

Chapter 25

Road to World War I

Nationalism

Congress of Vienna had assumed that organizing Europe along national lines would bring cooperation

But instead it brought on competition (colonial and economic competition)

Led to formation of “competing” alliances (Triple Alliance “vs.” Triple Entente)

Allies were to be defended, even when what they did was “foolish”

Nations took to believing that their own sovereignty outweighed everything else (“don’t consult others”)

War was still considered reasonable behavior – especially within the military

Germany eyed Russia (maybe parts of Belgium, France too); France wanted Alsace-Lorraine back

Britain justified protecting its empire, Russia believed in its duty to protect fellow Slavs

Internal Dissent

There were still ethnic groups desiring independence

Slavs in Austria-Hungary, Irish in the British Empire, Poles on Russia

Social labor movements were gaining influence and power

Some conservatives wondered whether a war’s patriotism might overshadow socialism

Militarism

Conscription (a “draft”) was a common practice (Britain and the US were the major exceptions)

Massive armies were the rule – Russian: 1.3M, French & German: 900K; British, Italian, Austrian: 250-500K

Military leaders were “required” to plan for possible *mobilization* of armies that size

The Outbreak of War: The Summer of 1914

Another Crisis in the Balkans

Recent freedom from the Ottoman Empire for some states turned focus on rivalry between Austria and Russia

Austria wanted to expand to include more of the Slavic nations; Russia wanted to create a large Slavic nation

Assassination of Francis Ferdinand

June 28, 1914: Gavrilo Princip, Bosnian in Serbian “Black Hand,” assassinated Franz Ferdinand, Sophia

Austria saw the chance to seize Serbia; fearing Russian opposition, it sought and received German approval

July 23: Austria issued an “impossible” ultimatum to Serbia; Serbia had to refuse some of the points

July 28: Austria declared war on Serbia

Declarations of War

July 28: Russia, still humiliated by Bosnia crisis, mobilized its army against Austria

But its mobilization plans had been based on a war with both Austria *and* Germany

July 29: Russian mobilization against Germany, knowing it would be seen as an act of war

Germany demanded a halt and Russia ignored it, so Germany declared war (August 1)

German war plans had already assumed a war with France first (Schlieffen Plan)

Defeat the French quickly then turn all troops toward the larger, slower Russian army

August 3: Germany declared war on France (after issuing an ultimatum to Belgium allowing free passage)

August 4: Britain declared war on Germany ostensibly for violating Belgian neutrality

“real” reason was a French-Russian loss to Germany & Austria would leave Britain “without a friend”

The War

1914-1915: Illusions and Stalemate

The war began with tremendous enthusiasm on all sides; everyone believed their country was “just,” justified

Socialists had claimed a war would benefit imperialism and harm working class, but nationalism won out

Almost everyone believed the war would last only “weeks”

All European wars in the last 100 years had been short (but the American Civil War had lasted 4 years)

Modern technology was so expensive that a country’s economy could support a war for long

War was seen as “romantic,” “glorious,” redemptive (“selfless”)

War in the West

Quick defeat of France relied on massive encirclement of Paris, but troops had been siphoned off to East

Within a week it was 20 miles from Paris, but counterattack at First Battle of Marne stopped Germans

War quickly turned into a stalemate; trenches were dug on both sides

Trenches ran from the English Channel south to the border of neutral Switzerland
Neither side could gain substantial ground for the next four years

War in the East

No stalemate: back-and forth struggle with the loss of as many lives as on the Western Front
By mid-September, Russians invaded Germany as far as Tannenberg, Mauer Lake – but were defeated
Austria defeated by Russia in Galicia and were thrown out of Serbia
Italy turned against Germany and Austria, attacked Austria
Germans aided Austria and defeated Russians in Galicia, pushing its army 300 miles back into Russia
Russian casualties (dead, captured, or wounded) were 2.5M; Russia almost out of the war
Germans, Austrians, and Bulgarians attacked Serbia and eliminated it from the war

1916-1917: The Great Slaughter

Daily Life in the Trenches

Unimaginably horrible, confusing: battles were often disorganized
Sound of machine-guns, exploding shells
Landscape of barbed wire, shell holes, mud, and the injured and dying (later: poison gas)
Within the trenches were decomposing bodies, rats, lice, often little or poor food, mud or dust
Daily life: extended periods of boredom interrupted by panic-inducing horror
Rotation was 1 week in combat, 1 week in reserve trenches, 2 weeks somewhere behind the lines
Days began with “stand to” 30 minutes before sunrise preparing for possible attack
if no attack, a day of breakfast, inspection, sentry duty, care of trenches, and personal time
Sometimes a “live and let live” attitude prevailed
No attacks at breakfast time, no shelling latrines, making noise to warn enemy of impending attack
“Christmas Truce” of 1914

The War

The Widening of the War

Both sides looked to expand alliances
Germany added the Ottoman Empire (and Britain, France, and Russia declared war on it) and Bulgaria
Italy changed sides and joined the Triple Entente (but was ineffective)

A Global Conflict

In the Middle East, T.E. Lawrence incited the Arabs to revolt against the Ottomans
In Egypt, the British employed soldiers from India, Australia, and New Zealand
In Africa, the Allies called upon African soldiers (France actually recruited Africans to fight in Europe)
Africans were also employed as laborers, building roads and bridges and carrying supplies
In East Asia, Japan joined the Allies (they wanted to seize German territories in Asia)
Japan even seized German territories in China
Australia and New Zealand joined Japan in conquering German-held parts of New Guinea

Entry of the United States

The US tried hard to remain neutral, despite its leanings toward Britain
US involvement arose out of the naval conflict between Britain and Germany
Britain imposed a blockade on Germany; Germany retaliated with unrestricted submarine warfare
1915: German u-boats were told to sink any ship crossing the blockade
they sank the passenger ship *Lusitania*, killing more than 100 Americans
protests from the US caused Germany to alter the strategy on and off until 1917
1917: Germany returned to unrestricted submarine warfare, determined to starve Britain
despite their confidence that the US wouldn't interfere, it joined the war on April 6
US entry was a big psychological boost to the Allies when they needed it
1917 hadn't been good: Italy was crushed in October, Russia had a revolution in November

A New Kind of Warfare

End of 1915: airplanes appeared on the battlefield (first for surveillance then for attacking ground targets)
Plane-to-plane warfare began with pistols and moved to timed machine guns
German dirigibles (giant airships) were used to bomb London and eastern England

They were frightening but ultimately impractical, as gunfire resulted in the explosion of their hydrogen gas

Tanks

1916: tanks were introduced to the battlefield

caterpillar tracks for any terrain, later came mounted guns, but they were not practical until 1918

The Home Front: The Impact of Total War

The war profoundly changed governments, economies, and societies

Just organizing mass armies (Germany had 5.5M soldiers in active units) required government organization

Total War: Political Centralization and Economic Regimentation

After initial patriotism wore off, governments had to address economic problems and wartime needs

Mass conscription was the rule; even Britain had to resort to it

Britain had raised a million-man volunteer army in 1915-1916 – but it wasn't enough

Governments had to ensure that skilled workers did not enlist but rather stayed at work

Wartime governments expanded their control over their economies

Free market was shelved in favor of price, wage, and rent controls, rationing of food and supplies

They nationalized industries and transportation systems

In effect, governments planned the economies; soldiers *and* war workers contributed to the “war effort”

Not all were equally able to create a “total war effort”

Germans structured production well but weren't very good at food rationing (20% was imports)

Military leaders played important part in planning (it had been authoritarian before the war)

British tried to maintain “liberal” limited government interference, but it had to give in

David Lloyd George appointed Minister of Munitions to control production

Britain established rent controls and food rationing

France struggled – after all, 75% of coal production and 80% of steel-making in occupied land

The relationship between civil and military authorities was strained

They argued for 3 years over who would control the conduct of the war

1917: Georges Clemenceau established civilian control over the war

Russia, Austria, and Hungary were less successful

Autocratic Russia and Austria hadn't the industrialization to produce enough materiel

Russia could only arm ¼ of its troops; it advised them to pick up enemy weapons

Austria had a hard time getting the cooperation of its many minorities

Italy couldn't get its citizens to be enthusiastic or produce enough materiel

Public Order and Public Opinion

As casualties mounted and privation (e.g., rationing) worsened civilian morale began to suffer greatly

1916: Strike activity began to rise in Germany, Britain, and France

Irish republican separatists occupied buildings and perpetrated violence against the British government

Liberals and socialists called for negotiated settlements to end the war

1917: mutinies arose in the Italian and French armies; Czech leaders called for independence

Expansion of police powers to stifle dissent was near universal (easier within autocratic societies)

In Britain early on, dissenters were charged with treason; later, it was extended to the press; France, too

Propaganda used to arouse support for the war, beginning with exaggeration of enemies' atrocities

As the war dragged on, propaganda became more sophisticated

The Social Impact of Total War

Total war meant full employment

Trade unions were accepted (in return for accepting wage limits and production schedules)

Women were called on to take over jobs and responsibilities they previously had been denied

e.g., banking and commerce, truck driving, farm labor, and – above all – factory work

Even then, there was a sizable resistance from men

Everyone expected that the jobs were temporary; at war's end, women were quickly replaced

War and Revolution

The Russian Revolution

After the revolution of 1905, Tsar Nicholas II relied more and more on his military and bureaucracy

Nicholas was the only European ruler to take command of his army – but he had no preparation for it

Ill-led and ill-armed, Russian armies suffered incredible losses

1914-1916: 2M soldiers were killed and 4-6M were wounded
Despite potential patriotism at the outbreak of war, Nicholas wasn't trusted
Middle class and aristocrats still wanted the constitutional monarchy promised in 1905
Peasants were more discontent as conditions worsened
Alexandra, the tsarina, kept Nicholas isolated from outside events
She was influenced by Rasputin, the "mad monk," who seemed able to stop her son's bleeding
She trusted his advice on political matters, too
When the aristocrats found out the depth of his influence, they assassinated him (December 1916)

The March Revolution

As a result of bread rationing, at the beginning of March 1917, strikes broke out in Petrograd (St. Petersburg)
March 8 (International Women's Day): 10K women marched through the streets in protest of high prices
They were joined by other workers and called for a general strike to shut all the factories on March 10
Alexandra wrote Nicholas, calling them "hooligans"; he trusted her and called on the military to stop it
Followed orders at first, but eventually it began to join the demonstrators – it was out of the tsar's control
March 12: the "abolished" Duma met and declared it was taking over government responsibility
March 15: it established a provisional government, the tsar abdicated
New government was middle-class and liberal: passed universal suffrage, civil equality, 8-hour workday
Soviets (councils of workers and soldiers) sprang up, representing the working class (heavily socialist)
Mensheviks (evolutionary socialists) and *Bolsheviks* (revolutionary socialists)
Bolsheviks were dedicated to the violent overthrow of the government
Believed that a small band of revolutionaries could make that happen
Bolsheviks were led by V.I. Lenin (born Vladimir Ulianov)
Lenin had been declared an "enemy of the state" when his brother was executed for attempting to assassinate the tsar; later he was shipped to Siberia; eventually exiled to Switzerland
While in Switzerland (1900-1917), he controlled the Bolsheviks
When war broke out, Lenin saw it as an opportunity to spread revolution
A few weeks after the March Revolution, the German army "smuggled" him into Russia
They hoped he could disrupt Russian politics (they were right)
Lenin's "April Theses" was a blueprint for a revolution that could go directly into socialism
He maintained that the power rested in the *soviets* (the soldiers, workers, and peasants)
So then the Bolsheviks needed to gain control of the *soviets* in order to overthrow the government
They proposed land reform, giving control of the factories to the workers, and ending the war
Their slogans: "Peace, land, bread," "Worker control of production," and "All power to the soviets"
The provisional government struggles
Internally, peasants begin "their own" land reform,
Externally, Military Order No. 1 advised soldiers to overthrow their officers and take control
It led to the collapse of discipline within the army and widespread desertion

The Bolshevik Revolution

July: After the government falsely accused the Bolsheviks of treason, Lenin was forced to flee to Finland
September: General Kornilov attempted to march on Petrograd and seize power
Scared, new Prime Minister Alexander Kerensky released Bolsheviks and appealed to the *soviet* for help
It served to point out just how weak the government was
October: Bolsheviks had gained a majority in the Petrograd and Moscow *soviets*
Lenin said the time was right for revolution
November 6 (October in the Russian calendar): pro-*soviet*, pro-Bolshevik forces seized the power
November 8: Lenin announced the new Soviet government – with himself as leader
He stepped in to dismiss the Constituent Assembly (Bolsheviks hadn't had the majority)
To win peasant support, his first law was to "nationalize" land (ratifying the peasant land grab)
To win worker support, he turned over control of the factories to the workers
Alexandra Kollontai became the Commissar for Social Welfare
Declared men and women equal, decreed marriage a civil (rather than religious) act
Provided health care for women and children, legalized divorce, permitted abortion
Lenin had promised peace, but he really had no choice:

Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918): Russia withdrew, gave Germany eastern Poland, the Ukraine, Finland, and the Baltic provinces

He said that it made no difference: there would be socialist revolts across Europe anyway

Civil War

Not everyone liked the revolution: tsarists, liberal bourgeois and aristocrats, socialists opposed to Lenin
That included Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries

Thousands of Allied troops entered Russia to try to get Russia to re-enter the war

1918-1921: the Bolshevik (Red) Army was forced to fight on many fronts (e.g., Siberia, the Ukraine)

late 1919: three White (anti-Bolshevik) armies almost got to the Bolsheviks

The Royal family (Nicholas, Alexandra, and their 5 children) was a victim of the Civil War

Captured in 1917, moved to Siberia and then Ekaterinburg, and in 1918 murdered and buried

Causes of the eventual Red Army victory

Better disciplined and organized, thanks to Leon Trotsky

Reinstituted the draft, recalled some old tsarist officers, insisted on rigid discipline

Summarily executed those who disobeyed orders or deserted

Held a unified, interior line of defense, could move troops easily from one front to another

Bolsheviks established *war communism*, a command economy and centralized bureaucracy

It also employed “revolutionary terror” with the Cheka, a new secret police

Causes of the White Army defeat

Political difference among the forces created distrust and disunity

Their forces were spread out around the Red Army, and communication and coordination were hard

The use of foreign armies resulted in increased sense of patriotism among the Russians

They had come to keep Russia World War I but they stayed past the armistice, raising Russian hostility

British, American, French and Japanese (in Siberia) forces were stationed on Russian soil

1921: Communists retained control of Russia, establishing a centralized bureaucratic state with only one party

The Last Year of the War

Russia's withdrawal gave Germany hope; they planned one last grand offensive: the 2nd Battle of the Marne

Began in March and ended in July, thwarted by a counterattack supported by 140K fresh American troops

The Allies began to advance toward Germany

September 29: General Ludendorff demanded that Germany sue for peace

The Allies demanded to negotiate with a liberal government but Germany's response wasn't fast enough

November 3: naval units mutinied, and councils of workers and soldiers began to take over administration

November 9: the Kaiser abdicated

November 11: the armistice was signed

The Casualties of the War

8-9M killed, 22M wounded – many of whom died later from injury or were mutilated, incl. loss of limb(s)

birthrate declined for a generation

created a “lost generation” of soldiers who were accustomed to violence (later supported Hitler, Mussolini)

1915: the Armenian Genocide of 1M after an uprising against the Ottomans

Revolutionary Upeavals in Germany and Austria-Hungary

Germany began to disintegrate into mutinies and mass demonstrations

Social democrats split into two factions, favoring parliamentary democracy or socialist revolution

The Radical Socialists (now called Communists) failed to control the government

Attempts to seize power in Berlin and Munich were crushed by the army and voluntary Free Corps

The German middle class came to fear Communism, and were vulnerable to arch-conservatives (like Hitler)

By war's end the A-H Empire had been replaced with Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia

Other regions tried to join Italy, Romania, and Poland

Ethnic identity and nationalism continued to outweigh class differences for the next 80 years

Only Hungary tried unification through Communism, but it failed after 5 months

The Peace Settlement

January 1919: delegates of the victorious Allies gathered in Paris to finalize a settlement

Lenin revealed secret wartime treaties from the archives showing that the war had really been about land grabs

Peace Aims

- US President Woodrow Wilson had tried to elevate the conversation, creating “Fourteen Points”
- A treaty that created a “just and lasting peace” was supposed to justify the war
- Points included no secret treaties, limits on armaments, and national *self-determination*
- Pushed greater democracy and a “general association of nations” to resolve differences and enforce rules
- European nations had more practical concerns
- David Lloyd George had been elected on a platform of making the Germans pay for the war
- France, having borne the brunt of the war, felt it deserved revenge and security against future aggression
- Solution? Demilitarize Germany, create a buffer state, and reparations, reparations, reparations
- Strengthen eastern Europe against the possibility of the spread of Russian Communism
- Overcoming conflicting agendas, a League of Nations was adopted, leaving the details for later

The Treaty of Versailles

- Separate treaties were written for the 5 defeated states: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottomans
- The Treaty of Versailles with Germany was by far the most important
- Article 231, the *War Guilt Clause*, declared Germany (and Austria) responsible for starting the war
- Therefore reparations were in order – the amount to be decided upon later by a commission
- It had to reduce its army to 100K and turn over some of Prussia to Poland, and Alsace-Lorraine to France
- A demilitarized zone on both sides of the Rhine River was stripped of armament and fortifications
- Germany wanted to reject the treaty, but that would have just renewed the war – at heavy cost to Germany

The Other Peace Treaties

- The other treaties redrew the map of eastern Europe
- German and Russian Empires lost territory and the Austro-Hungarian Empire disappeared
- New nations: Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary
- In the Balkans, Romania expanded and Serbia was incorporated into a new Yugoslavia
- It was impossible to draw the boundaries precisely to accommodate all ethnic groups
- France wanted protection from Germany and Communist Russia, so the lines included ethnic minorities
- Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia, Hungarians and Poles in Czechoslovakia, and Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Albanians in Yugoslavia
- The Allies had promised independence to the Arabs when the Ottoman Empire was defeated, but...
- France took control of Lebanon and Syria, Britain received Iraq and Palestine
- Officially, they were *mandates* being administered on behalf of the League of Nations
- The League of Nations needed the active participation of the victors but the US Senate failed to ratify the treaty
- The US also pulled out of an alliance with Britain and France, pursuing an isolationist foreign policy