

Soldiers in World War II: Expectations versus the Reality of War

~~During the years, 1914 – 1918~~ The expectations of soldiers ~~enter going into~~ World War I (WWI) during the years 1914 to 1918 were, to a large extent, shaped by society's views. ~~H~~ ~~owever~~ ~~and~~, as the soldiers soon discovered, these expectations were starkly very different to the reality of the war. S

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~~1-~~ Soldiers advanced into the war with commonly held beliefs ~~and~~. ~~p~~Pre-established ideas ~~about~~ how and why wars were fought. ~~r was conducted were shaped by the culture of the time.~~

~~2-~~ It was these ideas about the nobility of war and their patriotic duty as Englishmen which motivated men and views towards war which created a push for men to enlist. These ideas also in the war. Thus creating created a shift in society's views towards the men who did not, those not enlist, who were then seeing being established as as cowardly. Once in the trenches, English soldiers soon realised that their expectations

~~3-~~ ~~However the beliefs~~ of war were vastly different to the reality, particularly in terms of ~~methods of~~ ~~Battle~~ warfare and conditions in the trenches, which were so unlike previous battles.

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~~4-~~ The realities of the war were to a great extent concealed ~~from~~ the outside world. The vast ~~amounts numbers~~ of dead and injured soldiers were all largely kept under rapshidden from the public in order to ~~as the war had to continue~~ ensure the continuation of the war. Significantly, it

~~5-~~ ~~It w~~as not only the deaths and injuries ~~which was~~ ~~that were the~~ tragic outcomes of ~~World War I, WWI~~, but also the ways in which the experience of the war affected the veterans ~~it~~ psychologically ~~affected soldiers over time~~ in the years and decades that followed.

~~1-~~ The expectations of the soldiers regarding the war they would fight ~~physical war held by soldiers~~ were shaped by the culture of the age, which fantasising glorified the setting of the war and likened WWI to resemble previous battles. ~~War was seen as a romantic notion to society~~ ~~During~~ previous wars, battles had been fought hand to hand and at close range. Men

used swords, knives or guns and charged and retreated across the battlefield, (i.e. they were a war of movement). The ideology of Romantic notions of war drew on images of men dressed in their war attire uniforms with pride, with medals lining their chests, charging across the field. The battles were over quickly and each one was structured, based on previously planned tactics. The soldiers of 1914 went into war with the expectation that this war would be fought in the same way. They saw war as a noble enterprise, which would begin and end quickly. Of course the fear of death loomed, but this was largely the fear of being shot by a gun, which these young men imagined would be the worst possible death they would meet. It was these romantic notions of war that encouraged men in Britain to enlist with this whole romantic notion created by the culture of the time lulled soldiers entering the war into a false sense of security for what was to come.

Many young British men who volunteered to fight in WWI did so in order to meet society's crushing expectations of them, and to play the dutiful and patriotic role that they knew they must.

2. Soldiers enlisting in the war were channelled into a duty to their nation, again through the culture of the time. By becoming a soldier, you established yourself these men established themselves within society as being heroic, this being a push for some men to enlist. However one of the common reasons for volunteering was to avoid being ridiculed as a coward. A more common and truthful reason behind enlisting for men, was the persona of a coward given to those not joining. The push for men to enlist in the war military can be seen through the many propaganda posters of the time. These posters used guilt as a motivating factor to encourage men to join the war, using slogans such as; 'Who's absent? Is it you?'. This writing slogan was written being above and below the image of Winston Churchill, with images of soldiers standing to attention in the background. This shows that the call for volunteers was serious, makes the request for enrolling serious, as the Prime Minister himself was calling for men. This call for men to enlist was further strengthened by the implication that it was further made serious by the fact that it was considered a man's duty loyalty to his nation, and that by joining, men could demonstrate their true patriotism. These notions created with this reasoning

~~there was~~ great pressure for a generation of young British men. ~~Added to this was~~ There was ~~also~~ the belief that the war would ~~ahelp to~~ achieve the progression and development of society. A poster with the slogan; 'The only road for an Englishman-' ~~depicts has~~ soldiers marching through a ~~rubble~~ town in rubbles. This ~~is~~ instilled the idea that if men did not volunteer, in the men the idea that without men enlisting, things are not going to stop; the war would not end, and towns would continue to be ~~going to keep being~~ destroyed. Thus many Englishmen of the time felt that the had a noble call of duty, and that to refuse it would be cowardly. ~~e expectation from soldiers was that this was a call of duty, and would be considered cowardly if they did not go to war.~~

~~3-~~ The expectations held by the ~~of~~ soldiers of how the war would be fought for the war ahead were, however, erroneous. WWI, The battles ~~unlike previous wars, ly were was~~ not a war of movement, (although that was the objective). ~~At-~~ In the beginning, battles did involve eed advancing forward to capture towns ~~etc, such as for example~~ in the Battle of Liege on 5the 5th August 1914. However, this all changed in late 1914 when opposing forces met a stalemate on there was a change of tact, and in late 1914 on the Western Front, and each side began to dig trenches ~~were dug~~. The endeavour for ~~purpose of~~ battles was became to either try and to capture the opposition's trench so as to in order to move forward, or prevent the enemy from moving forward, and destroy them, by holding your the position. The strategy for many battles was to constantly bombard the opposition and then charge over to their trench when it was believed they were at their weakest, thus capturing their trenches. This aspect of trench warfare was depicted in the films All Quiet on the Western Front and Oh What a Lovely War. Military commanders were slow in recognising that old battle tactics would not work due to the lack of movement, and but they gradually changed their tactics. New weaponry was introduced, such as hand grenades and shell artillery. Shells were the most effective (and deadly) weapon used in trench warfare. When exploded, shells created ~~They made~~ a hole thirty feet deep and fifty feet across, and anyone in close range of the explosion would be killed or maimed. They Soldiers did not have time to plan where shells would be fired, as the strategy was to steadily bombard ment the opposition ~~to weaken them~~. Further, t The conditions in the trenches were appalling. Soldiers slept, ate and lived with their guns at the ready. At any moment, there could be a raid from

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opposition's trenches. The sound of gunfire was ever present. A shell could explode at any moment. The call to go 'over the top' could happen at any second.

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4. People back home in England to a certain degree continued to support the war, as they were not aware of the terrible atrocities and hardships that their husbands, brothers and sons did not know of the realities the men were facing on the front lines. Letters sent to and from the front line trenches masked the reality of war, as the men did not want to explain the truth to their loved ones. The lack of food, widespread diseases and illnesses, as well as the muddy, unhygienic conditions were all not fully explained-revealed to the public to the truest extent. The amount-numbers of men killed, and the way in which men they died was also mostly withheld. Soldiers would send letters to the friends-families of men who had died, explaining how writing that their death had been quick and painless, though were in many cases they were in fact slow and painful. This was especially the case for men hit by shell shrapnel or who had inhaled deadly fumes from gas attacks especially. (Toxic Gases was another weapon invented were developed as weapons. Devices were created which, when which when exploded, let out a ground covering toxic gas, which effects of inhaling included 'burnt ing-out' of the lungs, face and eyes when inhaled.) Any injured men whose health was were stable enough for them to be shipped home to travel home were sent on trains at night to side-in stations which would arrive at night, at small, out-of-the-way stations. Newspapers were also censored by the government Facts were also censored within newspapers. People back-at home in England did not know the true statistics of the war. The commanders of the military and the government ensured that this was the case so that did this so that the people 'back-at home' did not public would not know of the vast amounts of injured. Without support from the home front, the war would not be able to continue, as this is where the artillery was coming from.

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5. Men experienced significant came under great psychological stress during the war because of the constant and unpredictable risk of death (as well as witnessing unspeakable atrocities and the deaths of their comrades). This constant level of stress had a severely

negative effect on ~~war veterans~~ men after the war, both physically and mentally. Some events scarred men so deeply they never forgot them and their personalities were changed forever. Fighting across trenches meant that the soldiers did not always see the faces of the enemies that they killed and in the first months of the war many men were not conscious of the consequences or reality of what they were doing. However, it was not long before the reality of these murders set in for soldiers, most of whom would inevitably suffer terrible guilt for their actions. ~~some events brought men back to reality of their killing~~. Some came to believe that life had no meaning. ~~Because~~ Due to this, soldiers found it hard to return to their normal lives ~~slip back into normal life~~; their ~~re~~ minds would not stop running through reliving the trauma of past events. Extreme nervous breakdowns occurred which were known as shell shock, or battle fatigue. Symptoms included clawing at their faces, rocking back and forth, and shouting orders at invisible people.

Conclusion:

The reality of war was much worse than the young British volunteers believed it would be ~~what had been expected by the soldiers~~, however the war had to go on. The ideology surrounding WWI ~~for the upcoming war~~ was created through ~~shaped by~~ the culture of the time. ~~this, it was this~~ he emphasis on patriotic duty and the belief that men should become soldiers so that they would be considered ~~that they would become heroes~~ which, as well as the 'duty to ones nation' caused men to enlist into the war. However, these romantic notions quickly dissipated when soldiers were faced with the stark reality of a terrible and atrocious war when they entered ~~somewhat of a different situation when they started battle~~. Men did not only have a sudden death by gun shot to fear, but also the possibility of a slow and painful death ~~There was not just the possibility of a quick death by gunshot, but also by~~ caused by ~~toxic gas~~ and shell fire. The reality of ~~m~~ The romantic notion of war was crushed, and men lying in muddy trenches or hospital beds with missing limbs did not seem ~~was not~~ heroic. This ~~Not all the truth of~~ reality of life in the front lines was at the front ~~was not~~ exposed to people back at home. Disclosure ~~Censorship~~ of information from in newspapers and letters meant that the publicy did not know what was really going on. The authorities ~~government and military authorities~~ had begun a war, and therefore they believed they had to finish it, no matter how many people were sacrificed.

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Psychological effects....

