

# The History Shuffle - World War I

By Carson Elmore Jr. June 2013

*All:*

We are the cast, playing our parts,  
Trying to rule the world with our smarts.  
We are the ones who did the Trouble,  
And we're here to do the History Shuffle.

*Wilhelm II, to 1914:*

Vicky's my Gran, so it's in my blood  
An empire like hers' what I want.  
Bismarck complied, but I didn't like him,  
I rule by myself, so that's why I sacked him.  
Russia doesn't like my Middle East aims,  
And Britain I'm challenging over the waves.  
When the spark arrived, my TNT was ready,  
The First World War they all blame on Willy.  
I'm called the guy the who started the Trouble,  
And I'm here to do the History Shuffle.

*Austria Hungary, to 1914:*

I was rotting away and everyone knew it,  
But I wanted Bosnia and by treaties I owned it.  
Serbia just seceded from me,  
And our speaking terms were hardly friendly.  
When the heir to my throne went and got himself shot  
Guess who I blamed, and guess who I fought.  
Alliances caused the rest of the Trouble—  
All of us here on the History Shuffle.

*Britain, to 1914:*

I ruled the world, with power cemented—  
You want an arms race? No problem, I'll win it.  
I don't like to hoard, but others encroaching  
On Africa and India are sort of annoying.  
Everyone wants to mimic my ways  
But in the process tends to step on my face.  
Ask my king why I was allied with France  
And Russia, who I use to make dance!  
Whatever it was, I'm in this Trouble,  
And so I have to do the History Shuffle.

*The Ottoman Empire, to 1914:*

I held all the cards of everyone's mania,  
The Dardanelles, and the Straits of Marmara.  
My sultan's a puppet, and the Young Turks ignore him,  
And they are in love with all things German.  
Willy gave us a brand new railway station,  
And that set Russia thoroughly reeling.

They industrialized faster than Germany liked  
So when Ferdie was killed the excuse was swiped.  
Yet I'm not merely a cause of the Trouble,  
I got my slice in the History Shuffle.

*France, to Dec 1914:*

I was friends with Russia and also with Britain  
Cause Edward the 7<sup>th</sup> liked the third Napoleon.  
We both had an interest in European peace  
As it would help our African Colonies.  
I had been licked back in the Franco-Prussian War  
And I was confident that would happen no more.  
The War started with Russia and Germany,  
I couldn't be neutral and Germany attacked me.  
Well they didn't hit me cause my forts were too strong,  
The route through them would have taken too long.  
They smashed through Liege and went into Belgium  
Which was against the rules, and so entered Britain.  
They were looking to plow Paris into a farm,  
But Joffre and the British stopped them dead on the Marne.  
Which guaranteed this would be no short Trouble  
And we are now stuck in this History Shuffle.

*Churchill, 1915:*

I am the First Lord of the Admiralty:  
Britannia rules the waves, by orders from me.  
I've read all the books and I think I shall write some,  
The Napoleonic Wars show me how a war's won.  
Fortress Europe's been besieged before,  
A blockade of Germany should have stopped this war.  
But Germany just set its factories working,  
And trade with neutrals won't be stopped till 'Eighteen.  
So now I'm looking for a "soft underbelly",  
Before it was Spain, I think this time it's Turkey.  
But for that I'll be sacked, it was too much trouble,  
And we will go on with the History Shuffle.

*Russia, May 1916:*

I'm the Bear of the East, my army is huge,  
And once I get started I'm not gonna lose.  
I've millions of men, though they kind of need guns,  
And officers who can teach them not to run.  
The Old Guard are all in by appointment,  
And the Eastern Front needed some ointment.  
In 'Fifteen we were whipped, despite Austria's blunders,  
And at Lake Narotch we really caught thunder.  
But don't write me off, there will be more trouble,  
As you keep watching the History Shuffle.

*Belgium, 1914-1915:*

France and Russia were mutual buddies  
And the Franco-German border was way too brawny.

I mind my own business, with an eye on the others,  
And my neutrality's guaranteed by the Great Powers.  
When Germany invaded Britain had to declare,  
But 'twas too late for me and I went up in fire.  
The British and French stopped them near Aine,  
And the Western Front was a fixed stalemate.  
Blood poured like rain at Ypres and Marne  
So Churchill's plan was put into action.  
The Dardanelles were crushed (They're in the Aegean)  
But only halfway, and the Allies retreated.  
The Gallipoli invasion didn't work either,  
The ANZACs were stopped by Kemal, Mustafa.  
(he was called Ataturk after the Trouble)  
And that's where we are in the History Shuffle.

*Falkenhayn, 1916:*

If it's going to end as a stalemate,  
Then a war of attrition I am going to make.  
I told Herr Boss they were mostly beaten:  
Offensives should be launched on the French and Russians.  
Ten months it lasted, and I'm thoroughly certain,  
The first day's shells numbered *Eine Million!*  
We took Douamont and we didn't like it,  
But we stayed out of habit and determined to hold it.  
Bleed France dry was the general notion  
But they bled us too at the place called Verdun.  
Which was by no means the sort of Trouble  
I'd planned for this stage of the History Shuffle.

*General Brusilov, to July 1916:*

We retreated as usual until they hit Winter  
And then went to wait while they growled in the weather  
Italy joined us and asked Tsar Nicky  
If we could divert Austria-Hungary.  
Mikhail Alekseev asked us at a meeting  
And the North and Northwest commanders said nothing.  
Alekseev insisted on them going ahead  
So I volunteered to strike while 'tis red.  
No reinforcements or extra supplies?  
I'll be just fine with what's behind my eyes.  
I made perfect maps from guys in the sky,  
And a 5-wave plan to thoroughly drive.  
Artillery to cut off enemy succour—  
It all added up as Divide and Conquer.  
And the way that it worked (For it worked like a dream)  
Was so lightning fast I invented Blitzkrieg.  
From the Fourth to the Fifteenth of June I whipped them  
Till I ran out of stuff with which to kick them.  
Austria-Hungary nearly cracked from the trouble  
And Rumania joined us in the History Shuffle.

*Rumania, from July 1916:*

Like Italy before me I'd once been allied  
With the Kaiser but the king who started that died.  
Both of us weren't sure we wanted to play,  
The only outcome we could see was a dark day.  
But as it started to show the Centrals would be busted  
We joined the Allies and our sandals we dusted.  
Dove right in to the thick of the Trouble  
And started to dance this here History Shuffle.

*Marshal Philippe Petain, 1917-1918:*

I replaced Nivell who replaced Papa Joffre:  
I did a good job, though none of them liked me.  
I said, "Cannon Conquers, infantry occupies",  
No one else believed it, but that's how it lies!  
The army was being told to do what it couldn't  
Neville was a fool, and I was his replacement.  
I held the front even during the Somme,  
Then counterattacked till that battle was won.  
It started to show the end of the Trouble,  
And that's where we are in the History Shuffle.

*Woodrow Wilson, POTUS, 1917-1918:*

My reelection was won on staying out of the fight  
And I did my best to offer a way out of the night.  
Franz Joseph liked it but the rest kept their pride  
And the populations hated the opposite side.  
We still might have stayed but the Kriegsmarine's plot  
Was offensive to us and touched a sore spot.  
We were sort of leaning to the Allies' board  
And Unrestricted Sub sent us straight to Lloyd George.  
The Zimmerman Telegram sealed the deal,  
And we came at the Centrals with fire and steel.  
They met us too, and it all went downwards,  
Tanks, men, machine guns and airplanes and more.  
The fighting went on and millions kept dying  
And at length Germany began to be cracking.  
Bulgaria and the Ottomans each got an armistice,  
And Russia had left way back at Brest-Litovsk.  
Ludendorff asked me to end the Trouble,  
And Red Tape is left for the History Shuffle.

*Versailles Treaty, 1919:*

With great pain and fighting I was signed in Nineteen,  
Though Armistice Day marked the end of the firing.  
The world was divided between the victors,  
And every last drop was wrung from the losers.  
What was good in me was never ratified,  
And many people had their treaties outside.  
So this is not the true end of the Trouble,  
Merely the end of this History Shuffle.