

## **Chapter 31- The War to End War**

**1917-1918**

### **War by Act of Germany**

- At the end of 1916, Wilson made one last attempt to mediate between the embattled belligerents restating America's neutrality and declaring that only "peace without victory" would be durable
- On January 31, 1917, Germans announced their decision to wage unrestricted submarine warfare, sinking all ships, including America's, in the war zone
- Germany's leaders decided that the distinction between combatants and noncombatants was a luxury they could no longer afford—the Germans called Wilson's bluff (no war yet)
- To defend American interests, the president asked Congress for authority to arm American merchant ships—band of midwestern senators blocked the measure (American isolationism)
- The Zimmermann note was intercepted and published on March 1, 1917
- German foreign secretary Zimmermann had secretly proposed a German-Mexican alliance
- After this provocation, German U-boats sank four unarmed American merchant vessels in March
- Revolution in Russia could allow America to fight for democracy on side of the Allies
- Wilson stood before Congress on April 2, 1917, and asked for a declaration of war (↓ 4/6/17)
- President Wilson drew a clear line and the Germans chose to cross it—American war declaration

### **Wilsonian Idealism Enthroned**

- Wilson shattered one of the most sacred of traditions by engaging in a distant European war
- To galvanize the country Wilson declared the twin goals of "A war to end war" and a crusade "to make the world safe for democracy"—America did not fight for riches or territorial conquest

- Holding aloft the torch of idealism, the president fired up the public mind to a fever pitch

### **Wilson's Fourteen Potent Points**

- Wilson was recognized as the moral leader of the Allied cause—fame Fourteen Points Address
- One of his primary purposes was to keep reeling Russia in the war—holding alluring promises
- The first five points: a proposal to abolish secret treaties, freedom of the seas, removal of economic barriers among nations, reduction of armament burdens, adjustment of colonial claims in the interests of both native peoples and the colonizers—pleased many of the countries
- The other points held out the hope of independence to oppressed minority groups
- The capstone point, number fourteen, foreshadowed the League of Nations—an international organization that Wilson dreamed would provide a system of collective security
- Certain leaders of Allied nations were less than enthusiastic—were not universally applauded

### **Creel Manipulates Minds**

- Mobilizing people's minds for war was an urgent task facing the Washington authorities
- Committee on Public Information was created and was headed by George Creel—sell America on war and sell world on Wilsonian war aims—Creel organization with 150,000 workers
- “Four-minute men,” posters splashed on billboards, leaflets, propaganda books, and movies
- The entire nation, caught the frenzied spirit of a religious revival, burst into song (“Over there”)
- American war mobilization relied more on aroused passion and voluntary compliance than laws
- But he oversold the ideals of Wilson and led the world to expect too much

### **Enforcing Loyalty and Stifling Dissent**

- German-Americans numbered over 8 million out of 100 million and most proved loyal to the US
- People were quick to spread tales of spying and sabotage—hatred of Germans swept the nation

- Both the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 reflected current fears about Germans and antiwar Americans—1,900 prosecutions under these laws (antiwar Socialists and members of the radical Industrial Workers of the World—IWW)
- Socialist Eugene V. Debs was convicted under the Espionage Act of 1918 and sentenced to ten years in jail and IWW leader William D. Haywood and 00 associates were similarly convicted
- Virtually any criticism of the gov't could be censored and punished—breaking 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment?
- *Schenck v. United States* (1919), the Supreme Court affirmed their legality, arguing that freedom of speech could be revoked when such speech posed a “clear and present danger” to the nation

### **The Nation's Factories Go to War**

- Pacifistic Wilson had began some preparedness with creation of Council of National Defense
- Wilson also launched a shipbuilding program and endorsed a regular army of 100,000
- Sheer ignorance was among the biggest roadblocks that confronted economic mobilizers
- Old ideas proved to be liabilities—traditional fears of government efforts to control economy
- Late in the war, Wilson succeeded in imposing some order in this economic confusion
- In March 1918 he appointed Bernard Baruch to head the War Industries Board—dissolved after war; American preference for laissez-faire and a weak central government

### **Workers in Wartime**

- Spurred by slogan, “Labor Will Win the War,” American workers triumphed—in part they were driven by War Department’s “work or fight” rule of 1918, threatened unemployed male w/ draft
- The National Labor Board (Taft) headed off labor disputes that might hamper war effort—pressed employers to grant high wages and eight-hour day but did not guarantee right to organize

- Samuel Gompers and his American Federation of Labor loyally supported the war; the IWW engineered some of the most damaging industrial sabotage—“Wobblies” victims of conditions
- At war’s end the AF of L had more than doubled its membership to over 3 million
- Recognition of the right to organize still eluded labor’s grasp (war-time inflation threatened)
- Not even the call of patriotism and Wilsonian idealism could defuse all labor disputes
- In 1919 the greatest strike in American history rocked the steel industry—more than 250,000 workers left their jobs in a bid to force their employers to recognize their right to organize
- 30,000 African-American strikebreakers were called in and after confrontations the strike collapsed, a grievous setback that crippled the union movement for more than a decade
- Tens of thousands of southern blacks were drawn to the North in wartime by the magnet of war-industry employment—their sudden appearance in all-white areas sparked interracial violence
- Explosive riot in St. Louis, Missouri and race riot that ripped through Chicago (racial tension)

#### Suffering Until Suffrage

- Thousands of female workers flooded into factories and fields, taking up jobs vacated by men
- Many progressive-era feminists were pacifists and opposed participation of women in war effort
- National Woman’s party lead by Quaker activist Alice Paul were pacifists
- The larger part of the suffrage movement, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, supported Wilson’s war—leaders echoed Wilson’s justification for fighting by arguing that women must take part in the war effort to earn a role in shaping the peace (democracy)
- War mobilization gave new momentum to suffrage fight—Wilson endorsed woman suffrage
- In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, giving all American women the right to vote

- Women's wartime economic gains proved fleeting; Congress affirmed its support for women in their traditional role as mothers when it passed the Sheppard-Towner Maternity Act of 1921, providing federally financed instruction in maternal and infant health care
- Feminists campaigned for laws to protect women in the workplace and prohibit child labor

### **Forging a War Economy**

- For democracy, America had to feed itself and its allies; the man chosen to head the Food Administration was Quaker-humanitarian Herbert C. Hoover (relied on voluntary compliance)
- Hoover rejected ration cards and waged a whirlwind propaganda campaign (voluntary basis)
- Congress restricted the use of foodstuffs for manufacturing alcohol and self-denial helped accelerate the wave of prohibition—passage of Eighteenth Amendment in 1919
- Farm production increased by one-fourth and food exports to the Allies tripled in volume
- Fuel Administration, Treasury Department—Liberty Loan drives (netted \$21 billion, taxes)
- Pressures of various kinds were used to sell bonds—Victory Loan campaign in 1919
- The government reluctantly exercised its sovereign formal power (seized merchant vessels)
- Washington hustled to get its hands on ships and launched a few concrete ships

### **Making Plowboys into Doughboys**

- For fighting, America would use its navy to uphold freedom of the seas—it would continue to ship war materials to the Allies and supply them with loans (finally totaled nearly \$10 billion)
- By 1917, a huge American army would have to be raised, trained, and transported
- Conscription was the only answer to the need for raising an immense army with all speed
- The proposed draft bill ran into a barrage of criticism in Congress—six weeks after declaring war, Congress grudgingly got around to passing conscription
- The draft act required the registration of all males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five and no “draft dodger” could purchase his exemption or hire a substitute (key industries)

- The draft machinery worked effectively; within a few months, the army grew to over 4 million
- Women served for the first time and African-Americans also served in the armed forces
- Recruits were supposed to receive six months of training and tow more months overseas but so great was the urgency that many doughboys were swept swiftly into battle

### **Fighting in France—Belatedly**

- Russia's collapse underscored the need for haste; the communistic Bolsheviks ultimately withdrew their beat country from the "capitalistic" war early in 1918
- This sudden defection released hundreds of thousands of Germans from the eastern front facing Russia for the western front in France were they now had a superiority in manpower
- Berlin planned to knock out Britain after unlimited submarine warfare and no real effective American fighting force reached France until about a year after declaration of war
- France gradually began to bustle with American doughboys—small detachments sent into other areas such as Belgium, Italy, and notably Russia (Bolsheviks resented capitalistic interventions)

### **America Helps Hammer the "Hun"**

- The dreaded German drive on the western front exploded in the spring of 1918 (500,000 troops)
- The allied nations for the first time united under a supreme commander, French marshal Foch
- Late in May 1918, German juggernaut smashed to within forty miles of Paris (defeat France?)
- Newly arrived American troops were thrown into the breach at Château-Thierry and this was a historic moment—the first significant engagement of American troops in a European war
- American weight in the scales was now being felt; by July 1918, the German drive had spent its force and American men participate in a Foch counteroffensive in Second Battle of the Marne
- This engagement marked the beginning of a German withdrawal that was never really reversed
- The Americans demanded a separate army and received one under General Pershing

- Pershing's army undertook the Meuse-Argonne offensive from 9/26/18 to 11/11/18
- Victory was in sight but American armies in France were in grave danger of running short
- German allies were deserting them, the British blockade was causing critical food shortages, and the sledgehammer blows of the Allies rained down relentlessly (Wilsonian promises)

### **The Fourteen Points Disarm Germany**

- Berlin was now ready to hoist the white flag; warned of imminent defeat by the generals, it turned to the presumably softhearted Wilson in October 1918, seeking peace
- In stern responses, Wilson made it clear that the Kaiser must be thrown overboard before armistice could be negotiated and the Germans forced the Kaiser to flee to Holland
- On November 11, 1918, the Germans laid down their arms and Americans burst into rejoicing
- The United States' main contributions to the ultimate victory had been foodstuffs, munitions, credits, oil for first mechanized war, and manpower—prospect of endless U.S. troop reserves
- Britain and France had transported a majority of the doughboys to Europe

### **Wilson Steps Down from Olympus**

- Woodrow Wilson had helped to win the war and expectations ran extravagantly high
- The American president towered at the peak of his popularity and power and at this fateful moment, his sureness of touch deserved him and he made a series of tragic fumbles
- During war, "Politics Is Adjourned" was the slogan and partisan political strife had been kept below the surface during the war crisis; Wilson broke the truce by appealing for a Democratic victory in the congressional elections of November 1918—move backfired and (R) majority
- Wilson's decision to go in person to Paris to help make the peace infuriated Republicans; he snubbed the Senate in assembling his peace delegation and neglected to include a Republican senator in his official party—logical choice of Henry Cabot Lodge of MA but not included
- Lodge would have been problematic for the president—they hated each other

### **An Idealist Battles the Imperialists in Paris**

- Woodrow Wilson received tumultuous welcomes from masses of France, England, and Italy; the Paris Conference of great and small nations fell into the hands of the Big Four
- Wilson represented the richest great power and was joined by Premier Vittorio Orlando of Italy, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Britain, and Premier Georges Clemenceau of France
- Speed was urgent when the conference opened on January 18, 1919
- Wilson's ultimate goal was a world parliament to be known as the League of Nations—the victors would not take possession of conquered territory outright but would receive as trustees
- The Big Four agreed to make the League Covenant, Wilson's brainchild, an integral part of the final peace treaty—assembly of seats for all nations and a council controlled by many powers

### **Hammering Out the Treaty**

- To certain Republican senators, the League was a useless circle or over-potent “super-state”
- Thirty-nine Republican senators proclaimed that the Senate would not approve the League of Nations and difficulties delighted Wilson's Allied adversaries in Paris—bargaining position
- France secured the Security Treaty, in which both Britain and America pledged to come to its aid in the event of another German invasion—pact pigeonholed by the U.S. Senate (alliances)
- Wilson battled with France over Rhineland, Italy over Fiume, Japan over Chinese peninsula

### **The Peace Treaty That Bred a New War**

- A completed Treaty of Versailles was handed to the Germans in June 1919 (only 4 points)
- Allied powers were torn by conflicting aims, many sanctioned by secret treaties
- Wilson saved the pact from being an old-time peace of grasping imperialism and he had to do away with many of his points in order to salvage the more precious League of Nations



## **The Domestic Parade of Prejudice**

- Returning to America, Wilson sailed straight into a political typhoon; isolationists raised a whirlwind of protest against the treaty, especially Wilson's commitment to League of Nations
- German-Americans, Italian-Americans were aroused because the peace settlement was not sufficiently favorable—Irish-Americans denounced the League (gave Britain influence)
- Wilson's Tour and Collapse (1919)
  - A strong majority of the people still seemed favorable; Senator Lodge had no real hope of defeating the Treaty of Versailles—only to amend it to "Republicanize" it
  - Lodge effectively used delay to muddle and divide public opinion; the pact was bogged down in the Senate and Wilson decided to go to the sovereign people as he had often in the past
  - The campaign was started in the face of protests (frail health) and the Midwest received Wilson lukewarmly while two senators followed him and crowds answered their attacks on Wilson
  - The Rocky Mountain region and the Pacific Coast welcomed him with heartwarming outbursts on the return trip at Colorado, Wilson collapsed from exhaustion and lay sick in the White House

## **Defeat Through Deadlock**

- Senator Lodge, now at the helm, came up with fourteen formal reservations to the treaty
- The treaty alarmed critics because it morally bound the United States to aid any member victimized by external aggression—Congress wanted reserve war-declaring power
- When the day for voting in the Senate came, he sent word to all true Democrats to vote against the treaty with Lodge reservations attached; Wilson was still able to obstruct
- Loyal Democrats in the Senate blindly did Wilson's bidding; the nation was too deeply shocked to accept the verdict as final; so strong was public indignation that the Senate had to vote twice

- The lodge-Wilson personal feud, traditionalism, isolationism, disillusionment, and partisanship all contributed to the confused picture—he asked for all or nothing and got nothing

### **The “Solemn Referendum” of 1920**

- Wilson proposed to settle the treaty issue in the forthcoming presidential campaign of 1920 by appeal to the people for a “solemn referendum”—sheer folly because it was impossibility
- The Republican platform appealed to both pro-League and anti-League sentiment in the party
- They choose Senator Warren Harding of Ohio and Governor Calvin Coolidge of MA for election
- With newly enfranchised women swelling the vote totals, Harding was swept into power with a prodigious plurality of 7 million votes (16 million to 9 million for Cox)—Debs: 920,000 votes
- People were tired of Wilsonism—the professional high-browism, star-reaching idealism, bothersome do-goodism, moral overstrain, and constant self-sacrifice—eager to lapse back
- Republican isolationists turned Harding’s victory into a death sentence for the League

### **The Betrayal of Great Expectations**

- The Republic had helped to win a costly war, but kicked the fruits of victory under the table
- The ultimate collapse of the Treaty of Versailles must be laid at America’s doorstep—this complicated pact was a top-heavy structure designed to rest on a four-legged table (US)
- No less ominous events were set in motion when the Senate spurned the Security Treaty with France—the French built a powerful military force and Germany began to rearm illegally
- In the interests of its own security, the United States should have used its enormous strength to shape world-shaking events—instead it permitted itself to drift towards a Second World War