

CHAPTER 21

AMERICA AND THE GREAT WAR



AN APPEAL TO DUTY This most famous of all American war posters, by the artist James Montgomery Flagg, shows a fierce-looking Uncle Sam requesting, almost demanding, Americans to join the army to fight in World War I. With the nation very divided over the wisdom of entering the war, the Wilson administration believed it needed to persuade Americans not only to support the struggle but also—something unusual for Americans—to feel a sense of obligation to the government and its overseas commitments. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

THE GREAT WAR, AS IT WAS KNOWN to a generation unaware that another, greater war would soon follow, began relatively inconspicuously in August 1914 when forces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire invaded the tiny Balkan nation of Serbia. Within weeks, however, it had grown into a widespread conflagration, engaging the armies of almost all the major nations of Europe and shattering forever the delicate balance of power that had maintained a general peace on the Continent since the early nineteenth century.

Most Americans looked on with horror as the war became the most savage in history, but also with a conviction that the conflict had little to do with them. In that, they were profoundly mistaken. The United States in 1914 had been deeply involved in the life of the world since at least the Spanish-American War; and in the early years of the twentieth century—under three internationally active presidents—the nation took on many more international commitments and obligations. And so it should not have been surprising that the United States finally entered the war in 1917.

In doing so, it joined the most savage conflict in history. The fighting had already dragged on for two and a half years, inconclusive, almost inconceivably murderous. By 1917, the war had left Europe exhausted and on the brink of utter collapse. By the time it ended late in 1918, Germany had lost nearly 2 million soldiers in battle, Russia 1.7 million, France 1.4 million, Great Britain 900,000. A generation of European youth was decimated; centuries of political, social, and economic traditions were damaged and all but destroyed.

For America, however, the war was the source of a very different experience. As a military struggle, it was brief, decisive, and—in relative terms—without great cost. Only 112,000 American soldiers died in the conflict, half of them from influenza and other diseases rather than in combat. Economically, it was the source of a great industrial boom, which helped spark the years of prosperity that would follow. And the war propelled the United States into a position of international preeminence.

In other respects, World War I was a painful, even traumatic experience for the American people. At home, the nation became preoccupied with a search not just for victory but also for social unity—a search that continued and even intensified in the troubled years following the armistice, and that helped shatter many of the progressive ideals of the first years of the century. And abroad, once the conflict ended, the United States encountered frustration and disillusionment. The “war to end all wars,” the war “to make the world safe for democracy,” became neither. Instead, it led directly to twenty years of international instability that would ultimately generate another great conflict.

Total War

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1903 ▶ United States orchestrates Panamanian independence; new government signs treaty allowing United States to build Panama Canal
- 1904 ▶ “Roosevelt Corollary” announced
- 1905 ▶ Roosevelt mediates settlement of Russo-Japanese War
- 1906 ▶ American troops intervene in Cuba
- 1909 ▶ U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua
- 1910 ▶ Porfirio Díaz overthrown by Francisco Madero in Mexico
- 1913 ▶ Victoriano Huerta overthrows Madero in Mexico
- 1914 ▶ World War I begins
 - ▶ Coalminers’ strike in Ludlow, Colorado, ends in massacre of thirty-nine people
 - ▶ Panama Canal opens
 - ▶ Venustiano Carranza deposes Huerta in Mexico
- 1915 ▶ Great Migration of blacks to the North begins
 - ▶ *Lusitania* torpedoed
 - ▶ Wilson launches preparedness program
 - ▶ U.S. troops intervene in Haiti
- 1916 ▶ Sussex attacked
 - ▶ Wilson reelected president
 - ▶ U.S. troops pursue Pancho Villa into Mexico
- 1917 ▶ Germany announces unrestricted submarine warfare
 - ▶ Zimmermann telegram disclosed
 - ▶ Russian czar overthrown
 - ▶ United States declares war on Central Powers
 - ▶ Selective Service Act passed
 - ▶ War Industries Board created
 - ▶ Espionage Act passed
 - ▶ Race conflicts in East St. Louis, Illinois, and Houston
 - ▶ Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
 - ▶ United States recognizes Carranza government
- 1918 ▶ Wilson announces Fourteen Points
 - ▶ New Bolshevik government in Russia signs a separate peace with Central Powers
 - ▶ Sedition Act passed
 - ▶ U.S. troops repel Germans at Château-Thierry and Rheims
 - ▶ U.S. troops launch offensive in Argonne Forest
 - ▶ Armistice ends war (November 11)
 - ▶ American troops land in Soviet Union
 - ▶ Republicans gain control of Congress
 - ▶ Paris Peace Conference convenes
- 1919 ▶ Treaty of Versailles signed
 - ▶ Senate proposes modifications to treaty
 - ▶ Wilson suffers stroke
 - ▶ Senate rejects treaty
 - ▶ Economy experiences postwar inflation
 - ▶ Race riots break out in Chicago and other cities
 - ▶ Workers engage in steel strike and other unrest
 - ▶ Soviet Union creates Comintern
 - ▶ Theodore Roosevelt dies
- 1920 ▶ Nineteenth Amendment gives suffrage to women
 - ▶ Economic recession disrupts economy
 - ▶ Federal government reacts to “radicalism” with Palmer Raids and Red Scare
 - ▶ Sacco and Vanzetti charged with murder
 - ▶ Warren G. Harding elected president
- 1924 ▶ Woodrow Wilson dies
- 1927 ▶ Sacco and Vanzetti executed

THE “BIG STICK”: AMERICA AND THE WORLD, 1901–1917

To the general public, foreign affairs remained largely remote. Walter Lippmann once wrote: “I cannot remember taking any interest whatsoever in foreign affairs until after the outbreak of the First World War.” But to Theodore Roosevelt and later presidents, that made foreign affairs even more appealing. There the president could act with less regard for the Congress or the courts. There he could free himself from concerns about public opinion. Overseas, the president could exercise power unfettered and alone.

Roosevelt and “Civilization”

Theodore Roosevelt believed in the value and importance of using American power in the world (a conviction he once described by citing the proverb “Speak softly, but carry a big stick”). But he had two different standards for using that power.

Roosevelt believed that an important distinction existed between the “civilized” and “uncivilized” nations of the world. “Civilized” nations, as he defined them, were predominantly white and Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic; “uncivilized” nations were generally nonwhite, Latin, or Slavic. But racism was only partly the basis of the distinction. Equally important was economic development. He believed, therefore, that Japan, a rapidly industrializing society, had earned admission to the ranks of the civilized. A civilized society, he argued, had the right and duty to intervene in the affairs of a “backward” nation to preserve order and stability. That belief was one important reason for Roosevelt’s early support of the development of American sea power. By 1906, the American navy had attained a size and strength surpassed only by that of Great Britain (although Germany was fast gaining ground).

Racial and Economic Basis of Roosevelt’s Diplomacy

Protecting the “Open Door” in Asia

In 1904, the Japanese staged a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur in southern Manchuria, a



“THE NEW DIPLOMACY” This 1904 drawing by the famous *Puck* cartoonist Louis Dalrymple conveys the new image of America as a great power that Theodore Roosevelt was attempting to project to the world. Roosevelt the world policeman deals effectively with “less civilized” peoples (Asians and Latin Americans, seen clamoring at left) by using the “big stick” and deals equally effectively with the “civilized” nations (at right) by offering arbitration. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)



THE UNITED STATES AND LATIN AMERICA, 1895–1941 Except for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Canal Zone, the United States had no formal possessions in Latin America and the Caribbean in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. But as this map reveals, the U.S. exercised considerable influence in these regions throughout this period—political and economic influence, augmented at times by military intervention. Note the particularly intrusive presence of the United States in the affairs of Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic—as well as the canal-related interventions in Colombia and Panama. ♦ *What were some of the most frequent reasons for American intervention in Latin America?*

For an interactive version of this map, go to www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech21maps

province of China that both Russia and Japan hoped to control. Roosevelt, hoping to prevent either nation from becoming dominant there, agreed to a Japanese request to mediate an end to the conflict. Russia, faring badly in the war, had no choice but to agree. At a peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1905, Roosevelt extracted from the embattled Russians a recognition of Japan's territorial gains and from the Japanese an agreement to cease the fighting and expand no further. At the same time, he negotiated a secret agreement with the Japanese to ensure that the United States could continue to trade freely in the region.

Roosevelt won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his work in ending the Russo-Japanese War. But in the years that followed, relations between the United States and Japan steadily deteriorated. Japan now emerged as the preeminent naval power in the Pacific and soon began to exclude American trade from many of the territories it controlled. To be sure the Japanese government recognized the power of the United States, he sent sixteen battleships of the new American navy (known as the “Great White Fleet”

because the ships were temporarily painted white for the voyage) on an unprecedented journey around the world that included a call on Japan.

The Iron-Fisted Neighbor

Roosevelt took a particular interest in events in what he (and most other Americans) considered the nation's special sphere of interest: Latin America. He established a pattern of American intervention in the region that would long survive his presidency.

Early in 1902, the financially troubled government of Venezuela began to renege on debts to European bankers. Naval forces of Britain, Italy, and Germany blockaded the Venezuelan coast in response. Then German ships began to bombard a Venezuelan port amid rumors that Germany planned to establish a permanent base in the region. Roosevelt used the threat of American naval power to pressure the German navy to withdraw.

The incident helped persuade Roosevelt that European intrusions into Latin America could result not only from aggression but also from instability or irresponsibility

(such as defaulting on debts) within the Latin American nations themselves. As a result, in 1904 he announced what came to be known as the “Roosevelt Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine. The United States, he claimed, had the right not only to oppose European intervention in the Western Hemisphere but also to intervene in the domestic affairs of its neighbors if those neighbors proved unable to maintain order and national sovereignty on their own.

The immediate motivation for the Roosevelt Corollary, and the first opportunity for using it, was a crisis in the Dominican Republic. A revolution had toppled its corrupt and bankrupt government in 1903, but the new regime proved no better able to make good on the country’s \$22 million in debts to European nations. Roosevelt established, in effect, an American receivership, assuming control of Dominican customs and distributing 45 percent of the revenues to the Dominicans and the rest to foreign creditors. This arrangement lasted, in one form or another, for more than three decades.

In 1902, the United States granted political independence to Cuba, but only after the new government had agreed to the Platt Amendment to its constitution (see p. 560). The amendment gave the United States the right to prevent any other foreign power from intruding into the new nation. In 1906, when domestic uprisings seemed to threaten the internal stability of the island, American troops landed in Cuba, quelled the fighting, and remained there for three years.

The Panama Canal

The most celebrated accomplishment of Roosevelt’s presidency was the construction of the Panama Canal, which linked the Atlantic and the Pacific. At first, Roosevelt and many others favored a route across Nicaragua, which would permit a sea-level canal requiring no locks. But they soon turned instead to the narrow Isthmus of Panama in Colombia, the site of an earlier, failed effort by a French company to construct a channel. Although the Panama route was not at sea level (and would thus require locks), it was shorter than the one in Nicaragua. And construction was already about 40 percent complete. When the French company lowered the price for its holdings, the United States chose Panama.

Roosevelt dispatched John Hay, his secretary of state, to negotiate an agreement with Colombian diplomats in Washington that would allow construction to begin without delay. Under heavy American pressure, the Colombian chargé d’affaires, Tomas Herrén, unwisely signed an agreement giving the United States perpetual rights to a six-mile-wide “canal zone” across Colombia. The outraged Colombian senate refused to ratify it. Colombia then sent a new representative to Washington with instructions to

demand a higher payment from the Americans plus a share of the payment to the French.

Roosevelt was furious and began to look for ways to circumvent the Colombian government. Philippe Bunau-Varilla, chief engineer of the French canal project, was a ready ally. In November 1903, he helped organize and finance a revolution in Panama. There had been many previous revolts, all of them failures, but this one had the support of the United States. Roosevelt landed troops from the U.S.S. *Nashville* in Panama to “maintain order.” Their presence prevented Colombian forces from suppressing the rebellion, and three days later Roosevelt recognized Panama as an independent nation. The new Panamanian government quickly agreed to the terms the Colombian senate had rejected. Work on the canal proceeded rapidly, and it opened in 1914.

Taft and “Dollar Diplomacy”

Like his predecessor, William Howard Taft worked to advance the nation’s economic interests overseas. But he showed little interest in Roosevelt’s larger vision of world stability. Taft’s secretary of state, the corporate attorney Philander C. Knox, worked aggressively to extend American investments into less-developed regions. Critics called his policies “Dollar Diplomacy.”

It was particularly visible in the Caribbean. When a revolution broke out in Nicaragua in 1909, the administration quickly sided with the insurgents (who had been inspired to revolt by an American mining company) and sent troops into the country to seize the customs houses. As soon as peace was restored, Knox encouraged American bankers to offer substantial loans to the new government, thus increasing Washington’s financial leverage over the country. When the new pro-American government faced an insurrection less than two years later, Taft again landed troops in Nicaragua, this time to protect the existing regime. The troops remained there for more than a decade.

Diplomacy and Morality

Woodrow Wilson entered the presidency with relatively little interest or experience in international affairs. Yet he faced international challenges of a scope and gravity unmatched by those of any president before him. In many respects, he continued—and even strengthened—the Roosevelt-Taft approach to foreign policy.

Having already seized control of the finances of the Dominican Republic in 1905, the United States established a military government there in 1916. The military occupation lasted eight years. In neighboring Haiti, Wilson landed the marines in 1915 to quell a revolution, in the course of which a mob had murdered an unpopular president. American military forces remained in the country



OPENING THE PANAMA CANAL The great Miraflores locks of the Panama Canal open in October 1914 to admit the first ship to pass through the channel. The construction of the canal was one of the great engineering feats of the early twentieth century. But the heavy-handed political efforts of Theodore Roosevelt were at least equally important to its completion. (Bettmann/Corbis)

until 1934, and American officers drafted the new Haitian constitution adopted in 1918. When Wilson began to fear that the Danish West Indies might be about to fall into the hands of Germany, he bought the colony from Denmark and renamed it the Virgin Islands. Concerned about the possibility of European influence in Nicaragua, he signed a treaty with that country's government ensuring that no other nation would build a canal there and winning for the United States the right to intervene in Nicaragua to protect American interests.

But Wilson's view of America's role in the world was not entirely similar to the views of his predecessors, as became clear in his dealings with Mexico. For many years, under the friendly auspices of the corrupt dictator Porfirio Díaz, American businessmen had been establishing an enormous economic presence in Mexico. In 1910, however, Díaz had been overthrown by the popular leader Francisco Madero, who seemed hostile to American businesses in Mexico. The United States quietly encouraged a reactionary general, Victoriano Huerta, to depose Madero early in 1913, and the Taft administration, in its last weeks in office, prepared to recognize the new Huerta regime and welcome back a receptive envi-

Wilson's Moral Diplomacy

ronment for American investments in Mexico. Before it could do so, however, the new government murdered Madero, and Woodrow Wilson took office in Washington. The new president instantly announced that he would never recognize Huerta's "government of butchers."

At first, Wilson hoped that simply by refusing to recognize Huerta he could help topple the regime and bring to power the opposing Constitutionalists, led by Venustiano Carranza. But when Huerta, with the support of American business interests, established a full military dictatorship in October 1913, the president became more assertive. In April 1914, an officer in Huerta's army briefly arrested several American sailors from the U.S.S. *Dolphin* who had gone ashore in Tampico. The men were immediately released, but the American admiral—unsatisfied with the apology he received—demanded that the Huerta forces fire a twenty-one-gun salute to the American flag as a public display of penance. The Mexicans refused. Wilson used the trivial incident as a pretext for seizing the Mexican port of Veracruz.

Wilson had envisioned a bloodless action, but in a clash with Mexican troops in Veracruz, the Americans killed 126 of the Veracruz defenders and suffered 19 casualties of their own. Now at



PANCHO VILLA AND HIS TROOPS Pancho Villa (fourth from left in the front row) poses with some of the leaders of his army, whose members Americans came to consider bandits once they began staging raids across the U.S. border. He was a national hero in Mexico. (*Brown Brothers*)

the brink of war, Wilson began to look for a way out. His show of force, however, had helped strengthen the position of the Carranza faction, which captured Mexico City in August and forced Huerta to flee the country. At last, it seemed, the crisis might be over.

But Wilson was not yet satisfied. He reacted angrily when Carranza refused to accept American guidelines for the creation of a new government, and he briefly considered throwing his support to still another aspirant to leadership: Carranza's erstwhile lieutenant Pancho Villa, who was now leading a rebel army of his own. When Villa's military position deteriorated, however, Wilson abandoned him and finally, in October 1915, granted preliminary recognition to the Carranza government. By now, however, he had created yet another crisis. Villa, angry at what he considered an American betrayal, retaliated in January 1916 by shooting sixteen American mining engineers in northern Mexico. Two months later, he led his soldiers (or "bandits," as the United States called them) across the border into Columbus, New Mexico, where they killed seventeen more Americans.

With the permission of the Carranza government, Wilson ordered General John J. Pershing to lead an American expeditionary force across the Mexican border in pursuit of Villa. The American troops never found Villa, but they did engage in two ugly skirmishes with Carranza's army,

Intervention in Mexico

in which forty Mexicans and twelve Americans died. Again, the United States and Mexico stood at the brink of war. But at the last minute, Wilson drew back. He quietly withdrew American troops from Mexico, and in March 1917, he at last granted formal recognition to the Carranza regime. By now, however, Wilson's attention was turning elsewhere—to the far greater international crisis engulfing the European continent and ultimately much of the world.

THE ROAD TO WAR

The causes of the war in Europe—indeed the question of whether there were any significant causes at all, or whether the entire conflict was the result of a tragic series of blunders—have been the subject of continued debate for more than ninety years. What is clear is that the European nations had by 1914 created an unusually precarious international system that careened into war very quickly on the basis of what most historians agree was a relatively minor series of provocations.

The Collapse of the European Peace

The major powers of Europe were organized by 1914 in two great, competing alliances. The "Triple Entente" linked Britain, France, and Russia. The "Triple Alliance" united Germany,

Competing Alliances

the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Italy. The chief rivalry, however, was not between the two alliances, but between the great powers that dominated them: Great Britain and Germany—the former long established as the world’s most powerful colonial and commercial nation, the latter ambitious to expand its own empire and become at least Britain’s equal. The Anglo-German rivalry may have been the most important underlying source of the tensions that led to World War I, but it was not the immediate cause of its outbreak. The conflict emerged most directly out of a controversy involving nationalist movements within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On June 28, 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the tottering empire, was assassinated while paying a state visit to Sarajevo. Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia, a province of Austria-Hungary that Slavic nationalists wished to annex to neighboring Serbia; the archduke’s assassin was a Serbian nationalist.

This local controversy quickly escalated through the workings of the system of alliances that the great powers had constructed. With support from Germany, Austria-Hungary launched a punitive assault on Serbia. The Serbians called on Russia to help with their defense. The Russians began mobilizing their army on July 30. Things quickly careened out of control. By August 3, Germany had declared war on both Russia and France and had invaded Belgium in preparation for a thrust across the French border. On August 4, Great Britain—ostensibly to honor its alliance with France, but more importantly to blunt the advance of its principal rival—declared war on Germany. Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire formally began hostilities on August 6. Italy, although an ally of Germany in 1914, remained neutral at first and later entered the war on the side of the British and French. The Ottoman Empire (centered in Turkey) and other, smaller nations all joined the fighting later in 1914 or in 1915. Within less than a year, virtually the entire European continent and part of Asia were embroiled in a major war.

Wilson’s Neutrality

Wilson called on his fellow citizens in 1914 to remain “impartial in thought as well as deed.” But that was impossible, for several reasons. Some Americans sympathized with the German cause (German Americans because of affection for Germany, Irish Americans because of hatred of Britain). Many more (including Wilson himself) sympathized with Britain. Wilson himself was only one of many Americans who fervently admired England—its traditions, its culture, its political system; almost instinctively, these Americans attributed to the cause of the Allies (Britain, France, Italy, Russia) a moral quality that they denied to the Central Powers (Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire). Lurid reports of German atrocities in Belgium and France, skillfully



PROMOTING THE WAR IN AUSTRALIA The government of Australia at times had difficulty persuading men to sign up to fight in World War I, which some Australians believed was being fought to aid the British and had nothing to do with them. This poster was part of a drive to recruit volunteers in 1915. (*Private Collection*)

exaggerated by British propagandists, strengthened the hostility of many Americans toward Germany.

Economic realities also made it impossible for the United States to deal with the belligerents on equal terms. The British had imposed a naval blockade on Germany to prevent munitions and supplies from reaching the enemy. As a neutral, the United States had the right, in theory, to trade with Germany. A truly neutral response to the blockade would have been to stop trading with Britain as well. But while the United States could survive an interruption of its relatively modest trade with the Central Powers, it could not easily weather an embargo on its much more extensive trade with the Allies, particularly when war orders from Britain and France soared after 1914, helping to produce one of the greatest economic booms in the nation’s history. So America tacitly ignored the blockade of Germany and continued trading with Britain. By 1915, the United States had gradually transformed itself from a neutral power into the arsenal of the Allies.

The Germans, in the meantime, were resorting to a new and, in American eyes, barbaric tactic: submarine warfare. Unable to challenge British domination on the ocean’s surface, Germany began early in 1915 to use the newly improved submarine to try to stem the flow of supplies to England. Enemy vessels, the Germans announced,

Lusitania

would be sunk on sight. Months later, on May 7, 1915, a German submarine sank the British passenger liner *Lusitania* without warning, causing the deaths of 1,198 people, 128 of them Americans. The ship was, it later became clear, carrying both passengers and munitions; but most Americans considered the attack what Theodore Roosevelt called it: “an act of piracy.”

Wilson angrily demanded that Germany promise not to repeat such outrages and that the Central Powers affirm their commitment to neutral rights. The Germans finally agreed to Wilson’s demands, but tensions between the nations continued. Early in 1916, in response to an announcement that the Allies were now arming merchant ships to sink submarines, Germany proclaimed that it would fire on such vessels without warning. A few weeks later it attacked the unarmed French steamer *Sussex*, injuring several American passengers. Again Wilson demanded that Germany abandon its “unlawful” tactics; again the German government relented, still hoping to keep America out of the war.

Preparedness Versus Pacifism

Despite the president’s increasing bellicosity in 1916, he was still far from ready to commit the United States to war. One obstacle was American domestic politics. Facing a difficult battle for reelection, Wilson could not ignore the powerful factions that continued to oppose intervention.

The question of whether America should make military and economic preparations for war provided the first issue over which pacifists and interventionists could openly debate. Wilson at first sided with the anti-preparedness forces, denouncing the idea of an American military buildup as needless and provocative. As tensions between the United States and Germany grew, however, he changed his mind. In the fall of 1915, he endorsed an ambitious proposal for a large and rapid increase in the nation’s armed forces. Amid expressions of outrage from pacifists in Congress and elsewhere, he worked hard to win approval of it, even embarking on a national speaking tour early in 1916 to arouse support for the proposal.

Still, the peace faction wielded considerable political strength, as became clear at the Democratic Convention in the summer of 1916. The convention became especially enthusiastic when the keynote speaker punctuated his

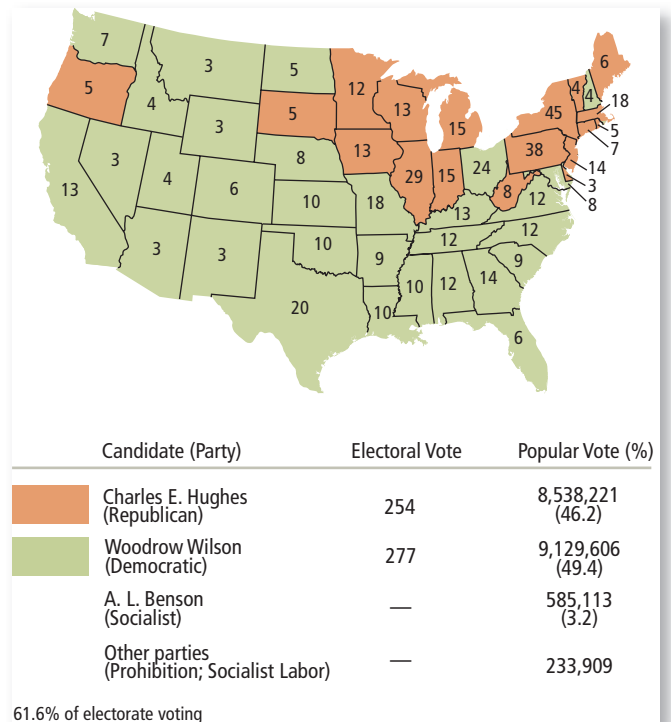
list of Wilson’s diplomatic achievements with the chant

“What did we do? What did we do? . . . We didn’t go to war! We didn’t go to war!” That speech helped produce one of the most prominent slogans of Wilson’s reelection campaign: “He kept us out of war.” During the campaign, Wilson did nothing to discourage those who argued that the Republican candidate, the progressive New York governor Charles Evans Hughes (supported by the bellicose

Theodore Roosevelt), was more likely than he to lead the nation into war. And when pro-war rhetoric became particularly heated, Wilson spoke defiantly of the nation being “too proud to fight.” He ultimately won reelection by a small margin: fewer than 600,000 popular votes and only 23 electoral votes. The Democrats retained a precarious control over Congress.

A War for Democracy

The election was behind him, and tensions between the United States and Germany remained high. But Wilson still required a justification for American intervention that would unite public opinion and satisfy his own sense of morality. In the end, he created that rationale himself. The United States, Wilson insisted, had no material aims in the conflict. Rather, the nation was committed to using the war as a vehicle for constructing a new world order, one based on some of the same progressive ideals that had motivated reform in America. In a speech before Congress in January 1917, he presented a plan for a post-war order in which the United States would help maintain peace through a permanent league of nations—a peace that would ensure self-determination for all



ELECTION OF 1916 Woodrow Wilson had good reason to be concerned about his reelection prospects in 1916. He had won only about 42 percent of the vote in 1912, and the Republican Party—which had been divided four years earlier—was now reunited around the popular Charles Evans Hughes. In the end, Wilson won a narrow victory over Hughes with just under 50 percent of the vote and an even narrower margin in the electoral college. Note the striking regional character of his victory. ♦ *How did Wilson use the war in Europe to bolster his election prospects?*

nations, a “peace without victory.” These were, Wilson believed, goals worth fighting for if there was sufficient provocation. Provocation came quickly.

In January, after months of inconclusive warfare in the trenches of France, the military leaders of Germany decided on one last dramatic gamble to achieve victory. They launched a series of major assaults on the enemy’s lines in France. At the same time, they began unrestricted submarine warfare (against American as well as Allied ships) to cut Britain off from vital supplies. The Allied defenses would collapse, they hoped, before the United States could intervene. The new German policy made

Zimmermann Telegram

American entry into the war virtually inevitable. Two additional events helped clear the way. On February 25, the British gave Wilson a telegram intercepted from the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, to the government of Mexico. It proposed that in the event of war between Germany and the United States, the Mexicans should join with Germany against the Americans to regain their “lost provinces” (Texas and much of the rest of the American Southwest) when the war was over. Widely publicized by British propagandists and in the American press, the Zimmermann telegram inflamed public opinion and helped build popular sentiment for war. A few weeks later, in March 1917, a revolution in Russia toppled the reactionary czarist regime and replaced it with a new, republican government. The United States would now be spared the embarrassment of allying itself with a despotic monarchy.

On the rainy evening of April 2, two weeks after German submarines had torpedoed three American ships, Wilson appeared before a joint session of Congress and asked for a declaration of war:

It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

Even then, opposition remained. For four days, pacifists in Congress carried on a futile struggle. When the declaration of war finally passed on April 6, fifty representatives and six senators voted against it.

“WAR WITHOUT STINT”

Armies on both sides in Europe were decimated and exhausted by the time of Woodrow Wilson’s declaration of war. The German offensives of early 1917 had failed to produce an end to the struggle, and French and British counteroffensives had accomplished little beyond adding to

Stalemate



THE WARTIME DRAFT This office in New York handled hundreds of men every day who arrived to enlist in response to draft notices. Although both the Union and the Confederacy had tried (and often failed) to use the draft during the Civil War, the World War I draft was the first centrally organized effort by the federal government to require military service from its citizens. Although some Americans evaded the draft in 1917 and 1918 (and were reviled by others as “shirkers”), most of those drafted complied with the law. (*Brown Brothers*)

the casualties. The Allies looked to the United States for help. Wilson, who had called on the nation to wage war “without stint or limit,” was ready to oblige.

Entering the War

By the spring of 1917, Great Britain was suffering such vast losses from attacks by German submarines—one of every four ships setting sail from British ports never returned—that its ability to continue receiving vital supplies from across the Atlantic was in question. Within weeks of joining the war, a fleet of American destroyers began aiding the British navy in its assault on German submarines. Other American warships escorted merchant vessels across the Atlantic. Americans also helped sow anti-submarine mines in the North Sea. The results were dramatic. Sinkings of Allied ships had totaled nearly 900,000 tons in the month of April 1917; by December, the figure had dropped to 350,000, and by October 1918 to 112,000. The convoys also helped the United States protect its own soldiers en route to Europe. No American troop ship was lost at sea in World War I.

Many Americans had hoped that providing naval assistance alone would be enough to turn the tide in the war, but it quickly became clear that American ground forces would also be necessary to shore up the tottering Allies.

Britain and France had few remaining reserves. By early 1918, Russia had withdrawn from the war. After the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917, the new government, led by V.I. Lenin, negotiated a hasty and costly peace with the Central Powers, thus freeing additional German troops to fight on the western front.

Russian Revolution

A WOMEN'S MOTOR CORPS Although the most important new role that women performed during World War I was probably working in factories that male workers had left, many women also enlisted in auxiliary branches of the military—among them these uniformed women who served as drivers for the army. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)



The American Expeditionary Force

There were only about 120,000 soldiers in the army in 1917, and perhaps 80,000 more in the National Guard. Neither group had any combat experience; and except for the small number of officers who had participated in the Spanish-American War two decades before and the Mexican intervention of 1916, few commanders had any experience in battle either.

Some politicians urged a voluntary recruitment process to raise the needed additional forces. Among the advocates of this approach was Theodore Roosevelt, now old and ill, who swallowed his hatred of Wilson and called on him at the White House with an offer to raise a regiment to fight in Europe. But the president and his secretary of war, Newton D. Baker, decided that only a national draft could provide the needed men; and despite the protests of those who agreed with House Speaker Champ Clark that “there is precious little difference between a conscript and a convict,” he won passage of the Selective Service Act in mid-May. The draft brought nearly 3 million men into the army; another 2 million joined various branches of the armed services voluntarily. Together, they formed what became known as the American Expeditionary Force (AEF).

Selective Service Act

It was the first time in American history that any substantial number of soldiers and sailors had fought overseas for an extended period. The military did its best to keep up morale among men who spent most of their time living in the trenches. They were frequently shelled and even when calm were muddy, polluted, and infested with rats. But when soldiers had time away from the front, they were usually less interested in the facilities the Red Cross

tried to make available for them than in exploring the bars and brothels of local towns. More than one in every ten American soldiers in Europe contracted venereal disease during World War I, which inspired elaborate official efforts to prevent infection and to treat it when it occurred.

In some respects, the AEF was the most diverse fighting force the United States had ever assembled. For the first time, women were permitted to enlist in the military—more than ten thousand in the navy and a few hundred in the marines. They were not allowed to participate in combat, but they served auxiliary roles in hospitals and offices.

Nearly 400,000 black soldiers enlisted in or were drafted into the army and navy as well. (The marines would not accept them.) And while most of them performed menial tasks on military bases in the United States, more than 50,000 went to France.

African-American soldiers served in segregated, all-black units under white commanders; and even in Europe, most of them were assigned to noncombat duty. But some black units fought valiantly in the great offensives of 1918. Most African-American soldiers learned to live with the racism they encountered—in part because they hoped their military service would ultimately improve their status. But a few responded to provocations violently. In August 1917, a group of black soldiers in Houston, subjected to continuing abuse by people in the community, used military weapons to kill seventeen whites. Thirteen black soldiers were hanged, and another forty were sentenced to life terms in military jails.

Having assembled this first genuinely national army, the War Department permitted the American Psychological Association to study it. The psychologists gave thousands of soldiers new tests designed to measure intelligence: the “Intelligence Quotient,” or “IQ,” test and other newly designed aptitude tests. In fact, the tests were less effective in measuring intelligence than in measuring education; and they reflected the educational expectations of the white middle-class people who had devised them. Half the whites and the vast majority of the African Americans taking the test scored at levels that classified them as “morons.” In reality, most of them were simply people who had not had much access to education.

The Military Struggle

The engagement of these forces in combat was intense but brief. Not until the spring of 1918 were significant numbers of American ground troops available for battle.

Eight months later, the war was over. Under the command of General John J. Pershing, who had only recently led the unsuccessful American pursuit of Pancho Villa, the American Expeditionary Force—although it retained a command structure independent of the other Allies—joined the existing Allied forces.

African-American
Soldiers

General John Pershing

The experience of American troops during World War I was very different from those of other nations, which had already been fighting for nearly four years by the time the U.S. forces arrived in significant numbers. British, French, German, and other troops had by then spent years living in the vast network of trenches that had been dug into the French countryside. Modern weapons made conventional, frontal battles a recipe for mass suicide. Instead, the two sides relied on heavy shelling of each other’s trenches and occasional, usually inconclusive, and always murderous assaults across the “no-man’s land” dividing them. Life



LIFE IN THE TRENCHES For most British, French, German, and ultimately American troops in France, the most debilitating part of World War I was the seeming endlessness of life in the trenches. Some young men lived in these cold, wet, muddy dugouts for months, even years, surrounded by filth, sharing their space with vermin, eating mostly rotten food. Occasional attacks to try to dislodge the enemy from its trenches usually ended in failure and became the scenes of terrible slaughters. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

in the trenches was almost indescribably terrible. The trenches were places of extraordinary physical stress and discomfort. They were also places of intense boredom, laced with fear. By the time the Americans arrived, morale on both sides was declining, and many soldiers had come to believe that the war would be virtually endless.

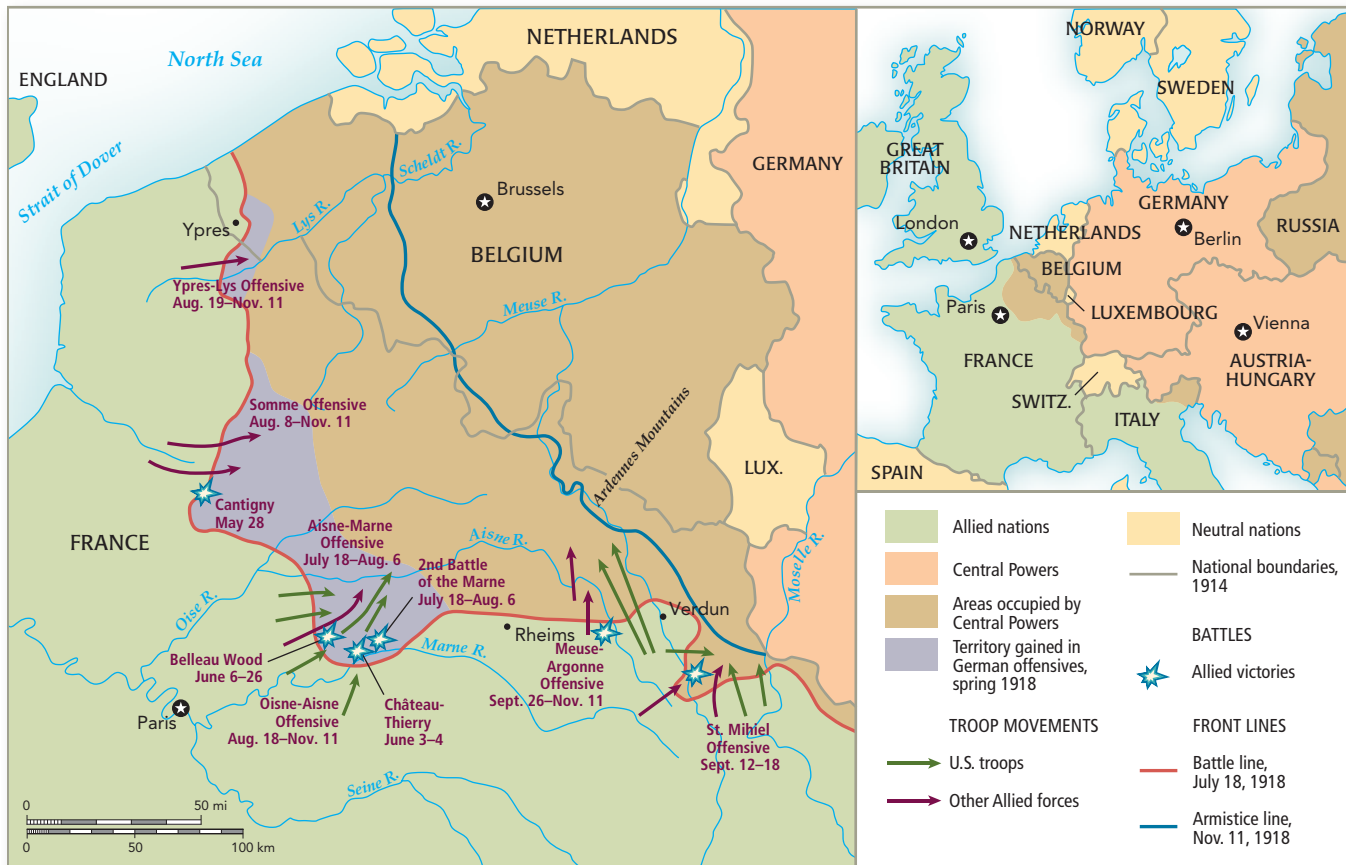
Although the American forces had trench experiences of their own, they were very brief compared to those of the European armies. Instead, the United States tipped the balance of power in the battle and made it possible for the Allies at last to break out of their entrenched positions and advance against the Germans. In early June 1918, American forces at Château-Thierry assisted the French in repelling a German offensive that had brought German forces within fifty miles of Paris. Six weeks later, after over a million American troops had flooded into France, the Americans helped turn away another assault, at Rheims, farther

south. By July 18, the Allies had halted the German advance and were beginning a successful offensive of their own.

On September 26, the American fighting force joined a large assault against the Germans in the Argonne Forest that lasted nearly seven weeks. By the end of October, despite terrible weather, they had helped push the Germans back toward their own border and had cut the enemy's major supply lines to the front.

Meuse-Argonne
Offensive

Faced with an invasion of their own country, German military leaders now began to seek an armistice—an immediate cease-fire that would, they hoped, serve as a prelude to negotiations among the belligerents. Pershing wanted to drive on into Germany itself; but other Allied leaders, after first insisting on terms that made the agreement little different from a surrender, accepted the German proposal. On November 11, 1918, the Great War shuddered to a close.



AMERICA IN WORLD WAR I: THE WESTERN FRONT, 1918 These maps show the principal battles in which the United States participated in the last year of World War I. The small map on the upper right helps locate the area of conflict within the larger European landscape. The larger map at left shows the long, snaking red line of the western front in France—stretching from the border between France and southwest Germany all the way to the northeast border between Belgium and France. Along that vast line, the two sides had been engaged in murderous, inconclusive warfare for over three years by the time the Americans arrived. Beginning in the spring and summer of 1918, bolstered by reinforcements from the United States, the Allies began to win a series of important victories that finally enabled them to begin pushing the Germans back. American troops, as this map makes clear, were decisive along the southern part of the front. ♦ *At what point did the Germans begin to consider putting an end to the war?*

The New Technology of Warfare

World War I was a proving ground for a range of military and other technologies. The trench warfare that characterized the conflict was necessary because of the enormous destructive power of newly improved machine guns and higher-powered artillery. It was no longer feasible to send troops out into an open field, or even to allow them to camp in the open. The new weaponry would slaughter them in an instant. Trenches sheltered troops while allowing limited, and usually inconclusive, fighting. But technology overtook the trenches, too, as mobile weapons—tanks and flamethrowers—proved capable of piercing entrenched positions. Most terrible of all, perhaps, new chemical weapons—poisonous mustard gas, which required troops to carry gas masks at all times—made it possible to attack entrenched soldiers without direct combat.

The new forms of technological warfare required elaborate maintenance. Faster machine guns needed more ammunition. Motorized vehicles required fuel and spare parts and mechanics capable of servicing them. The logistical difficulties of supply became a major factor in planning tactics and strategy. Late in the war, when advancing toward Germany, Allied armies frequently had to stop for days at a time to wait for their equipment to catch up with them.

World War I was the first conflict in which airplanes played a significant role. The planes themselves were relatively simple and not very maneuverable; but anti-aircraft technology was not yet highly developed either, so their effectiveness was still considerable. Planes began to be constructed to serve various functions: bombers, fighters (planes that would engage in “dogfights” with other planes), and reconnaissance aircraft.

The most “modern” part of the military during World War I was the navy. New battleships emerged—of which the British *Dreadnought* was perhaps the most visible example—that made use of new technologies such as turbine propulsion, hydraulic gun controls, electric light and power, wireless telegraphy, and advanced navigational aids. Submarines, which had made a brief appearance in the American Civil War, now became significant weapons (as the German U-boat campaign in 1915 and 1916 made clear). The new submarines were driven by diesel engines, which had the advantage of being more compact than a steam engine and whose fuel was less explosive than that of a gasoline engine. The diesel engine also had a much greater range than ships powered by other fuels.

The new technologies were to a large degree responsible for the most stunning and horrible characteristic of World War I—its appalling level of casualties. A million men representing the British Empire (Britain, Canada, Australia, India, and others) died. France lost 1.7 million men; Germany, 2 million; the former Austro-Hungarian Empire,

High Casualty Rates

1.5 million; Italy, 460,000; and Russia, 1.7 million. The number of Turkish dead, which was surely large, was never known. In Britain, one-third of the men born between 1892 and 1895 died in the war. Similarly terrible percentages could be calculated for other warring nations. Even greater numbers of men returned home with injuries, some of them permanently crippling. The United States, which entered the war near its end and became engaged only in the last successful offensives, suffered very light casualties in contrast—112,000 dead, half of them victims of influenza, not battle. But the American casualties were very high in the battles in which U.S. troops were centrally involved.

THE WAR AND AMERICAN SOCIETY

The American experience in World War I was relatively brief, but it had profound effects on the government, on the economy, and on society. Mobilizing an industrial economy for total war required an unprecedented degree of government involvement in industry, agriculture, and other areas. It also required, many Americans believed, a strenuous effort to ensure the loyalty and commitment of the people.

Organizing the Economy for War

By the time the war ended, the United States government had spent \$32 billion for expenses directly related to the conflict. This was a staggering sum by the standards of the time.

Financing the War

The entire federal budget had seldom exceeded \$1 billion before 1915, and as recently as 1910 the nation’s entire gross national product had been only \$35 billion. To finance the war, the government relied on two devices. First, it launched a major drive to solicit loans from the American people by selling “Liberty Bonds” to the public. By 1920, the sale of bonds, accompanied by elaborate patriotic appeals, had produced \$23 billion. At the same time, new taxes were bringing in an additional sum of nearly \$10 billion—some from levies on the “excess profits” of corporations, much from new, steeply graduated income and inheritance taxes that ultimately rose as high as 70 percent in some brackets.

An even greater challenge was organizing the economy to meet war needs. In 1916, Wilson established a Council of National Defense, composed of members of his cabinet, and a Civilian Advisory Commission, which set up local defense councils in every state and locality. Economic mobilization, according to this first plan, was to rest on a dispersal of power to local communities.

But this early administrative structure soon proved unworkable. Some members of the Council of National Defense, many of them disciples of the social engineering

gospel of Thorstein Veblen and the “scientific management” principles of Frederick Winslow Taylor, urged a centralized approach. Instead of dividing the economy geographically, they proposed dividing it functionally by organizing a series of planning bodies, each to supervise a specific sector of the economy. The administrative structure that slowly emerged from such proposals was dominated by a series of “war boards,” one to oversee the railroads, one to supervise fuel supplies (largely coal), another to handle food (a board that helped elevate to prominence the brilliant young engineer and business executive Herbert Hoover). The boards generally succeeded in meeting essential war needs without paralyzing the domestic economy.

At the center of the effort to rationalize the economy was the War Industries Board (WIB), an agency created in July 1917 to coordinate government purchases of military supplies. Casually organized at first, it stumbled badly until March 1918, when Wilson restructured it and placed it under the control of the Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch. From then on, the board wielded powers greater (in theory at least) than any other government agency had ever possessed. Baruch decided which factories

would convert to the production of which war materials and set prices for the goods they produced. When materials were scarce, Baruch decided to whom they should go. When corporations were competing for government contracts, he chose among them. He was, it seemed, providing the centralized regulation of the economy that some progressives had long urged.

In reality, the celebrated efficiency of the WIB was something of a myth. The agency was, in fact, plagued by mismanagement and inefficiency. Its apparent success rested in large part on the sheer extent of American resources and productive capacities. Nor was the WIB in any real sense an example of state control of the economy. Baruch viewed himself as the partner of business; and within the WIB, businessmen themselves—the so-called dollar-a-year men, who took paid leave from their corporate jobs and worked for the government for a token salary—supervised the affairs of the private economy. Baruch ensured that manufacturers who coordinated their efforts with his goals would be exempt from anti-trust laws. He helped major industries earn enormous profits from their efforts.

The effort to organize the economy for war produced some spectacular accomplishments: Hoover’s efficient



CAPTION TO COME

organization of domestic food supplies, William McAdoo's success in untangling the railroads, and others. In some areas, however, progress was so slow that the war was over before many of the supplies ordered for it were ready. Even so, many leaders of both government and industry emerged from the experience convinced of the advantages of a close, cooperative relationship between the public and private sectors. Some hoped to continue the wartime experiments in peacetime.

Labor and the War

The growing link between the public and private sectors extended, although in greatly different form, to labor. The National War Labor Board, established in April 1918 to resolve labor disputes, pressured industry to grant important concessions to workers: an eight-hour day, the maintenance of minimal living standards, equal pay for women doing equal work, recognition of the right of unions to organize and bargain collectively. In return, it insisted that workers forgo all strikes and that employers not engage in lockouts. Membership in labor unions increased by more than 1.5 million between 1917 and 1919.

The war provided workers with important, if usually temporary, gains. But it did not stop labor militancy. That was particularly clear in the West, where the Western Federation of Miners staged a series of strikes to improve the terrible conditions in the underground mines. The bloodiest of them occurred just before the war. In Ludlow, Colorado, in 1914, workers (mostly Italians, Greeks, and Slavs) walked out of coal mines owned by John D. Rockefeller. Joined by their wives and daughters, they continued the strike even after they had been evicted from company housing and had moved into hastily erected tents. The state militia was called into the town to protect the mines, but in fact (as was often the case), it actually worked to help employers defeat the strikers.

Joined by strikebreakers and others, the militia attacked the workers' tent colony; and in the battle that followed, thirty-nine people died, among them eleven children. But these events, which became known as the Ludlow Massacre, were only precursors to continued conflict in the mines that the war itself did little to discourage.

Economic and Social Results of the War

Whatever its other effects, the war helped produce a remarkable period of economic growth in the United States—a boom that began in 1914 (when European demands for American products began to increase) and accelerated after 1917 (in response to demand from the United States war effort). Industrial production soared, and manufacturing activity expanded in regions that had previously had relatively little of it. The shipbuilding indus-

try, for example, grew rapidly on the West Coast. Employment increased dramatically; and because so many white men were away at war, new opportunities for female, African-American, Mexican, and Asian workers appeared. Some workers experienced a significant growth in income, but inflation cut into the wage increases and often produced a net loss in purchasing power. The agricultural economy profited from the war as well. Farm prices rose to their highest levels in decades, and agricultural production increased dramatically as a result.

One of the most important social changes of the war years was the migration of hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the rural South into northern industrial cities. It became known as the “Great Migration.” Like most migrations, it was a result of both a “push” and a “pull.” The push was the poverty, indebtedness, racism, and violence most blacks experienced in the South. The pull was the prospect of factory jobs in the urban North and the opportunity to live in communities where blacks could enjoy more freedom and autonomy. In the labor-scarce economy of the war years, northern factory owners dispatched agents to the South to recruit African-American workers. Black newspapers advertised the prospects for employment in the North. And perhaps most important, those who migrated sent word back to friends and families of the opportunities they encountered—one reason for the heavy concentration of migrants from a single area of the South in certain cities in the North. In Chicago, for example, the more than 70,000 new black residents came disproportionately from a few areas of Alabama and Mississippi.

The result was a dramatic growth in black communities in northern industrial cities such as New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit. Some older, more established black residents of these cities were unsettled by these new arrivals, with their country ways and their revivalistic religion; the existing African-American communities considered the newcomers coarse and feared that their presence would increase their own vulnerability to white racism. But the movement could not be stopped. New churches sprang up in black neighborhoods (many of them simple storefronts, from which self-proclaimed preachers searched for congregations). Low-paid black workers crowded into inadequate housing. As the black communities expanded, they inevitably began to rub up against white neighborhoods, with occasionally violent results. In East St. Louis, Illinois, a white mob attacked a black neighborhood on July 2, 1917, burned down many houses, and shot the residents of some of them as they fled. As many as forty African Americans died.

For American women, black and white, the war meant new opportunities for employment. A million or more women worked in a wide range of industrial jobs that, in peacetime, were considered male preserves: steel,

Lessons of the Managed Economy

Ludlow Massacre

“Great Migration”

Race Riots

WOMEN INDUSTRIAL WORKERS In World War II, such women were often called “Rosie the Riveter.” Their presence in these previously all-male work environments was no less startling to Americans during World War I. These women are shown working with acetylene torches to bevel armor plate for tanks. (*Margaret Bourke-White/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*)



munitions, trucking, public transportation. Most of them had been working in other, lower-paying jobs earlier. But whatever changes the war brought were temporary ones. As soon as the war was over, almost all of the women working in previously male industrial jobs quit or were fired; in fact, the percentage of women working for wages actually declined between 1910 and 1920. The government had created the Women in Industry Board to oversee the movement of these women into the jobs left behind by men. After the war, the board became the Women’s Bureau, a permanent agency dedicated to protecting the interests of women in the work force.

THE SEARCH FOR SOCIAL UNITY

The idea of unity—not only in the direction of the economy but in the nation’s social purpose—had been the dream of many progressives for decades. To them, the war seemed to offer an unmatched opportunity for America to close ranks behind a great common cause. In the process, they hoped, society could achieve a lasting sense of collective purpose. But the task proved impossible to achieve.

The Peace Movement

Government leaders, and many others, realized that public sentiment about American involvement in the war had been deeply divided before April 1917 and remained so even after the declaration of war.

The peace movement in the United States before 1917 had many constituencies: German Americans, Irish Americans, religious pacifists (Quakers, Mennonites, and

others), intellectuals and groups on the left such as the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World, all of whom considered the war a meaningless battle among capitalist nations for commercial supremacy—an opinion many others, in America and Europe, later came to share. But the most active and widespread peace activism came from the women’s movement. In 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt, a leader of the fight for woman suffrage, helped create the Woman’s Peace Party, with a small but active membership. As the war in Europe intensified, the party’s efforts to keep the United States from intervening grew.

Women peace activists were sharply divided once America entered the war in 1917. The National American Woman Suffrage Association, the single largest women’s organization, supported the war and, more than that, presented itself as a patriotic organization dedicated to advancing the war effort. Its membership grew dramatically as a result. Catt, who was among those who abandoned the peace cause, now began calling for woman suffrage as a “war measure,” to ensure that women (whose work was essential to the war effort) would feel fully a part of the nation. But many other women refused to support the war even after April 1917. Among them were Jane Addams, who was widely reviled as a result, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a leading feminist activist.

Women peace activists shared many of the political and economic objections to the war of the Socialist Party (to which some of them belonged). But some criticized the war on other grounds as well, arguing that as “the mother half of humanity,” they had a special moral and maternal basis for their pacifism.

Selling the War and Suppressing Dissent

World War I was not as popular among the American people as World War II would be, but most of the country supported the intervention once it began. In communities all across the nation, there were outbursts of fervent patriotism, floods of voluntary enlistments in the military, and greatly increased displays of patriotism. Women joined their local Red Cross in an effort to contribute to the war effort. Children raised money for war bonds in their schools. Churches included prayers for the president and the troops in their services. Indeed, the war gave a large boost to the wave of religious revivalism that had been growing for a decade before 1917; and revivalism, in turn, became a source of support for the war. Billy Sunday, the leading revivalist of his time, dropped his early opposition to intervention in 1917 and became a fervent champion of the American military effort.

Nevertheless, government leaders (and many others) remained deeply concerned about the significant minorities who continued to oppose the war even after the United States entered it. Many believed that a crucial prerequisite for victory was an energetic, even coercive, effort to unite public opinion behind the military effort.

The most conspicuous government effort to rally public support was a vast propaganda campaign orchestrated by the new Committee on Public Information (CPI). It was directed by the Denver journalist George Creel, who spoke openly of the importance of achieving social unity. The CPI supervised the distribution of tons of pro-war literature (75 million pieces of printed material). War posters plastered the walls of offices, shops, theaters, schools, churches, and homes. Newspapers dutifully printed official government accounts of the reasons for the war and the prospects for quick victory. Creel encouraged reporters to exercise “self-censorship” when reporting news about the struggle.

As the war continued, the CPI’s tactics became increasingly crude. Government-promoted posters and films became lurid portrayals of the savagery of the Germans, bearing such titles as *The Prussian Cur* and *The Kaiser: Beast of Berlin*, encouraging Americans to think of the German people as something close to savages.

The government soon began more coercive efforts to suppress dissent. The CPI ran full-page advertisements in popular magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post* urging citizens to notify the Justice Department when they encountered “the man who spreads the pessimistic stories . . . , cries for peace, or belittles our efforts to win the war.” The Espionage Act of 1917 gave the government new tools with which to respond to such reports. It created stiff penalties for spying, sabotage, or obstruction of the war effort (crimes that were often broadly defined); and it empowered the Post Office Department



WARTIME PROPAGANDA This poster—one of many lurid images of imperial Germany used by the United States government to generate enthusiasm for American involvement in World War I—shows bloodstained German boots with the German eagle clearly visible. The demonization of Germany was at the heart of government efforts to portray the war to Americans. (*Library of Congress*)

to ban “seditious” material from the mails. Sedition, Postmaster General Albert Sidney Burleson said, included statements that might “impugn the motives of the government and thus encourage insubordination,” anything that suggested “that the government is controlled by Wall Street or munitions manufacturers, or any other special interests.” He included in that category all publications of the Socialist Party.

More repressive were two measures of 1918: the Sabotage Act of April 20 and the Sedition Act of May 16. These bills expanded the meaning of the Espionage Act to make illegal any public expression of opposition to the war; in practice, it allowed officials to prosecute anyone who criticized the president or the government.

The most frequent targets of the new legislation (and one of the reasons for its enactment in the first place) were such anticapitalist groups (and antiwar) groups as the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Many Americans had favored the repression of

BILLY SUNDAY AND MODERN REVIVALISM

Billy Sunday was a farm boy from Iowa who attended school only until the eighth grade, became a professional baseball player in his teens, and then, in 1886, at the age of twenty-four, experienced a conversion to evangelical Christianity. Over the next decade, he rose to become the most successful revivalist in America in an era when revivalism was spreading rapidly through rural and urban communities alike.

The great revival of the early twentieth century was not the first or the last in American history. But that revival—which reached a peak during the anxious years of World War I—stirred vast numbers of Americans and both reflected and helped to create a deep and lasting schism in the nation's Christian community.

The new revivalism was, among other things, an effort by conservative

Christians to fight off the influence of Darwin and his theory of evolution. Conservatives deplored the impact of Darwin on religion. A great many American Protestants in the late nineteenth century—people known as modernists—had revised their faith to incorporate Darwin's teaching. In the process, they had discarded from religion some of the beliefs that many conservative Christians considered critically important: the literal truth of the Bible (including the story of Creation), the faith in personal conversion, the factuality of miracles, the strong belief in the existence of heaven and hell, and many others. Faith in these religious "fundamentals" was important to conservatives (who began to be known as "fundamentalists") because without them, they believed, religion would no longer be a vibrant, central presence in their lives. And in an age

of rapid and often disorienting social change, many Americans found traditional religious belief an important source of solidity and stability.

Billy Sunday combined an instinctive feel for fundamentalist belief with an eager and skillful understanding of modern techniques of marketing and publicity and a genius for making religion entertaining. In the process, he became a prototype for the great revivalists of the later twentieth century: Aimee Semple McPherson, Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and many others. In his own time, Sunday was as popular and successful as any of them.

Sunday enlisted the support of advertisers and public relations experts to publicize his crusades, and he developed sophisticated methods of measuring the success of his mission. He raised enormous sums of money from eager worshipers (and, at times, wealthy patrons). But while he used some of it to live and travel comfortably, most of it went to publicizing his revival meetings and constructing the elaborate, if temporary, "tabernacles" in which he spoke before up to 20,000 people at a time. Established churches canceled their services when Sunday was in town and sent their congregants to hear him. Newspapers devoted enormous attention to his sermons and their impact. People lined the streets to catch a glimpse of him as he walked or rode through towns.

Part of Sunday's success was a result of his previous career as a baseball player, which he used to create a bond with male members of his audience. And part was a result of his flamboyant oratorical style. He leaped around his platform like the athlete he was, told jokes, waved the American flag, raised and lowered his voice to create a sense of intimacy and then a sense of passion. He was a natural



BILLY SUNDAY IN ILLINOIS, 1908 This photograph shows one of the many temporary tabernacles erected to house the enormous crowds—in this case over 5,000 people—whom Billy Sunday regularly attracted. He is shown here in Bloomington, Illinois, in January 1908, but the scene repeated itself in many places through the first decades of the twentieth century.

(C. U. Williams, Bloomington, Illinois/Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois)

socialists and radicals even before the war; the wartime policies now made it possible to move against them legally. Eugene V. Debs, the humane leader of the Socialist Party and an opponent of the war, was sentenced to ten years in prison in 1918. Only a pardon by President Warren G. Harding ulti-

mately won his release in 1921. Big Bill Haywood and members of the IWW were especially energetically prosecuted. Only by fleeing to the Soviet Union did Haywood avoid long imprisonment. More than 1,500 people were arrested in 1918 for the crime of criticizing the government.



BILLY SUNDAY ON THE PULPIT The artist George Bellows based this 1925 lithograph of Sunday preaching on an earlier painting of the same scene. It reveals something of the enormous energy Sunday brought to his sermons. (Bettmann/Corbis)

showman, and he had no inhibitions about using the techniques of showmanship to manipulate his audiences. But he was successful, too, because he combined fundamentalist religious themes with outspoken positions on social issues.

He was a highly effective advocate of prohibition and sometimes seemed to convert an entire community to temperance in a single stroke. "BURLINGTON IS DRY," an Iowa newspaper headline announced after one of his visits. "BILLY SUNDAY HAS MADE GRAVEYARD OF ONCE FAST TOWN." Sunday also spoke, at times with great fervor, about other reforms: cleaning up corrupt city governments, attacking the great trusts, fighting poverty. "I believe," he once said, "if society permits any considerable proportion of people to live in foul, unlighted rooms . . . if society allows deserving men to stagger along with less than a living wage . . . if society . . . throws the unripe strength of children into the hopper of corporate greed to be ground down into dividends, then society must share the responsibility if these people become criminals, thieves, cutthroats, drunkards, and prostitutes."

Yet he also insisted that individuals were not simply victims of society. "A man is not supposed to be the victim of his environment," he argued. Society could not explain the failures of "the individual who's got a rotten heart." Most of all, he argued, even the most degraded individuals could save themselves through Christ. An active faith would not only give them spiritual peace; it would also help them rise in the world. Religion, as Sunday presented it, was a form of self-help in a time when many Americans were searching desperately for ways to gain control over their lives and their fates.

Sunday opposed American involvement in World War I in the first years of the fighting in Europe. "A lot of fools over there are murdering each other to satisfy the damnable ambitions of a few mutts who sit on thrones," he once said. But when the United States entered the fighting, he took second place to no one in the fervor of his support and the passion of his patriotism. By then, the surge of revivalism he had helped create had spread widely through America—partly because of the ambitions of Sunday's many imitators (over a thousand of them, according to some estimates), who hoped to achieve something like his fame



POSING WITH THE BIBLE Sunday was almost never photographed in conventional portrait style. Even posed pictures usually showed him in some animated form—gesticulating, lunging, or (as here) holding up the Bible. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)

and fortune; and partly because of the eagerness of established congregations to bring revivalists into their communities to get people back into their churches. The war increased the appetite for revivalism in many communities, and it brought Sunday—and many others—a last great burst of success.

One of the things that made the war so important to revivalists, and their critics, was the hatred of Germany that became so powerful in American culture in those years. That hatred took several very different forms. To fundamentalists like Sunday, Germany was a source of evil because it had abandoned religion and embraced the new secular, scientific values of the modern world. To critics of fundamentalists, the problem with Germany was that it was not modern enough, that it was trapped in an older, discredited world of tribalism and savagery. This disagreement became the source of harsh charges and countercharges between fundamentalists and modernists during the war and contributed to lasting bitterness between the two groups. It also increased the fervor with which fundamentalists responded to charismatic leaders like Sunday.

Sunday's popularity faded after 1920, as he became a harsh critic of "radicalism" and "foreignness" and as the popularity of revivals declined in the face of a beckoning new consumer culture. When he died in 1935, he was attracting crowds only in scattered, rural communities of deeply conservative views. But in his heyday, Sunday provided millions of Americans with a combination of dazzling entertainment and prescriptions for renewing their religious faith. In the process, he helped sustain their belief in the possibility of personal success through a combination of faith and hard work even as the new industrial society was rapidly eroding the reality of the "self-made man."

State and local governments, corporations, universities, and private citizens contributed as well to the climate of repression. Vigilante mobs sprang up to "discipline" those who dared challenge the war. A dissident Protestant clergyman in Cincinnati was pulled from his bed one night by

a mob, dragged to a nearby hillside, and whipped "in the name of the women and children of Belgium." An IWW organizer in Montana was seized by a mob and hanged from a railroad bridge.

A cluster of citizens' groups emerged to mobilize "respectable" members of their communities to root out disloyalty. The American Protective League, probably the largest of such groups, enlisted the services of 250,000 people, who served as "agents"—prying into the activities and thoughts of their neighbors, opening mail, tapping telephones, and in general attempting to impose unity of opinion on their communities. It received government funds to support its work. Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory, a particularly avid supporter of repressing dissent, described the league and similar organizations approvingly as "patriotic organizations." Other vigilante organizations—the National Security League, the Boy Spies of America, the American Defense Society—performed much the same function.

There were many victims of such activities: socialists, labor activists, female pacifists. But the most frequent targets of repression were immigrants: Irish Americans because of their historic animosity toward the British, Jews because many had expressed opposition to the anti-Semitic policies of the Russian government, and others. "Loyalist" citizens' groups policed immigrant neighborhoods. They monitored meetings and even conversations for signs of disloyalty. Even some settlement house workers, many of whom had once championed ethnic diversity, contributed to such efforts. The director of the National Security League described the origins of the anti-immigrant sentiment, which was producing growing support for what many were now calling "100 percent Americanism":

"100 Percent Americanism"

The melting pot has not melted. . . . There are vast communities in the nation thinking today not in terms of America, but in terms of Old World prejudices, theories, and animosities.

The greatest target of abuse was the German-American community. Most German Americans supported the American war effort once it began. Still, public opinion turned bitterly hostile. A campaign to purge society of all things German quickly gathered speed, at times assuming ludicrous forms. Sauerkraut was renamed "liberty cabbage." Frankfurters became "liberty sausage." Performances of German music were frequently banned. German books were removed from the shelves of libraries. Courses in the German language were removed from school curricula; the California Board of Education called it "a language that disseminates the ideals of autocracy, brutality, and hatred." Germans were routinely fired from jobs in war industries, lest they "sabotage" important tasks. Some were fired from positions entirely unrelated to the war—for example, Karl Muck, the German-born conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Vigilante groups routinely subjected Germans to harassment and beatings, including a lynching in southern Illinois in 1918. Relatively

few Americans favored such extremes, but many came to agree with the belief of the eminent psychologist G. Stanley Hall that "there is something fundamentally wrong with the Teutonic soul."

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER

Woodrow Wilson had led the nation into war promising a more just and stable peace at its conclusion. Well before the armistice, he was preparing to lead the fight for what he considered a democratic postwar settlement.

The Fourteen Points

On January 8, 1918, Wilson appeared before Congress to present the principles for which he claimed the nation was fighting. The war aims had fourteen distinct provisions, widely known as the Fourteen Points; but they fell into three broad categories. First, Wilson's proposals contained eight specific recommendations for adjusting postwar boundaries and for establishing new nations to replace the defunct Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Those recommendations reflected his belief in the right of all peoples to self-determination.

Wilson's Idealistic Vision

Second, there were five general principles to govern international conduct in the future: freedom of the seas, open covenants instead of secret treaties, reductions in armaments, free trade, and impartial mediation of colonial claims. Finally, there was a proposal for a league of nations that would help implement these new principles and territorial adjustments and resolve future controversies.

There were serious flaws in Wilson's proposals. He provided no formula for deciding how to implement the "national self-determination" he promised for subjugated peoples. He said little about economic rivalries and their effect on international relations, even though such economic tensions had been in large part responsible for the war. Nevertheless, Wilson's international vision quickly came to enchant not only much of his own generation (in both America and Europe), but also members of generations to come. It reflected his belief, strongly rooted in the ideas of progressivism, that the world was as capable of just and efficient government as were individual nations; that once the international community accepted certain basic principles of conduct, and once it constructed modern institutions to implement them, the human race could live in peace.

The Fourteen Points were also an answer to the new Bolshevik government in Russia. In December 1917, Lenin issued his own statement of war aims, strikingly similar to Wilson's. Wilson's announcement, which came just three weeks

Lenin's Challenge

later, was, among other things, a last-minute (and unsuccessful) effort to persuade the Bolshevik regime to keep Russia in the war. But Wilson also realized that Lenin was now a competitor in the effort to lead the postwar order. And he announced the Fourteen Points in part to ensure that the world looked to the United States, not Russia, for guidance.

Early Obstacles

Wilson was confident, as the war neared its end, that popular support would enable him to win Allied approval of his peace plan. But there were ominous signs both at home and abroad that his path might be more difficult than he expected. In Europe, leaders of the Allied powers, many resenting what they considered Wilson's tone of moral superiority, were preparing to resist him even before the armistice was signed. They had reacted unhappily when Wilson refused to make the United States their "ally" but had kept his distance as an "associate" of his European partners, keeping American military forces separate from the Allied armies they were joining.

Most of all, however, Britain and France, having suffered incalculable losses in their long years of war, and having stored up an enormous reserve of bitterness toward Germany as a result, were in no mood for a benign and generous peace. The British prime minister, David Lloyd George, insisted for a time that the German kaiser be captured and executed. He and Georges Clemenceau, president of France, remained determined to the end to gain something from the struggle to compensate them for the catastrophe they had suffered.

At the same time, Wilson was encountering problems at home. In 1918, with the war almost over, Wilson unwisely appealed to the American voters to support his peace plans by electing Democrats to Congress in the November elections. A Republican victory, he declared, would be "interpreted on the other side of the water as a repudiation of my leadership." Days later, the Republicans captured majorities in both houses. Domestic economic troubles, more than international issues, had been the most important factor in the voting; but because of the president's ill-timed appeal, the results damaged his ability to claim broad popular support for his peace plans.

The leaders of the Republican Party, in the meantime, were developing their own reasons for opposing Wilson. Some were angry that he had tried to make the 1918 balloting a referendum on his war aims, especially since many Republicans had been supporting the Fourteen Points. Wilson further antagonized them when he refused to appoint any important Republicans to the negotiating team that would represent the United States at the peace conference in Paris. But the president considered such matters unimportant. Only one member of

the American negotiating party would have any real authority: Wilson himself. And once he had produced a just and moral treaty, he believed, the weight of world and American opinion would compel his enemies to support him.

The Paris Peace Conference

Wilson arrived in Europe to a welcome such as few men in history have experienced. To the war-weary people of the Continent, he was nothing less than a savior, the man who would create a new and better world. When he entered Paris on December 13, 1918, he was greeted, some observers claimed, by the largest crowd in the history of France. The negotiations themselves, however, proved less satisfying.

The principal figures in the negotiations were the leaders of the victorious Allied nations: David Lloyd George representing Great Britain; Clemenceau representing France; Vittorio Orlando, the prime minister of Italy; and Wilson, who hoped to dominate them all. From the beginning, the atmosphere of idealism Wilson had sought to create was competing with a spirit of national aggrandizement. There was, moreover, a strong sense of unease about the unstable situation in eastern Europe and the threat of communism. Russia, whose new Bolshevik government was still fighting "White" counterrevolutionaries, was unrepresented in Paris; but the radical threat it seemed to pose to Western governments was never far from the minds of any of the delegates, least of all Wilson himself.

Indeed, not long before he came to Paris, Wilson ordered the landing of American troops in the Soviet Union. They were there, he claimed, to help a group of 60,000 Czech soldiers trapped in Russia to escape. But the Americans soon became involved, at least indirectly, in assisting the White Russians (the anti-Bolsheviks) in their fight against the new regime. Some American troops remained in Russia as late as April 1920. Lenin's regime survived these challenges, but Wilson refused to recognize the new government. Diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were not restored until 1933.

In the tense and often vindictive atmosphere of the negotiations in Paris, Wilson was unable to win approval of many of the broad principles he had espoused: freedom of the seas, which the British refused even to discuss; free trade; "open covenants openly arrived at" (the Paris negotiations themselves were often conducted in secret). Despite his support for "impartial mediation" of colonial claims, he was forced to accept a transfer of German colonies in the Pacific to Japan; the British had promised them in exchange for Japanese assistance in the war. Wilson's pledge of "national self-determination" for all peoples

Allied Intransigence

The Big Four

Wilson's Retreat

THE BIG FOUR IN PARIS Surface cordiality during the Paris Peace Conference disguised serious tensions among the so-called Big Four, the leaders of the victorious nations in World War I. As the conference progressed, the European leaders developed increasing resentment of Woodrow Wilson's high (and some of them thought sanctimonious) moral posture in the negotiations. Shown here in the library of the Hotel Crillon are, from left to right, Vittorio Orlando of Italy, David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Georges Clemenceau of France, and Wilson. (*Bettmann/Corbis*)



suffered numerous assaults. Economic and strategic demands were constantly coming into conflict with the principle of cultural nationalism.

The treaty departed most conspicuously from Wilson's ideals on the question of reparations. As the conference began, the president opposed demanding compensation from the defeated Central Powers. The other Allied leaders, however, were insistent, and slowly Wilson gave way and accepted the principle of reparations, the specific sum to be set later by a commission. That figure, established in 1921, was \$56 billion, supposedly to pay for damages to civilians and for military pensions. Continued negotiations over the next decade scaled the sum back considerably. In the end, Germany paid only \$9 billion, which was still more than its crippled economy could afford. The reparations, combined with other territorial and economic penalties, constituted an effort to keep Germany weak for the indefinite future. Never again, the Allied leaders believed, should the Germans be allowed to become powerful enough to threaten the peace of Europe.

Wilson did manage to win some important victories in Paris in setting boundaries and dealing with former colonies. He secured approval of a plan to place many former colonies and imperial possessions (among them Palestine) in "trusteeship" under the League of Nations—the so-called mandate system. He blocked a French proposal to break up western Germany into a group of smaller states. He helped design the creation of two new nations: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, which were welded together out of, among other territories, pieces of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Each nation contained an

uneasy collection of ethnic groups that had frequently battled one another in the past.

But Wilson's most visible triumph, and the one most important to him, was the creation of a permanent international organization to oversee world affairs and prevent future wars. On January 25, 1919, the Allies voted to accept the "covenant" of the League of Nations; and with that, Wilson believed, the peace treaty was transformed from a disappointment into a success. Whatever mistakes and inequities had emerged from the peace conference, he was convinced, could be corrected later by the League.

The covenant provided for an assembly of nations that would meet regularly to debate means of resolving disputes and protecting the peace. Authority to implement League decisions would rest with a nine-member executive council; the United States would be one of five permanent members of the council, along with Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. The covenant left many questions unanswered, most notably how the League would enforce its decisions. Wilson, however, was confident that once established, the new organization would find suitable answers.

The Ratification Battle

Wilson was well aware of the political obstacles awaiting him at home. Many Americans, accustomed to their nation's isolation from Europe, questioned the wisdom of this major new commitment to internationalism. Others had serious reservations about the specific features of the treaty and the covenant. After a brief trip to

Washington in February 1919, during which he listened to harsh objections to the treaty from members of the Senate and others, he returned to Europe and insisted on several modifications in the covenant to satisfy his critics. The revisions ensured that the United States would not be obliged to accept a League mandate to oversee a territory and that the League would not challenge the Monroe Doctrine. But the changes were not enough to mollify his opponents, and Wilson refused to go further.

Wilson presented the Treaty of Versailles (which took its name from the palace outside Paris where the final negotiating sessions had taken place) to the Senate on July 10, 1919, asking, “Dare we reject it and break the heart of the world?” In the weeks that followed, he refused to consider even the most innocuous compromise. His deteriorating physical condition—he was suffering from hardening of the arteries and had apparently experienced something like a mild stroke (undiagnosed) in Paris—may have contributed to his intransigence.

The Senate, in the meantime, was raising many objections. Some senators—the fourteen so-called irreconcilables, many of them western isolationists—opposed the agreement on principle. But other opponents, with less fervent convictions, were principally concerned with constructing a winning issue for the Republicans in 1920 and with weakening a president whom they had come to despise. Most notable of these was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, the powerful chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. A man of stunning arrogance and a close friend of Theodore Roosevelt (who had died early in 1919, spouting hatred of Wilson to the end), Lodge loathed the president with genuine passion. “I never thought I could hate a man as I hate Wilson,” he once admitted. He used every possible tactic to obstruct, delay, and amend the treaty. Wilson, for his part, despised Lodge as much as Lodge despised him.

Public sentiment clearly favored ratification, so at first Lodge could do little more than play for time. When the document reached his committee, he spent two weeks slowly reading aloud each word of its 300 pages; then he held six weeks of public hearings to air the complaints of every disgruntled minority (Irish Americans, for example, angry that the settlement made no provision for an independent Ireland). Gradually, Lodge’s general opposition to the treaty crystallized into a series of “reservations”—amendments to the League covenant limiting American obligations to the organization.

At this point, Wilson might still have won approval if he had agreed to some relatively minor changes in the language of the treaty. But the president refused to yield.

When he realized the Senate would not budge, he decided to appeal to the public.

Wilson’s Ordeal

What followed was a political disaster and a personal tragedy. Wilson embarked on a grueling, cross-country speaking tour to arouse public support for the treaty. In a little more than three weeks, he traveled over 8,000 miles by train, speaking as often as four times a day, resting hardly at all. Finally, he reached the end of his strength. After speaking at Pueblo, Colorado, on September 25, he collapsed with severe headaches. Canceling the rest of his itinerary, he rushed back to Washington, where, a few days later, he suffered a major stroke. For two weeks he was close to death; for six weeks more, he was so seriously ill that he could conduct virtually no public business. His wife and his doctor formed an almost impenetrable barrier around him, shielding him from any official pressures that might impede his recovery, preventing the public from receiving any accurate information about the gravity of his condition.

Wilson ultimately recovered enough to resume a limited official schedule, but he was essentially an invalid for the remaining eighteen months of his presidency. His left side was partially paralyzed; more important, like many stroke victims, he had only partial control of his mental and emotional state. His condition only intensified what had already been his strong tendency to view public issues in moral terms and to resist any attempts at compromise. When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee finally sent the treaty to the full Senate for ratification, recommending nearly fifty amendments and reservations, Wilson refused to consider any of them. When the full Senate voted in November to accept fourteen of the reservations, Wilson gave stern directions to his Democratic allies: They must vote only for a treaty with no changes whatsoever; any other version must be defeated. On November 19, 1919, forty-two Democrats, following the president’s instructions, joined with the thirteen Republican “irreconcilables” to reject the amended treaty. When the Senate voted on the original version without any reservations, thirty-eight senators, all but one Democrats, voted to approve it; fifty-five senators (some Democrats among them) voted no.

There were sporadic efforts to revive the treaty over the next few months. But Wilson’s opposition to anything but the precise settlement he had negotiated in Paris remained too formidable an obstacle. He was, moreover, becoming convinced that the 1920 national election would serve as a “solemn referendum” on the League. By now, however, public interest in the peace process had begun to fade—partly as a reaction against the tragic bitterness of the ratification fight, but more in response to a series of other crises.

Wilson’s Intransigence

Henry Cabot Lodge

League Membership
Rejected

A SOCIETY IN TURMOIL

Even during the Paris Peace Conference, many Americans were less concerned about international matters than about turbulent events at home. The American economy experienced a severe postwar recession. And much of middle-class America responded to demands for change with a fearful, conservative hostility. The aftermath of war brought not the age of liberal reform that progressives had predicted, but a period of repression and reaction.

Industry and Labor

Citizens of Washington, D.C., on the day after the armistice, found it impossible to place long-distance telephone calls: the lines were jammed with officials of the war agencies canceling government contracts. The fighting had ended sooner than anyone had anticipated, and without warning, without planning, the nation was launched into the difficult task of economic reconversion.

At first, the wartime boom continued. But the postwar prosperity rested largely on the lingering effects of the

war (government deficit spending continued for some months after the armistice) and on sudden, temporary demands (a booming market for scarce consumer goods at home and a strong market for American products in the war-ravaged nations of Europe). This brief postwar boom was accompanied, however, by raging inflation, a result in part of the rapid abandonment of wartime price controls. Through most of 1919 and 1920, prices rose at an average of more than 15 percent a year.

Finally, late in 1920, the economic bubble burst, as many of the temporary forces that had created it disappeared and as inflation began killing the market for consumer goods. Between 1920 and 1921, the gross national product (GNP) declined nearly 10 percent; 100,000 businesses went bankrupt; 453,000 farmers lost their land; nearly 5 million Americans lost their jobs. In this unpromising economic environment, leaders of organized labor set out to consolidate the advances they had made in the war, which now seemed in danger of being lost. The raging inflation of 1919 wiped out the modest wage gains workers had achieved during the war; many laborers worried about job security as hundreds of thousands of veterans returned to the work force; arduous working conditions—such as the twelve-hour workday in the steel industry—continued to be a source of discontent. Employers aggravated the resentment by using the end of the war (and the end of government controls) to rescind benefits they had been forced to give workers in 1917 and 1918—most notably recognition of unions.

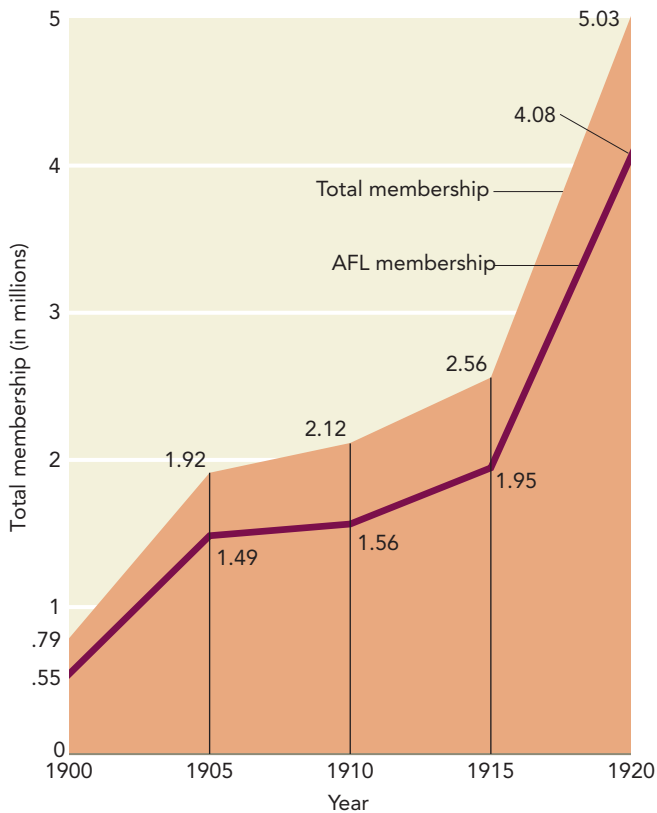
The year 1919, therefore, saw an unprecedented wave of strikes—more than 3,600 in all, involving over 4 million workers. In January, a walkout by shipyard workers in Seattle, Washington, evolved into a general strike that brought the entire city to a standstill. The mayor requested and received the assistance of U.S. Marines to keep the city running, and eventually the strike failed. But the brief success of a general strike, something Americans associated with European radicals, made the Seattle incident reverberate loudly throughout the country.

In September, there was a strike by the Boston police force, which was responding to layoffs and wage cuts by demanding recognition of its union. Seattle had remained generally calm during its strike; but with its police off the job, Boston erupted in violence and looting. Efforts by local businessmen, veterans, and college students to patrol the streets proved ineffective; and finally Governor Calvin Coolidge called in the National Guard to restore order. (His public statement that “there is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time” attracted national acclaim.) Eventually, Boston officials dismissed the entire police force and hired a new one.

In September 1919, the greatest strike in American history began, when 350,000 steelworkers in several eastern

New Social Environment

Postwar Recession



UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1900–1920 This chart illustrates the steady increase in union membership in the first part of the twentieth century—a membership dominated by unions associated with the AFL. Note the particularly sharp increase between 1915 and 1920, the years of World War I. ♦ *Why did the war years see such an expansion of union labor?*

Boston Police Strike



THE BOSTON POLICE STRIKE National Guardsmen stand guard in front of a store where broken windows suggest looting has already occurred, during the Boston Police Strike of 1919. (Bettmann/Corbis)

and midwestern cities walked off the job, demanding an eight-hour day and recognition of their union. The steel strike was long, bitter, and violent—most of the violence coming from employers, who hired armed guards to disperse picket lines and escort strikebreakers into factories. It climaxed in a riot in Gary, Indiana, in which eighteen strikers were killed. Steel executives managed to keep most plants running with nonunion labor, and public opinion was so hostile to the strikers that the AFL—having at first endorsed the strike—soon timidly repudiated it. By January, the strike had collapsed. It was a setback from which organized labor would not recover for more than a decade.

Steelworkers' Strike
Defeated

The Demands of African Americans

The nearly 400,000 black men who had served in the armed forces during the war came home in 1919 and marched down the main streets of the industrial cities with other returning troops. And then (in New York and other cities), they marched again through the streets of black neighborhoods such as Harlem, led by jazz bands,

cheered by thousands of African Americans, worshiped as heroes. The black soldiers were an inspiration to thousands of urban African Americans, a sign, they thought, that a new age had come, that the glory of black heroism in the war would make it impossible for white society ever again to treat African Americans as less than equal citizens.

In fact, that black soldiers had fought in the war had almost no impact at all on white attitudes. But it did have a profound effect on black attitudes: it accentuated African-American bitterness—and increased black determination to fight for their rights.

New Black Attitudes

For soldiers, there was an expectation of some social reward for their service. For many other American blacks, the war had raised economic expectations, as they moved into industrial and other jobs vacated by white workers, jobs to which they had previously had no access. Just as black soldiers expected their military service to enhance their social status, so black factory workers regarded their move north as an escape from racial prejudice and an opportunity for economic gain.

By 1919, however, the racial climate had become savage and murderous. In the South, there was a sudden

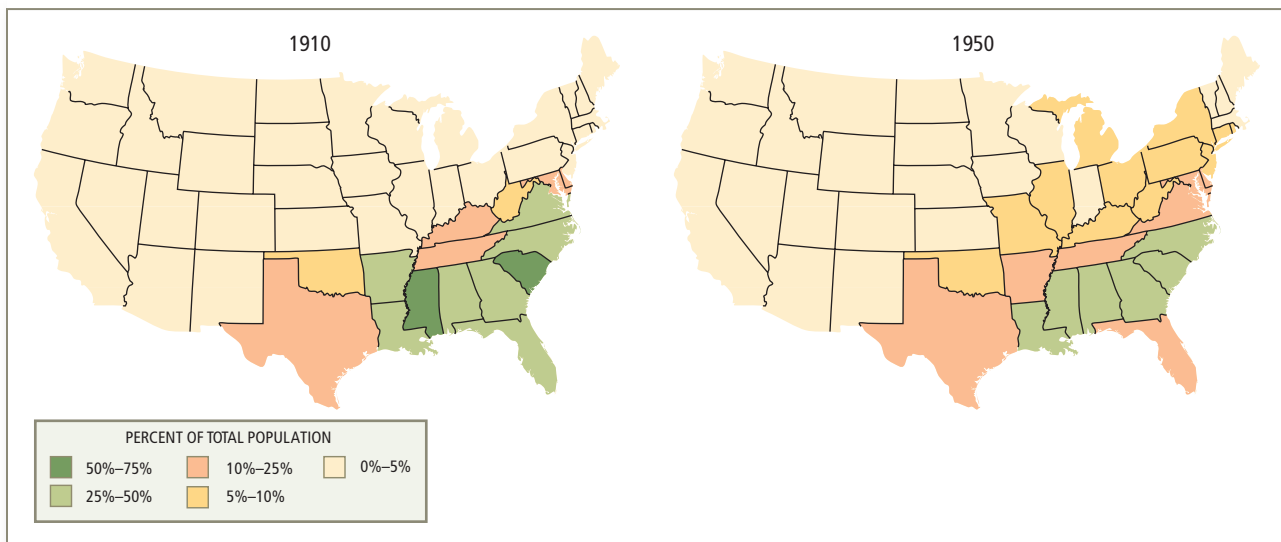
THE FIFTEENTH REGIMENT ON FIFTH AVENUE The all-black Fifteenth Army Regiment marches up Fifth Avenue in New York City in 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I. They are en route to an army training camp in New York State before traveling to the front in Europe. Less than two years later, many of these same men marched through Harlem on their return from the war, and again down Fifth Avenue, before cheering crowds—convinced, wrongly, that their service in the war would win them important new freedoms at home. (Bettmann/Corbis)



increase in lynchings: more than seventy blacks, some of them war veterans, died at the hands of white mobs in 1919 alone. In the North, black factory workers faced widespread layoffs as returning white veterans displaced them from their jobs. Black veterans found no significant new opportunities for advancement. Rural black migrants to northern cities encountered white communities unfam-

miliar with and generally hostile to them; and as whites became convinced that black workers with lower wage demands were hurting them economically, animosity grew rapidly.

The wartime riots in East St. Louis and elsewhere were a prelude to a summer of much worse racial violence in 1919. In Chicago, a black teenager swimming in Lake



AFRICAN-AMERICAN MIGRATION, 1910–1950 Two great waves of migration produced a dramatic redistribution of the African-American population in the first half of the twentieth century—one around the time of World War I, the other during and after World War II. The map on the left shows the almost exclusive concentration of African Americans in the South as late as 1910. The map on the right shows both the tremendous increase of black populations in northern states by 1950, and the relative decline of black populations in parts of the South. Note in particular the changes in Mississippi and South Carolina. ♦ *Why did the wars produce such significant migration out of the South?*

Michigan on a hot July day happened to drift toward a white beach. Whites on shore allegedly stoned him unconscious; he sank and drowned. Angry blacks gathered in crowds and marched into white neighborhoods to retaliate; whites formed even larger crowds and roamed into black neighborhoods shooting, stabbing, and beating passersby, destroying homes and properties. For more than a week, Chicago was virtually at war. In the end, 38 people died—15 whites and 23 blacks—and 537 were injured; over 1,000 people were left homeless. The Chicago riot was the worst but not the only racial violence during the so-called red summer of 1919; in all, 120 people died in such racial outbreaks in the space of little more than three months.

Racial violence, and even racially motivated urban riots, was not new. The deadliest race riot in American history had occurred in New York during the Civil War. But the 1919 riots were different in one respect: they did not just involve white people attacking blacks; they also involved blacks fighting back. The NAACP signaled this change by

urging African Americans not just to demand government protection, but also to retaliate, to defend themselves. The poet Claude McKay, one of the major figures of what would shortly be known as the Harlem Renaissance, wrote a poem after the Chicago riot called “If We Must Die”:

Like men we'll face the murderous cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back.

At the same time, a Jamaican, Marcus Garvey, began to attract a wide American following—mostly among poor urban blacks—with an ideology of black nationalism. Garvey encouraged African Americans to take pride in their own achievements and to develop an awareness of their African heritage—to reject assimilation into white society and develop pride in what Garvey argued was their own superior race and culture. His United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) launched a chain of black-owned grocery stores and pressed for the creation of other black businesses. Eventually, Garvey

Marcus Garvey's Black Nationalism



MARCUS GARVEY Marcus Garvey can be seen here enthroned on an opulent stage set for the 1924 convention of his United Negro Improvement Association. He is surrounded by uniformed guards and delegates from his organization. At the organization's peak, these annual meetings attracted thousands of people from around the world and lasted for weeks. (*Marcus Garvey at Liberty Hall, 1924. Photograph by James VanDerZee. © Donna Mussendem VanDerZee.*)

began urging his supporters to leave America and “return” to Africa, where they could create a new society of their own. In the 1920s, the Garvey movement experienced explosive growth for a time; and the UNIA became notable for its mass rallies and parades, for the opulent uniforms of its members, and for the growth of its enterprises. It began to decline, however, after Garvey was indicted in 1923 on charges of business fraud. He was deported to Jamaica two years later. But the allure of black nationalism, which he helped make visible to millions of African Americans, survived in black culture long after Garvey himself was gone.

The Red Scare

To much of the white middle class at the time, the industrial warfare, the racial violence, and other forms of dissent all appeared to be frightening omens of instability and radicalism. This was in part because the Russian Revolution of November 1917 made it clear that communism was no longer simply a theory, but now an important regime.

Concerns about the communist threat grew in 1919 when the Soviet government announced the formation of the Communist International (or Comintern), whose pur-

pose was to export revolution around the world. And in America itself, there were, in addition to the great number of imagined radicals, a modest number of real ones. The American Communist Party was formed in 1919, and there were other radical groups (many of them dominated by immigrants from Europe who had been involved in radical politics before coming to America). Some of these radicals were presumably responsible for a series of bombings in the spring of 1919 that produced great national alarm. In April, the post office intercepted several dozen parcels addressed to leading businessmen and politicians that were triggered to explode when opened. Several of them reached their destinations, and one of them exploded, severely injuring a domestic servant of a public official in Georgia. Two months later, eight bombs exploded in eight cities within minutes of one another, suggesting a nationwide conspiracy. One of them damaged the façade of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer’s home in Washington. In 1920, there was a terrible explosion in front of the Morgan bank on Wall Street, which killed thirty people (although only one clerk in the bank itself).

The bombings crystallized what was already a growing determination among many middle-class Americans (and some government officials) to fight back against radicalism—a determination steeled by the repressive



THE RED SCARE, 1919 Boston police pose for cameras holding piles of allegedly communist literature that they have gathered through raids on the offices of radical groups in the city. Such raids were already becoming common even before Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer ordered the so-called Palmer Raids in cities all over the United States in January 1920. (Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis)

atmosphere of the war years. This antiradicalism accompanied, and reinforced, the already strong commitment among old-stock Protestants to the idea of “100 percent Americanism.” And it produced what became known as the Red Scare.

Popular Antiradicalism

Antiradical newspapers and politicians now began to portray almost every form of instability or protest as a sign of a radical threat. Race riots, one newspaper claimed, were the work of “armed revolutionaries running rampant through our cities.” The steel strike, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* claimed, was “penetrated with the Bolshevik idea . . . steeped in the doctrines of the class struggle and social overthrow.” Nearly thirty states enacted new peacetime sedition laws imposing harsh penalties on those who promoted revolution; some 300 people went to jail as a result—many of them people whose “crime” had been nothing more than opposition to the war. There were spontaneous acts of violence against supposed radicals in some communities. A mob of off-duty soldiers in New York City ransacked the offices of a socialist newspaper and beat up its staff. Another mob, in Centralia, Washington, dragged an IWW agitator from jail and castrated him before hanging him from a bridge. Citizens in many communities removed “subversive” books from the shelves of libraries; administrators in some universities dismissed “radical” members from their faculties. Women’s groups such as the National Consumers’ League came under attack by antiradicals because so many feminists had opposed American intervention in the fighting in Europe.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to the Red Scare came from the federal government. On New Year’s Day, 1920, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his ambitious assistant, J. Edgar Hoover, orchestrated a series of raids on alleged radical centers throughout the country and arrested more than 6,000 people.

The Palmer Raids had been intended to uncover large caches of weapons and explosives; they netted a total of three pistols and no dynamite. Most of those arrested were ultimately released, but about 500 who were not American citizens were summarily deported.

Palmer Raids

The ferocity of the Red Scare soon abated, but its effects lingered well into the 1920s, most notably in the celebrated case of Sacco and Vanzetti. In May 1920, two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were charged with the murder of a paymaster in Braintree, Massachusetts. The evidence against them was questionable; but because both men were confessed anarchists, they faced a widespread public presumption of guilt. They were convicted in a trial of extraordinary injudiciousness, before an openly bigoted judge, Webster Thayer, and were sentenced to death. Over the next several years, public support for Sacco and Vanzetti grew to formidable proportions. But all requests for a new trial or a pardon were denied. On August 23, 1927, amid widespread protests around the world, Sacco and Vanzetti, still proclaiming their innocence, died in the electric chair. There was a cause that a generation of Americans never forgot.

Sacco and Vanzetti



SACCO AND VANZETTI The artist Ben Shahn painted this view of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, handcuffed together in a courtroom in 1927 waiting to hear if the appeal of their 1921 verdicts for murdering a Boston paymaster would succeed. It did not, and the two men were executed later that year. Just before his execution, Vanzetti said: “Never in our full life can we hope to do such work for tolerance, for man’s understanding of man, as now we do by an accident. Our words—our lives—our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph.” (©Estate of Ben Shahn/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY/Vaga)

The Retreat from Idealism

On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, became part of the Constitution. To the woman suffrage movement, this was the culmination of nearly a century of struggle. To many progressives, who had seen the inclusion of women in the electorate as a way of bolstering their political strength, it seemed to promise new support for reform. In some respects, the amendment helped fulfill that promise. Because of woman suffrage, members of Congress—concerned that women would vote as a bloc on the basis of women’s issues—passed the Shepard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act in 1921, one of the first pieces of federal welfare legislation that provided funds for supporting the health of women and infants. Concern about the women’s vote also appeared to create support for the 1922 Cable Act, which granted women the rights of U.S. citizenship independent of their husbands’ status, and for the proposed (but never ratified) 1924 constitutional amendment to outlaw child labor.

In other ways, however, the Nineteenth Amendment marked less the beginning of an era of reform than an ending. Economic problems, feminist demands, labor

unrest, racial tensions, and the intensity of the antiradicalism they helped create—all combined in the years immediately following the war to produce a general sense of disillusionment.

That became particularly apparent in the election of 1920. Woodrow Wilson wanted the campaign to be a referendum on the League of Nations, and the Democratic candidates, Ohio governor James M. Cox and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, tried to keep Wilson’s ideals alive. The Republican presidential nominee, however, offered a different vision. He was Warren Gamaliel Harding, an obscure Ohio senator whom party leaders had chosen as their nominee confident that he would do their bidding once in office. Harding offered no ideals, only a vague promise of a return, as he later phrased it, to “normalcy.” He won in a landslide. The Republican ticket received 61 percent of the popular vote and carried every state outside the South. The party made major gains in Congress as well. Woodrow Wilson, who had tried and failed to create a postwar order based on democratic ideals, stood repudiated. Early in 1921, he retired to a house on S Street in Washington, where he lived quietly until his death in 1924. In the meantime, for most Americans, a new era had begun.

Return to “Normalcy”

CONCLUSION

The greatest and most terrible war in human history to that point was also an important moment in the rise of the United States to global preeminence. The powers of Europe emerged from more than four years of carnage with their societies and economies in disarray. The United States emerged from its own, much briefer, involvement in the war poised to become the most important political and economic force in the world.

For a time after the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, most Americans—President Wilson among them—wanted to stay out of the conflict. Gradually, however, as the war dragged on and the tactics of Britain and Germany began to impinge on American trade and on freedom of the seas, the United States found itself drawn into the conflict. In April 1917, finally, Congress agreed (although not without considerable dissent) to the president’s request that the United States enter the war as an ally of Britain.

American forces quickly broke the stalemate that had bogged the European forces down in years of inconclusive trench warfare. Within a few months after the arrival of substantial numbers of American troops in Europe, Germany agreed to an armistice and the war shuddered to a close. American casualties, although not inconsiderable, were negligible compared to the millions suffered by the European combatants. In the meantime, the American

economy experienced an enormous industrial boom as a result of the war.

The social experience of the war in the United States was, on the whole, dismaying to reformers. Although the war enhanced some reform efforts—most notably prohibition and woman suffrage—it also introduced an atmosphere of intolerance and repression into American life, an atmosphere assisted by policies of the federal government designed to suppress dissent. The aftermath of the war was even more disheartening to progressives, both because of a brief but highly destabilizing recession, and because of a wave of repression directed against labor, radicals, African Americans, and immigrants in 1919 and 1920.

At the same time, Woodrow Wilson’s bold and idealistic dream of a peace based on the principles of democracy and justice suffered a painful death. The Treaty of Versailles, which he helped to draft, was itself far from what Wilson had hoped. It did, however, contain a provision for a League of Nations, which Wilson believed could transform the international order. But the League quickly became controversial in the United States; and despite strenuous efforts by the president—efforts that hastened his own physical collapse—the treaty was defeated in the Senate. In the aftermath of that traumatic battle, the American people seemed to turn away from Wilson’s ideals and entered a very different era.

INTERACTIVE LEARNING

The *Primary Source Investigator CD-ROM* offers the following materials related to this chapter:

- A short documentary, **Tulsa Race Riot of 1921** (D19).
- Interactive maps: **America in World War I** (M23) and **Influenza Pandemic** (M70).
- Documents, images, and maps related to U.S. involvement in the Great War and the significant postwar problems. Highlights include the text of Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points; the 1918 Sedition Act, which criminalized speech critical of the United

States; and images that depict a widespread fear of radicalism, such as soldiers destroying a Socialist flag and a portrait of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian immigrants whose controversial murder trial ended with their execution.

Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e)

For quizzes, Internet resources, references to additional books and films, and more, consult this book's Online Learning Center.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

Ernest R. May, *The World War and American Isolation* (1959) is an authoritative account of America's slow and controversial entry into the Great War. Frank Freidel provides a sweeping account of the American soldier's battlefield experience during World War I in *Over There: The Story of America's First Great Overseas Crusade* (1964). David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (1980) is an important study of the domestic impact of the war. Robert D. Cuff, *The War Industries Board: Business-Government Relations During World War II* (1973) is a good account of mobilization for war in the United States. Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (1991) examines the ways in which mobilization for war created new public benefits for various groups, including labor. Maureen Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work* (1980) describes the impact of World War I on women workers. John Keegan, *The First World War* (1998) is a superb military history. Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (1992) is a valuable study of the battle for peace. Arno Mayer, *Wilson*

vs. Lenin (1959) and *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution* (1965) are important revisionist accounts of the peacemaking process. Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (2002) is an important account of the Paris Peace Conference. America's stormy debate over immigration and national identity before, during, and after World War I is best captured by John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism* (1955). William M. Tuttle Jr., in *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (1970), recounts the terrible riots of 1919 that showed America violently divided along racial and ideological lines. Paul L. Murphy, *World War I and the Origins of Civil Liberties* (1979) shows how wartime efforts to quell dissent created new support for civil liberties. Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded* (2009) tells the story of postwar terrorism and the responses to it. *The Great War—1918* (1997) is a documentary film chronicling the experiences of American soldiers in the closing battles of World War I through their letters and diaries.