTBALL!

It’s the 1970 World Cup qualifiers, and both countries finished top of their qualifying tables, so it was now time for them to play against each other in a series of matches. The first match took place in Honduras and, the night before the game, Hondurans gathered outside the Salvadoran team’s hotel making noise and taunting them. The next day, Honduras defeated the exhausted El Salvador team 1-0 with a late 90th minute goal. After the match, a young Salvadoran fan, unable to bare her country’s defeat, shot herself. The government glorified the incident, turning her into a national hero, and many carried photos of her to the next game.

The second match took place in El Salvador and, this time, it was the Hondurans who were forced to endure a sleepless night, and, the next day, before the match, instead of the Honduran flag, the Salvadorans raised a dirty rag, so if you’re trying to reduce tension, good job. The Hondurans were easily beaten 3-0 by El Salvador. The Honduran team fled home in a bulletproof bus with rocks being thrown at them, and the manager reportedly told the players that they were lucky they lost. In response to the defeat, Hondurans began terrorising the Salvadoran settlers even more, in some cases throwing them off their land and burning down their homes. Many fled back to El Salvador.

The third match was in Mexico. El Salvador won 3-2, knocking Honduras out of the tournament. Back in Honduras, attacks on Salvadoran immigrants increased, and, with their people under attack and an unmanageable refugee crisis, El Salvador severed all diplomatic ties with Honduras and declared war.

The Football War is also known as the 100 hours war, as that was how long it lasted. Despite initial successes for El Salvador, the war quickly became a stalemate, and El Salvador removed forces from Honduras with the promise from the Organisation of American States that the El Salvador immigrants would be protected.

El Salvador lost every game in the world cup and was knocked out in the first round. The war was caused by terrorising immigrants and football. But were there any even crazier wars in the 20th century.

The Great Emu War

Narrator: The Great Depression, which I talked about earlier, happened, and Australia was more badly affected than most, as it relied heavily on its export industries, and in the current economic climate, no one was buying. To make things worse, Australia had introduced its own currency, and picked it onto the gold standard by the British pound, but then the UK started messing with its own take on the gold standard, and if this is starting to sound confusing, let me simplify it.

Australia: Hey, looks like my car has broken down, could you maybe give me a tow?

UK: No problem, friend, I’ve got you. \*tows Australia’s car off a cliff\*

Narrator: More economic downturn.

It was Australia’s farmers that were suffering the most. After the First World War, Australia had given returning veterans land for farming, but with the current economic crisis, the farmers just weren’t making enough money, and many left to go find work in the cities, but for those who remained, things were about to get worse.

The emu was Australia’s national bird, and it was a pest. They usually return to the coast after their breeding season, but suddenly found Western Australia full of lush, wet farmland. 20,000 emus cost the already struggling farmers millions more pounds in lost crops and damages. The situation couldn’t continue like this. Something had to be done.

In 1932, the farmers turned to the government for help. You’d think they’d no to the minister of agriculture, but the farmers were like:

Farmers: No, this is a job for the military.

Narrator: So they went to George Pearce, the Minister of Defence. That’s right, Australia was to go to war with the emus. But not everyone was happy with the idea.

Opposition: This is barbaric! We can’t go slaughtering thousands of our own national bird!

Pearce: Come on, guys. The machine guns will make it quick and painless.

Opposition: Machine guns? You’re using machine guns? This is animal cruelty!

Pearce: Look, I know it’s unusual, but it’s not like we’re poachers turning the birds into feather hats. Think of the benefits. It will be great target practice for our boys, the government can say it took action, and I get a nice new feather hat.

Narrator: Of course, Pearce first made the farmers sign an agreement saying that they would pay for the whole thing, and that Pearce wouldn’t take any of the blame if the operation, that was clearly very stupid, turned out to indeed be stupid.

The operation went ahead, but the evil emu population of Western Australia had a plan.

Emu 1: Ok, so it looks like the humans are coming for us, but check this out, I’ve come up with an amazing plan. See if you can follow me here, ok? When the humans approach, we run away.

Emu 2: Sir…you’re a genius.

Narrator: The first battle of the war was at Campion. The men opened fire. The emus split into smaller groups and ran in every direction. The men were only able to kill what they called ‘a number of birds’, but the vast majority got away. Winner of battle 1: emus.

Many of the emus were able to take multiple bullets, but still run at full speed to safety. They decided they needed to get closer to the emus, so they tried sneaking up on a large number of emus and firing at a short range. Maybe they were just unlucky, but it is my professional opinion that the emus were magic, as both guns jammed after just 12 birds were killed, and most escaped. Winner of battle 2: emus.

The men were feeling a little humiliated after losing to a pack of discount ostriches, so they decided to move further south, where the emus were said to be tamer.

The operation was a fiasco and the press had a field day. In parliament, Pearce was lambasted, and the opposition party members suggested that medals should be handed out to the emus, who had won every round so far. Pearce, feeling quite humiliated, called the operation off, but four days later, the famers approached again and said:

Farmers: Hey man, the emus are still eating all our crops. Can you send the army back out here?

Pearce: Sure, why not?

Narrator: This time, the army had learned the emus’ guerrilla tactics, and were much more successful, with reports suggesting men were cutting down 300 emus every week.

Despite the success, the media had lost interest in the whole thing, but with 1000 emus killed, Pearce finally ended the operation, and returned to Parliament declaring victory for the humans.

Opposition: So there were 20,000 emus out there destroying crops and you’ve killed 1000.

Pearce: Yeah.

Opposition: Meaning there are still 19,000 emus out there to destroy crops.

Pearce: Yep.

Opposition: And in addition, you’ve burned through 10,000 rounds of ammunition, meaning you’ve wasted 10 rounds per confirmed kill.

Pearce: Yup.

Opposition: Yeah, I’m gonna go ahead and call this one for the emus.

Pearce: \*whispers\* at least I got a new feather hat.

Opposition: What?

Pearce: What?

Narrator: So in the end, the emus won the Great Emu War of 1932.

Conclusion

Narrator: The Arab Israeli conflict came about because of the holocaust in World War 2. Before the second world war, the Americans had no interest in what the Soviets were doing, and the Soviets didn’t seem to interested in setting up Communist puppet states in other countries before World War 2, so you can argue that the Cold War was caused by World War 2. World War 2 was caused by the Treaty of Versailles, which was caused by World War 1, so World War 2 was caused by World War 1. World War 1 was caused by a number of things, the assassination, Serbia’s greed, and the Franco German war of 1870/71. Franz Ferdinand was supposedly going to be kinder to the Slavic people, so if Serbia and the Serbs hadn’t been so greedy, maybe the war could have been averted. The Franco German war of 1870/71 was caused by Prussia wanting to unite Germany’s states without invading, so if Prussia hadn’t been so greedy, that war wouldn’t have happened, meaning that World War 1, World War 2, the Cold War and the Arab Israeli conflict didn’t happen either. World War 1 showed that the alliance systems make a small war turn into a big one, with what could have been a small war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia turned into a World War. And the Russian Revolution came about because the Tsar did nothing about the famines, so if it wasn’t for Prussia and Serbia’s greed, the alliance system, and if the Tsar had been competent, World War 1, World War 2, The Cold War and the Arab Israeli conflict wouldn’t have happened, and we would have been left with the Football War, the Emu War, and, of course, the greatest war of all time in 1981 where a man took on the full might of Australia single handed, and won. That man was Ian Terence Botham, although, admittedly, he did have a bit of help from Graham Dilley and Bob Willis.