

Chapter 33: The War to End War ~ 1917-1918

U.S. History Period 7

Mr. Schipper

- I. War by Act of Germany
 1. On January 22, 1917, **Woodrow Wilson** made one final, futile attempt to avert war, delivering a moving address that declared that only “peace without victory” would be lasting.
 - i. Germany responded by shocking the world, announcing that it would not be engaging in *unrestricted* warfare, which meant that its **U-boats** would now be firing on armed and unarmed ships in the war zone.
 2. Wilson asked Congress for the authority to arm merchant ships, but a band of Midwestern senators tried to block this measure.
 3. Then, the **Zimmerman note** was intercepted and published on March 1, 1917.
 - i. Written by German foreign secretary **Arthur Zimmerman**, it secretly proposed an alliance between Germany and Mexico, and if the **Central Powers** won, Mexico could recover Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona from the U.S.
 4. The Germans also began to make good on their threats, sinking numerous ships, while in Russia, a revolution toppled the tsarist regime.
 5. On April 2, 1917, President Wilson asked for Congress to declare war, which it did four days later; Wilson had lost his gamble.
- II. Wilsonian Idealism Enthroned
 1. Many people still didn’t want to enter into war, for America had prided itself in isolationism for decades, and now, Wilson was entangling America in a distant war.
 - i. Six senators and 50 representatives, including the first Congresswoman, **Jeanette Ranking**, voted against war.
 2. To gain enthusiasm for the war, Wilson came up with the idea of America entering the war to “make the world safe for democracy.”
 - i. This idealistic motto worked brilliantly, but with the new American zeal came the loss of Wilson’s earlier motto, “peace without victory.”
- III. Fourteen Potent Wilsonian Points
 1. On January 8, 1917, Wilson delivered his **Fourteen Points Address** to Congress.
 2. The **Fourteen Points** were a set of idealistic goals for peace:
 - i. No more secret treaties.
 - ii. Freedom of the seas was to be maintained.
 - iii. A removal of economic barriers among nations.
 - iv. Reduction of armament burdens.
 - v. Adjustment of colonial claims in the interests of natives and colonizers.
 - vi. Other points included: “**self-determination**,” or independence for oppressed minority groups, and a **League of Nations**, an international organization that would keep the peace and settle world disputes.
- IV. Creel Manipulates Minds
 1. The **Committee on Public Information**, headed by **George Creel**, was created to “sell” the war to those people who were against it and gain support for it.
 - i. The Creel organization sent out an army of 75,000 men to deliver speeches in favor of the war, showered millions of pamphlets containing the most potent “Wilsonisms” upon the world, splashed posters and billboards that had emotional appeals, and showed anti-German movies like *The Kaiser, the Beast of Berlin*.

2. There were also patriotic songs, but Creel did err in that he oversold some of the ideals, and result would be disastrous disillusionment.
- V. Enforcing Loyalty and Stiffing Dissent
 1. Germans in America were surprisingly loyal to the U.S., but nevertheless, many Germans were blamed for espionage activities, and a few were tarred, feathered, and beaten.
 2. The **Espionage Act** of 1917 and the **Sedition Act** of 1918 showed American fears/paranoia about Germans and other perceived threat.
 - i. Antiwar Socialists and the members of the radical union **Industrial Workers of the World** (IWW) were often prosecuted, including Socialist **Eugene V. Debs** and IWW leader **William D. Haywood**, who were arrested, convicted, and sent to prison.
 - ii. Fortunately, after the war, there were presidential pardons (from **Warren G. Harding**), but a few people still sat in jail into the 1930s.
- VI. The Nation's Factories Go to War
 1. America was very unprepared for war, though Wilson had created the **Council of National Defense** to study problems with any mobilization and had launched a shipbuilding program.
 - i. America's army was only the 15th largest in the world.
 2. In trying to mobilize for war, no one knew how much America could produce, and traditional **laissez-faire** economics still provided resistance to government control of the economy.
 - i. In march 1918, Wilson named **Bernard Baruch** to head the **War Industries Board**, but this group never had much power and was disbanded soon after the armistice.
- VII. The War, Workers, and Women
 1. Congress imposed a rule that made any unemployed man available to go into the war, which discouraged strikes, and laborers sweated in producing munitions.
 2. The **National War Labor Board**, headed by former president **William H. Taft**, settled any possible labor difficulties that might hamper the war efforts.
 3. Fortunately, **Samuel Gompers's American Federation of Labor** (AF of L), which represented skilled laborers, loyally supported the war, and by war's end, its membership more than doubled to over 3 million.
 4. Yet, there were still labor problems, as price inflation threatened to eclipse wage gains, and over 6000 strikes broke out during the war, the greatest occurring in 1919, when 250,000 steelworkers walked off the job.
 - i. But the steel owners brought in 30,000 African-Americans to break the strike, and in the end, the strike collapsed, hurting the labor cause for more than a decade.
 5. During the war, Blacks immigrated to the North to find more jobs, and did, but the appearance of Blacks in formerly all-White towns did spark violence, such as in Chicago and St. Louis.
 - i. Blacks were also often brought in as strikebreakers.
 6. Women also found more opportunities in the workplace, since the men were gone to war.
 - i. This gained support for women's suffrage, which was finally achieved with the **20th Amendment**, passed in 1920.
 7. Although a **Women's Bureau** did appear after the war to protect female workers, most women gave up their jobs at war's end, and Congress even affirmed its support of women in their traditional roles in the home with the **Sheppard-Towner Maternity Act** of 1921, which federally financed instruction in maternal and infant health care.
- VIII. Forging a War Economy
 1. Mobilization relied more on passion and emotion than laws.

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2. **Herbert Hoover** was chosen to head the **Food Administration**, since he had organized a hugely successful voluntary food drive for the people of Belgium
 - i. He spurned ration cards in favor of voluntary meatless Tuesdays and wheatless Wednesdays, using posters, billboards, and other media to whip up a patriotic spirit which encouraged people to voluntarily sacrifice some of their own goods for the war.
 - ii. After all, America had to feed itself and its European allies.
 3. Hoover's voluntary approach worked beautifully, as citizens grew gardens on street corners to help the farmers, people observed "heatless Mondays," "lightless nights," and "gasless Sundays" in accordance with the **Fuel Administration**, and the farmers increased food production by one-fourth.
 4. The wave of self-sacrifice also sped up the drive against alcohol, culminating with the **18th Amendment**, which prohibited the sale, distribution, or consumption of alcohol.
 5. Money was raised through the sale of war bonds, four great **Liberty Loan** drives, and increased taxes.
 6. Still, the government sometimes flexed its power, such as when it took over the RR's in 1917.
- IX. Making Plowboys into Doughboys
1. European Allies finally confessed to the U.S. that not only were they running out of money to pay for their loans from America but also that they were running out of men, and that America would have to raise a train an army to send over to Europe, or the Allies would collapse.
 2. This could only be solved with a draft, which Wilson opposed but finally supported as a disagreeable but temporary necessity.
 - i. The draft bill ran into heated opposition in Congress but was grudgingly passed.
 - ii. Unlike earlier wars, there was no way for one to buy one's way out of being drafted.
 3. Luckily, patriotic men and women lined up on draft day, disproving ominous predictions of bloodshed by the opposers of the draft.
 - i. Within a few months, the army had grown to 4 million men and women.
 - ii. African-Americans were allowed in the army, but they were usually assigned to non-combat duty; also, training was so rushed that many troops didn't know how to even use rifles, much less bayonets, but were sent to Europe anyway!
- X. Fighting in France—Belatedly
1. After the **Bolsheviks** seized control of Russia, they withdrew the nation from the war, freeing up thousands of German troops to fight on the **Western Front**.
 2. German predictions of American tardiness proved to be rather accurate, as America took one year before it sent a force to Europe and also had transportation problems.
 3. Nevertheless, American doughboys slowly poured into Europe, and U.S. troops helped in an Allied invasion of Russia at **Archangel** to prevent munitions from falling into German hands.
 - i. 10,000 troops were sent to Siberia as part of an Allied expedition whose purpose was to prevent munitions from falling into the hands of Japan, rescue some 45,000 trapped Czechoslovak troops, and prevent Bolshevik forces from snatching military supplies.
 - ii. Bolsheviks resented this interference, which it felt was America's way of suppressing its infant communist revolution.
- XI. America Helps Hammer the "Hun"
1. In the spring of 1918, one commander, the French Marshal Foch, for the first time, led the Allies and just before the Germans were about to invade Paris and knock out France, American reinforcements arrived and pushed the Germans back.

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2. In the **Second Battle of the Marne**, Allies pushed Germany back some more, marking a German withdrawal that was never again effectively reversed.
 3. The Americans, demanding their own army instead of just supporting the British and French, finally got General **John J. Pershing** to lead a front.
 4. The **Meuse-Argonne offensive** cut German railroad lines and took 120,000 casualties.
 - i. **Alvin C. York** became a hero when he single-handedly killed 20 Germans and captured 132 more; ironically, he had been in an antiwar sect beforehand.
 5. Finally, the Germans were exhausted and ready to surrender, for they were being deserted, the British blockade was starving them, and the Allied blows just kept coming.
 - i. It was a good thing, too, because American victories were using up resources too fast.
 - ii. Also, pamphlets containing seductive Wilsonian promises rained down on Germany, in part persuading them to give up.
- XII. The Fourteen Points Disarm Germany
1. At 11:00 of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the Germans laid down their arms after overthrowing their Kaiser in hopes that they could get a peace based on the Fourteen Points.
 2. It was the *prospect* of endless American troops, rather than the American military performance, that had demoralized the Germans.
- XIII. Wilson Steps Down from Olympus
1. At the end of the war, Wilson was at the height of his popularity, but when he appealed for voters to give a Democratic victory in 1918, but American voters instead gave Republicans a narrow majority, and Wilson went to Paris as the only leader of the Allies *not* commanding a majority at home.
 2. When Wilson decided to go to Europe personally to oversee peace proceedings, Republicans were outraged, thinking that this was all just for flamboyant show.
 - i. When he didn't include a single Republican, not even Senator **Henry Cabot Lodge**, a very intelligent man who used to be the "scholar in politics" until Wilson came along and was therefore jealous and spiteful of Wilson, the Republicans got even more mad.
- XIV. An Idealist Battles the Imperialists in Paris
1. At the Paris Conference in 1919, the **Big Four**—Italy, led by **Vittorio Orlando**, France, led by **Georges Clemenceau**, Britain, led by **David Lloyd George**, and the U.S., led by Wilson—basically dictated the terms of the treaty.
 - i. Wilson successfully got all of the colonies of the losers to be put into the hands of his dream, the League of Nations, but they would be given to various countries of the League, which would be trustees.
 - ii. This was basically colonialism thinly disguised.
 2. Wilson also managed to get his League of Nations accepted by the other powers and nations.
- XV. Hammering Out the Treaty
1. However, at home in America, the Republicans proclaimed that they would not pass the treaty, since to them, the League of Nations was either over-powerful or useless.
 - i. Led by Henry Cabot Lodge, **William Borah** of Idaho and **Hiram Johnson** of California, these senators were bitterly opposed to the League.
 2. Upon seeing Wilson's lack of support, the other European nations had stronger bargaining chips, as France demanded the **Rhineland** and **Saar Valley** (but didn't receive it; instead, the League of Nations got the Saar Basin for 15 years and then let it vote to determine its fate) and Italy demanded **Fiume**, a valuable seaport inhabited by both Italians and Yugoslavs.

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1. Wilson had proposed to take the treaty to the people with a national referendum, but that would have been impossible.
 2. In 1920, the Republican Party was back together, thanks in part to Teddy Roosevelt's death in 1919, and it devised a clever platform that would appeal to pro-League and anti-League factions of the party, and they chose Warren G. Harding as their candidate in the "smoke-filled room," with **Calvin Coolidge** as the vice presidential candidate.
 3. The Democrats chose **James M. Cox** and **Franklin D. Roosevelt** as VP, and they also supported a League of Nations, but not necessarily *the* League of Nations.
 4. Warren G. Harding was swept into power
- XXII. The Betrayal of Great Expectations
1. U.S. isolationism doomed the Treaty of Versailles and indirectly led to **World War II**, because France, without an ally, built up a large military force, and Germany, suspicious and fearful, began to illegally do the same.
 2. The suffering of Germany and the disorder of the time was used by **Adolf Hitler** to seize power in Germany, build up popularity, and drag Europe into war.
 3. It was the U.S.'s responsibility to take charge as the most powerful nation in the world after World War I, but it retreated into isolationism, and let the rest of the world do whatever it wanted in the hopes that the U.S. would not be dragged into another war, but ironically, it was such actions that eventually led the U.S. into WWII.