CHAPTER 22

World War I

1914–1920
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Early in the morning of July 12, 1917, 2,000 armed vigilantes swept through Bisbee, Arizona, acting on behalf of the Phelps-Dodge mining company and Bisbee’s leading businessmen to break a bitter strike that had crippled Bisbee’s booming copper industry. The vigilantes seized miners in their homes, on the street, and in restaurants and stores. Any miner who wasn’t working or willing to work was herded into Bisbee’s downtown plaza, where two machine guns commanded the scene. From the Plaza, more than 2,000 were marched to the local baseball park. There, mine managers gave them a last chance to return to work. Hundreds accepted and were released. The remaining 1,400 were forced at gunpoint onto a freight train, which took them 173 miles east to Columbus, New Mexico, where they were dumped in the desert.

The Bisbee deportation occurred against a complex backdrop. America had just entered World War I, corporations were seeking higher profits, and labor militancy was on the rise. Bisbee was only one of many American communities to suffer vigilantism during the war. Any number of offenses—not displaying a flag, failing to buy war bonds, criticizing the draft, alleged spying, any apparently “disloyal” behavior—could trigger vigilante action. In Western communities like Bisbee, vigilantes used the superpatriotic mood to settle scores with labor organizers and radicals.

Arizona was the leading producer of copper in the United States. With a population of 8,000, Bisbee lay in the heart of the state’s richest mining district. The giant Phelps-Dodge Company dominated Bisbee’s political and social life. It owned the town’s hospital, department store, newspaper, library, and largest hotel. With the introduction of new technology and open pit mining after 1900, unskilled laborers—most of them Slavic, Italian, Czech, and Mexican immigrants—had increasingly replaced skilled American and English-born miners in Bisbee’s workforce.

America’s entry into the war pushed the price of copper to an all-time high, prompting Phelps-Dodge to increase production. Miners viewed the increased demand for labor as an opportunity to flex their own muscle and improve wages and working conditions. Two rival union locals, one affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the other with the more radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or “Wobblies,” sought to organize Bisbee’s workers. On June 26, 1917, Bisbee’s Wobblies went on strike. They demanded better mine safety, an end to discrimination against union workers, and a substantial pay increase. The IWW, making special efforts to attract lower-paid, foreign-born workers to their cause, even hired two Mexican organizers. Although the IWW had only 300 or 400 members in Bisbee, more than half the town’s 4,700 miners supported the strike.

The walkout was peaceful, but Walter Douglas, district manager for Phelps-Dodge, was unmoved. “There will be no compromise,” he declared, “because you cannot compromise with a rattlesnake.” Douglas, Cochise County Sheriff Harry Wheeler, and Bisbee’s leading businessmen met secretly to plan the July 12 deportation. The approximately 2,000 men they deputized to carry it out were members of Bisbee’s Citizens’ Protective League and the Workers Loyalty League. These vigilantes included company officials, small businessmen, professionals, and antiunion workers. Local telephone and telegraph offices agreed to isolate Bisbee by censoring outgoing messages. The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad, a subsidiary of Phelps-Dodge, provided the waiting boxcars.

The participants in this illegal conspiracy defended themselves by exaggerating the threat of organized labor. They also appealed to patriotism and played on racial fears. The IWW opposed American involvement in the war, making it vulnerable to charges of disloyalty. A proclamation, posted in Bisbee the day of the deportation, claimed, “There is no labor trouble—we are sure of that—but a direct attempt to embarrass and injure the government of the United States.” Sheriff Wheeler told a visiting journalist he worried that Mexicans “would take advantage of the disturbed conditions of the strike and start an uprising, destroying the mines and murdering American women and children.”
An army census of the deportees, who had found temporary refuge at an army camp in Columbus, New Mexico, offered quite a different picture. Of the 1,400 men, 520 owned property in Bisbee. Nearly 500 had already registered for the draft, and more than 200 had purchased Liberty Bonds. More than 400 were married with children; only 400 were members of the IWW. Eighty percent were immigrants, including nearly 400 Mexicans. A presidential mediation committee concluded that “conditions in Bisbee were in fact peaceful and free from manifestations of disorder or violence.” The deported miners nonetheless found it difficult to shake the accusations that their strike was anti-American and foreign inspired.

At their camp, the miners organized their own police force and elected an executive committee to seek relief. The presidential mediation committee criticized the mine companies and declared the deportation illegal. But it also denied that the federal government had any jurisdiction in the matter. Arizona’s attorney general refused to offer protection for a return to Bisbee.

In September, the men began gradually to drift away from Columbus. Only a few ever returned to Bisbee. The events convinced President Wilson that the IWW was a subversive organization and a threat to national security. The Justice Department began planning an all-out legal assault that would soon cripple the Wobblies. But Wilson could not ignore protests against the Bisbee outrage from such prominent and patriotic Americans as Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor. To demonstrate his administration’s commitment to harmonious industrial relations, the president appointed a special commission to investigate and mediate wartime labor conflicts. But Arizona’s mines would remain union free until the New Deal era of the 1930s.

The labor struggle in Bisbee, Arizona reflected the new tensions of a nation at war. Labor shortages brought on by wartime production proved a boon for organized labor. But wartime patriotism also provided cover for business and conservative groups to aggressively attack labor and radical groups in the courts and in the streets. Most Progressive activists would turn their attention away from reform projects and toward the task of mobilizing a society for battle, as the federal government expanded its influence enormously. Yet some longtime Progressive causes, like Prohibition and woman suffrage, were finally enacted into law under the banner of wartime necessity. A booming economy attracted millions of rural African American migrants to the cities, where their new presence triggered a wave of racist repression. Although the United States spent only about a year and a half in the fighting, the upheavals brought on by the Great War would be felt for decades to come.
CHAPTER 22  WORLD WAR I, 1914–1920

Roosevelt: The Big Stick

Theodore Roosevelt left a strong imprint on the nation’s foreign policy. Like many of his class and background, “T.R.” took for granted the superiority of Protestant Anglo-American culture and the goal of spreading its values and influence. He believed that to maintain and increase its economic and political stature, America must be militarily strong. In 1900, Roosevelt summarized his activist views, declaring, “I have always been fond of the West African proverb, ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far.’”

Roosevelt brought the “big stick” approach to several disputes in the Caribbean region. Since the 1880s, several British, French, and American companies had pursued various plans for building a canal across the Isthmus of Panama, thereby connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The canal was a top priority for Roosevelt, and he tried to negotiate a leasing agreement with Colombia, of which Panama was a province. But when the Colombian Senate rejected a final American offer in the fall of 1903, Roosevelt invented a new strategy. A combination of native forces and foreign promoters associated with the canal project plotted a revolt against Colombia. Roosevelt kept in touch with at least one leader of the revolt, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, an engineer and agent for the New Panama Canal Company, and the president let him know that U.S. warships were steaming toward Panama.

On November 3, 1903, just as the USS Nashville arrived in Colón harbor, the province of Panama declared itself independent of Colombia. The United States immediately recognized the new Republic of Panama. Less than two weeks later, Bunau-Varilla, serving as a minister from Panama, signed a treaty granting the United States full sovereignty in perpetuity over a ten-mile-wide canal zone. America
guaranteed Panama’s independence and agreed to pay it $10 million initially and an additional $250,000 a year for the canal zone. Years after the canal was completed, the U.S. Senate voted another $25 million to Colombia as compensation.

The Panama Canal was a triumph of modern engineering and gave the United States a tremendous strategic and commercial advantage in the Western Hemisphere. It took eight years to build and cost hundreds of poorly paid manual workers their lives. Several earlier attempts to build a canal in the region had failed. But with better equipment and a vigorous campaign against disease, the United States succeeded. In 1914, after $720 million in construction costs, the first merchant ships sailed through the canal.

“The inevitable effect of our building the Canal,” wrote Secretary of State Elihu Root in 1905, “must be to require us to police the surrounding premises.” Roosevelt agreed. He was especially concerned that European powers might step in if America did not. In 1903, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy had imposed a blockade on Venezuela in a dispute over debt payments owed to private investors. To prevent armed intervention by the Europeans, Roosevelt in 1904, proclaimed what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. “Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society,” the statement read, justified “the exercise of an international police power” anywhere in the hemisphere. Roosevelt invoked the corollary to justify U.S. intervention in the region, beginning with the Dominican Republic in 1905. To counter the protests of European creditors (and the implied threat of armed intervention), Washington assumed management of the Dominican debt and customs services. Roosevelt and later presidents cited the corollary to justify armed intervention in the internal affairs of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

With the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, Roosevelt worried about the future of the Open Door policy in Asia. In 1899, in a series of diplomatic notes, Secretary of State John Hay had won approval for the so-called Open Door approach, giving all nations equal access to trading and development rights in China. A total victory by Russia or Japan could upset the balance of power in East Asia and threaten American business enterprises there. He became especially concerned after the Japanese scored a series of military victories over Russia and began to loom as a dominant power in East Asia.

Roosevelt mediated a settlement of the Russo-Japanese War at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1905 (for which he was awarded the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize). In this settlement, Japan won recognition of its dominant position in Korea and consolidated its economic control over Manchuria. Yet repeated incidents of anti-Japanese racism in California kept American-Japanese relations strained. In 1906, for example, the San Francisco school board, responding to nativist fears of a “yellow peril,” ordered the segregation of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean students. Japan angrily protested. In 1907, in the so-called gentlemen’s agreement, Japan agreed not to issue passports to Japanese male laborers looking to emigrate to the United States, and Roosevelt promised to fight anti-Japanese discrimination. He then persuaded the San Francisco school board to exempt Japanese students from the segregation ordinance.

But Roosevelt did not want these conciliatory moves to be interpreted as weakness. He thus built up American naval strength in the Pacific, and in 1908, he sent battleships to visit Japan in a muscle-flexing display of sea power. In that same year, the two burgeoning Pacific powers reached a reconciliation. The Root-Takahira Agreement affirmed the “existing status quo” in Asia, mutual respect for territorial possessions in the Pacific, and the Open Door trade policy in China. From the Japanese perspective, the agreement recognized Japan’s colonial dominance in Korea and southern Manchuria.

Roosevelt Corollary  President Theodore Roosevelt’s policy asserting U.S. authority to intervene in the affairs of Latin American nations; an expansion of the Monroe Doctrine.

Monroe Doctrine  In December 1823, Monroe declared to Congress that Americans “are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power.”

Open Door  American policy of seeking equal trade and investment opportunities in foreign nations or regions.
TAFT: DOLLAR DIPLOMACY

Roosevelt’s successor, William Howard Taft, believed he could replace the militarism of the big stick with the more subtle and effective weapon of business investment. Taft and his secretary of state, corporate lawyer Philander C. Knox, followed a strategy (called “dollar diplomacy” by critics) in which they assumed that political influence would follow increased U.S. trade and investment. As Taft explained in 1910, he advocated “active intervention to secure for our merchandise and our capitalists opportunity for profitable investment.”

Overall American investment in Central America grew rapidly, from $41 million in 1908 to $93 million by 1914. Most of this money went into railroad construction, mining, and plantations. The United Fruit Company alone owned about 160,000 acres of land in the Caribbean by 1913. But dollar diplomacy ended up requiring military support. The Taft administration sent the navy and the marines to intervene in political disputes in Honduras and Nicaragua, propping up factions pledged to protect American business interests. A contingent of U.S. Marines remained in Nicaragua until 1933. The economic and political structures of Honduras and Nicaragua were controlled by both the dollar and the bullet (see Map 22-1).

In China, Taft and Knox pressed for a greater share of the pie for U.S. investors. They gained a place for U.S. bankers in the European consortium, building the massive new Hu-kuang Railway in southern and central China. But Knox blundered by attempting to “neutralize” the existing railroads in China. He tried to secure a huge international loan for the Chinese government that would allow it to buy up all the foreign railways and develop new ones. Both Russia and Japan, which had fought wars over their railroad interests in Manchuria, resisted this plan as a threat to the arrangements hammered out at Portsmouth with the help of Theodore Roosevelt. Knox’s “neutralization” scheme, combined with U.S. support for the Chinese Nationalists in their 1911 revolt against the ruling Manchu dynasty, prompted Japan to sign a new friendship treaty with Russia. The Open Door to China was now effectively closed, and American relations with Japan began a slow deterioration that ended in war thirty years later.

WILSON: MORALISM AND REALISM IN MEXICO

Right after he took office in 1913, President Woodrow Wilson observed that “it would be the irony of fate if my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs.” His political life up to then had centered on achieving progressive reforms in the domestic arena. As it turned out, Wilson had to face international crises from his first day in office. These were of a scope and complexity unprecedented in U.S. history. Wilson had no experience in diplomacy, but he brought to foreign affairs a set of fundamental principles that combined a moralist’s faith in American democracy with a realist’s understanding of the power of international commerce. He believed that American economic expansion, accompanied by democratic principles and Christianity, was a civilizing force in the world.

Wilson, like most corporate and political leaders of the day, emphasized foreign investments and industrial exports as the keys to the nation’s prosperity. He believed that the United States, with its superior industrial efficiency, could achieve supremacy in world commerce if artificial barriers to free trade were removed. He championed and extended the Open Door principles of John Hay, advocating strong diplomatic and military measures “for making ourselves supreme in the world from an economic point of view.” Wilson often couched his vision of a dynamic, expansive, American capitalism in terms of a moral crusade. As he put it in a speech to a congress of salesmen, “[Since] you are Americans and are meant to carry liberty and
justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go, go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America.” Yet he quickly found that the complex realities of power politics could interfere with moral vision.

Wilson’s policies toward Mexico, which foreshadowed the problems he would encounter in World War I, best illustrate his difficulties. The 1911 Mexican Revolution...
had overthrown the brutally corrupt dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, and popular leader Francisco Madero had won wide support by promising democracy and economic reform for millions of landless peasants. But the U.S. business community was nervous about the future of its investments which, in the previous generation, had come to dominate the Mexican economy. By 1910, American companies owned over one-quarter—130 million acres—of Mexico’s land, including over half of its coastlines and border areas. A handful of American mining companies had led the way in exploiting Mexican natural resources, using high capitalization, advanced technology, and sophisticated marketing networks to win control of roughly four-fifths of the gold, silver, and copper extracted from Mexican mines. Similar patterns developed in the timber and petroleum sectors, and Mexican capitalists owned very little of the nation’s export industries. Meanwhile, in Mexican industrial communities such as Tampico—transformed into an overcrowded and badly polluted boomtown by the expanding oil industry—virtually all Mexican workers were relegated to unskilled and badly paying jobs.

Wilson at first gave his blessing to the revolutionary movement, expressed regret over the Mexican-American War of 1846–48, and disavowed any interest in another war. But right before he took office, Wilson was stunned by the ousting and murder of Madero by his chief lieutenant, General Victoriano Huerta. Other nations, including Great Britain and Japan, recognized the Huerta regime, but Wilson refused. He announced that the United States would support only governments that rested on the rule of law. An armed faction opposed to Huerta, known as the Constitutionalists and led by Venustiano Carranza, emerged in northern Mexico. Both sides rejected an effort by Wilson to broker a compromise between them. Carranza, an ardent nationalist, pressed for the right to buy U.S. arms, which he won in 1914. Wilson also isolated Huerta diplomatically by persuading the British to withdraw their support in exchange for American guarantees of English property interests in Mexico. But Huerta stubbornly remained in power. In April 1914, Wilson used a minor insult to U.S. sailors in Tampico as an excuse to invade. American naval forces bombarded and then occupied Veracruz, the main port through which Huerta received arms shipments. Nineteen Americans and 126 Mexicans died in the battle, which brought the United States and Mexico close to war, and provoked anti-American demonstrations in Mexico and throughout Latin America. Wilson accepted the offer of the ABC Powers—Argentina, Brazil, and Chile—to mediate the dispute. Huerta rejected a plan for him to step aside in favor of a provisional government. But then in August, Carranza managed to overthrow Huerta. Playing to nationalist sentiment, Carranza too denounced Wilson for his intervention.

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As war loomed in Europe, Mexico’s revolutionary politics continued to frustrate Wilson. For a brief period, Wilson threw his support behind Francisco “Pancho” Villa, Carranza’s former ally, who now led a rebel army of his own in northern Mexico. But Carranza’s forces dealt Villa a major setback in April 1915. In October, its attention focused on the war in Europe, the Wilson administration recognized Carranza as Mexico’s de facto president. Meanwhile, Pancho Villa, feeling betrayed, turned on the United States and tried to provoke a crisis that might draw Washington into war with Mexico. In 1916, Villa led several raids in Mexico and across the border into the United States that killed a few dozen Americans. The man once viewed by Wilson as a fighter for democracy was now dismissed as a dangerous bandit.
In March 1916, enraged by Villa’s defiance, Wilson dispatched General John J.
Pershing and an army that eventually numbered 15,000 to capture him. For a year,
Pershing’s troops chased Villa in vain, penetrating 300 miles into Mexico. The invasion
made Villa a symbol of national resistance in Mexico, and his army grew from
500 men to 10,000 by the end of 1916. Villa’s effective hit-and-run guerrilla tactics
kept the U.S. forces at bay. A frustrated General Pershing complained that he felt “just
a little bit like a man looking for a needle in a haystack.” He urged the U.S. govern-
ment to occupy the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua and later called for the occup-
ation of the entire country.

Skirmishes between American forces and Carranza’s army brought the two
nations to the brink of war again in June 1916. Wilson prepared a message to Congress
asking permission for American troops to occupy all of northern Mexico. But he
never delivered it. There was fierce opposition to war with Mexico throughout the
country. Perhaps more important, mounting tensions with Germany caused Wilson
to hesitate. He told an aide that “Germany is anxious to have us at war with Mexico,
so that our minds and our energies will be taken off the great war across the sea.”
Wilson thus accepted negotiations by a face-saving international commission.

Wilson’s attempt to guide the course of Mexico’s revolution and protect U.S.
interests left a bitter legacy of suspicion and distrust in Mexico. It also suggested the
limits of a foreign policy tied to a moral vision rooted in the idea of American excep-
tionalism. Militarism and imperialism, Wilson had believed, were hallmarks of the old
European way. American liberal values—rooted in capitalist development, democracy,
and free trade—were the wave of the future. Wilson believed the United States could
lead the world in establishing a new international system based on peaceful com-
merce and political stability. In both the 1914 invasion and the 1916 punitive expedi-
tion, Wilson declared that he had no desire to interfere with Mexican sovereignty.
But in both cases, that is exactly what he did. The United States, he argued, must
actively use its enormous moral and material power to create the new order. That prin-
ciple would soon engage America in Europe’s bloodiest war and its most momentous
revolution.

THE GREAT WAR

World War I, or the Great War, as it was originally called, took an enormous human toll on an entire generation of Europeans. The unprece-
dented slaughter on the battlefields of Verdun, Ypres, Gallipoli, and scores of other places appalled the combatant nations. At the war’s start in August 1914, both sides had confidently predicted a quick victory. Instead, the killing dragged on for more than four years, and in the end, transformed the old power relations and political map of Europe. The United States entered the war reluctantly, and American forces played a supportive, rather than a central, role in the military outcome. Yet the wartime experience left a sharp imprint on the nation’s economy, politics, and cultural life—one that would last into the next decades.

THE GUNS OF AUGUST

Only a complex and fragile system of alliances had kept the European powers at peace
with each other since 1871. Two great competing camps had evolved by 1907: the
Triple Alliance (also known as the Central Powers), which included Germany, Austria-
Hungary, and Italy; and the Triple Entente (also known as the Allies), which included
Great Britain, France, and Russia. At the heart of this division was the competition

Militarism  The tendency to see military
might as the most important and best tool
for the expansion of a nation’s power and
prestige.

Imperialism  The policy and practice
of exploiting nations and peoples
for the benefit of an imperial power either
directly through military occupation and
colonial rule or indirectly through economic
domination of resources and markets.

WHY DID most Americans oppose
U.S. involvement in World War I in 1914?

Allies  In World War I, Britain, France,
Russia, and other belligerent nations
fighting against the Central Powers but
not including the United States.
between Great Britain, long the world’s dominant colonial and commercial power, and Germany, which had powerful aspirations for an empire of its own.

The alliance system managed to keep small conflicts from escalating into larger ones for most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But its inclusiveness was also its weakness: the alliance system threatened to entangle many nations in any war that did erupt. On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the unstable Austro-Hungarian Empire, was assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The archduke’s killer was a Serbian nationalist who believed the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia ought to be annexed to neighboring Serbia. Germany pushed Austria-Hungary to retaliate against Serbia, and the Serbians in turn asked Russia for help.

By early August, both sides had exchanged declarations of war and begun mobilizing their forces. Germany invaded Belgium and prepared to move across the French border. But after the German armies were stopped at the River Marne in September, the war settled into a long, bloody stalemate. New and grimly efficient weapons, such as the machine gun and the tank, and the horrors of trench warfare, meant unprecedented casualties for all involved. Centered in northern France, the fighting killed 5 million people over the next two and a half years.

**American Neutrality**

The outbreak of war in Europe shocked Americans. President Wilson issued a formal proclamation of neutrality and urged citizens to be “impartial in thought as well as in action.” In practice, powerful cultural, political, and economic factors made the impartiality advocated by Wilson impossible. The U.S. population included many ethnic groups with close emotional ties to the Old World. Out of a total population of 92 million in 1914, about one-third were “hyphenated” Americans, either foreign-born or having one or both parents who were immigrants. Strong support for the Central Powers could be found among the 8 million German-Americans, as well as the 4 million Irish-Americans, who shared their ancestral homeland’s historical hatred of English rule. On the other side, many Americans were at least mildly pro-Allies due to cultural and language bonds with Great Britain and the tradition of Franco-American friendship.

Both sides bombarded the United States with vigorous propaganda campaigns. The British effectively exploited their bonds of language and heritage with Americans. Reports of looting, raping, and the killing of innocent civilians by German troops circulated widely in the press. Many of these atrocity stories were exaggerated, but verified German actions—the invasion of neutral Belgium, submarine attacks on merchant ships, and the razing of towns—lent them credibility. German propagandists blamed the war on Russian expansionism and France’s desire to avenge its defeat by Germany in 1870–71. It is difficult to measure the impact of war propaganda on American public opinion. As a whole, though, it highlighted the terrible human costs of the war, and thus strengthened the conviction that America should stay out of it.

Economic ties between the United States and the Allies were perhaps the greatest barrier to true neutrality. Early in the war, Britain imposed a blockade on all shipping to Germany. The United States, as a neutral country, might have insisted on the right of nonbelligerents to trade with both sides, as required by international law. But in practice, although Wilson protested the blockade, he wanted to avoid antagonizing Britain and disrupting trade between the United States and the Allies. Trade with Germany all but ended while trade with the Allies increased dramatically. As war orders poured in from Britain and France, the value of American trade with the Allies shot up from $824 million in 1914 to $3.2 billion in 1916. By 1917, loans to the Allies
exceeded $2.5 billion compared to loans to the Central Powers of only $27 million. As America's annual export trade jumped from $2 billion in 1913 to nearly $6 billion in 1916, the nation enjoyed a great economic boom—transforming the economy in places like Bisbee, Arizona—and the United States became neutral in name only.

**Preparedness and Peace**

In February 1915, Germany declared the waters around the British Isles to be a war zone, a policy that it would enforce with unrestricted submarine warfare. All enemy shipping, despite the requirements of international law to the contrary, would be subject to surprise submarine attack. Neutral powers were warned that the problems of identification at sea put their ships at risk. The United States issued a sharp protest to this policy, calling it “an indefensible violation of neutral rights,” and threatened to hold Germany accountable.

On May 7, 1915, a German U-boat sank the British liner *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland. Among the 1,198 people who died, were 128 American citizens. The *Lusitania* was in fact, secretly carrying war materials, and passengers had been warned about a possible attack. Wilson nevertheless denounced the sinking as illegal and inhuman, and the American press loudly condemned the act as barbaric. An angry exchange of diplomatic notes led Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan to resign in protest against a policy he thought too warlike.

**QUICK REVIEW**

**Anglo-American Ties**

- 1915: United States gave tacit support to British naval blockade of Germany.
- May 1915: German submarine sank the *Lusitania*.
- Americans demanded a tough stand against Germany but did not want to be drawn into the war.
CHAPTER 22  WORLD WAR I, 1914–1920

Tensions heated up again in March 1916 when a German U-boat torpedoed the Sussex, an unarmed French passenger ship, injuring four Americans. President Wilson threatened to break off diplomatic relations with Germany unless it abandoned its methods of submarine warfare. He won a temporary diplomatic victory when Germany promised that all vessels would be visited prior to attack. But the crisis also prompted Wilson to begin preparing for war. The National Security League, active in large Eastern cities and bankrolled by conservative banking and commercial interests, helped push for a bigger army and navy and, most important, a system of universal military training. In June 1916, Congress passed the National Defense Act, which more than doubled the size of the regular army to 220,000 and integrated the state National Guards under federal control. In August, Congress passed a bill that dramatically increased spending for new battleships, cruisers, and destroyers.

Not all Americans supported these preparations for battle, and opposition to military buildup found expression in scores of American communities. As early as August 29, 1914, 1,500 women clad in black had marched down New York's Fifth Avenue in the Woman's Peace Parade. Out of this gathering evolved the American Union against Militarism, which lobbied against the preparedness campaign and against intervention in Mexico. Antiwar feeling was especially strong in the South and Midwest.

A group of thirty to fifty House Democrats, led by majority leader Claude Kitchin of North Carolina, stubbornly opposed Wilson’s military buildup. Jane Addams, Lillian D. Wald, and many other prominent progressive reformers spoke out for peace. A large reservoir of popular antiwar sentiment flowed through the culture in various ways. Movie director Thomas Ince won a huge audience for his 1916 film Civilization, which depicted Christ returning to reveal the horrors of war to world leaders. Two of the most popular songs of 1915 were “Don’t Take My Darling Boy Away” and “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier.”

Wilson acknowledged the active opposition to involvement in the war by adopting the winning slogan “He Kept Us Out of War” in the 1916 presidential campaign. He made a point of appealing to progressives of all kinds, stressing his support for the eight-hour day and his administration’s efforts on behalf of farmers. The war-induced prosperity no doubt helped him to defeat conservative Republican Charles Evans Hughes in a very close election. But Wilson knew that the peace was as fragile as his victory.

SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY

By the end of January 1917, Germany’s leaders had decided against a negotiated peace settlement, placing their hopes instead in a final decisive offensive against the Allies. On February 1, 1917, with the aim of breaking the British blockade, Germany declared unlimited submarine warfare, with no warnings, against all neutral and belligerent shipping. This strategy went far beyond the earlier, more limited use of the U-boat. The decision was made with full knowledge that it might bring America into the conflict. In effect, German leaders were gambling that they could destroy the ability of the Allies to fight, before the United States would be able to effectively mobilize manpower and resources.

Wilson was indignant and disappointed. He still hoped for peace, but Germany had made it impossible for him to preserve his twin goals of U.S. neutrality and freedom of the seas. Reluctantly, Wilson broke off diplomatic relations with Germany and called on Congress to approve the arming of U.S. merchant ships. On March 1, the White House shocked the country when it made public a recently intercepted coded
message, sent by German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmermann to the German ambassador in Mexico. The Zimmermann note proposed that an alliance be made between Germany and Mexico if the United States entered the war. Zimmermann suggested that Mexico take up arms against the United States and receive in return the “lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona.” The note caused a sensation, and became a very effective propaganda tool for those who favored U.S. entry into the war. The specter of a German-Mexican alliance helped turn the tide of public opinion in the Southwest, where opposition to U.S. involvement in the war had been strong.

Revelation of the Zimmermann note stiffened Wilson’s resolve. He issued an executive order in mid-March, authorizing the arming of all merchant ships and allowing them to shoot at submarines. In that month, German U-boats sank seven U.S. merchant ships, leaving a heavy death toll. Anti-German feeling increased, and thousands took part in prowar demonstrations in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other cities. Wilson finally called a special session of Congress to ask for a declaration of war.

On April 2, on a rainy night, before a packed and very quiet assembly, Wilson made his case. He reviewed the escalation of submarine warfare, which he called “warfare against mankind,” and said that neutrality was no longer feasible or desirable. But the conflict was not merely about U.S. shipping rights, Wilson argued. He employed highly idealistic language to make the case for war, reflecting his deeply held belief that America had a special mission as mankind’s most enlightened and advanced nation:

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 to 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.

Wilson’s eloquent speech won over the Congress, most of the press, and even his bitterest political critics, such as Theodore Roosevelt. The Senate adopted the war resolution 82 to 6, the House 373 to 50. On April 6, President Wilson signed the declaration of war. All that remained was to win over the American public.

American Mobilization

The overall public response to Wilson’s war message was enthusiastic. Most newspapers, religious leaders, state legislatures, and prominent public figures endorsed the call to arms. But the Wilson administration was less certain about the feelings of ordinary Americans and their willingness to fight in Europe. It therefore took immediate steps to win over public support for the war effort, to place a legal muzzle on antiwar dissenters, and to establish a universal military draft. War mobilization was above all, a campaign to unify the country.

Selling the War

Just a week after signing the war declaration, Wilson created the Committee on Public Information (CPI) to organize public opinion. It was dominated by its civilian chairman, the journalist and reformer George Creel. He had become a personal friend of Wilson’s while handling publicity for the 1916 Democratic campaign. Creel quickly transformed the CPI from its original function as coordinator of
government news, into a sophisticated and aggressive agency for promoting the war. To sell the war, Creel raised the art of public relations to new heights. He enlisted more than 150,000 people to work on a score of CPI committees. They produced more than 100 million pieces of literature—pamphlets, articles, books—that explained the causes and meaning of the war. The CPI also created posters, slides, newspaper advertising, and films to promote the war. It called upon movie stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks to help sell war bonds at huge rallies. Famous journalists like the muckraker Ida Tarbell and well-known artists like Charles Dana Gibson were recruited. Across the nation, a volunteer army of 75,000 “Four Minute Men” gave brief patriotic speeches before stage and movie shows.

The CPI led an aggressively negative campaign against all things German. Posters and advertisements depicted the Germans as Huns, bestial monsters outside the civilized world. German music and literature, indeed the German language itself, were suspect, and were banished from the concert halls, schools, and libraries of many communities. The CPI also urged ethnic Americans to abandon their Old World ties, to become “unhyphenated Americans.” The CPI’s push for conformity would soon encourage thousands of local, sometimes violent, campaigns of harassment against German-Americans, radicals, and peace activists.

Fading Opposition to War

By defining the call to war as a great moral crusade, President Wilson was able to win over many Americans who had been reluctant to go to war. In particular, many liberals and progressives were attracted to the possibilities of war as a positive force for social change. Many progressives identified with President Wilson’s definition of the war as an idealistic crusade to defend democracy, spread liberal principles, and redeem European decadence and militarism. John Dewey, the influential philosopher, believed the war offered great “social possibilities” for developing the public good through science and greater efficiency.

The writer and cultural critic Randolph Bourne was an important, if lonely, voice of dissent among intellectuals. A former student of Dewey’s at Columbia University, Bourne wrote a series of antiwar essays warning of the disastrous consequences for reform movements of all kinds. He was particularly critical of “war intellectuals” such as Dewey, who were so eager to shift their energies to serving the war effort. “War is essentially the health of the State,” Bourne wrote, and he accurately predicted sharp infringements on political and intellectual freedoms.

The Woman’s Peace Party, founded in 1915 by feminists opposed to the preparedness campaign, dissolved. Most of its leading lights—Florence Kelley, Lillian D. Wald, and Carrie Chapman Catt—threw themselves into volunteer war work. Catt, leader of the huge National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), believed that supporting the war might help women win the right to vote. She joined the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense and encouraged suffragists to mobilize women for war service of various kinds. A few lonely feminist voices, such as Jane Addams, continued steadfastly to oppose the war effort. But war work proved very popular among activist middle-class women. It gave them a leading role in their communities—selling bonds, coordinating food conservation drives, and working for hospitals and the Red Cross.
“You’re in the Army Now”

The central military issue facing the administration was how to raise and deploy U.S. armed forces. When war was declared, there were only about 200,000 men in the army. Traditionally, the United States had relied on volunteer forces organized at the state level. But volunteer rates after April 6 were less than they had been for the Civil War or the Spanish-American War, reflecting the softness of prowar sentiment. The administration thus introduced the Selective Service Act, which provided for the registration and classification for military service of all men between ages twenty-one and thirty-five. To prevent the widespread opposition to the draft that had occurred during the Civil War, the new draft had no unpopular provision allowing draftees to buy their way out of service by paying for a substitute.

On June 5, 1917, nearly 10 million men registered for the draft. There was scattered organized resistance, but overall, registration records offered evidence of national support. A supplemental registration in August 1918 extended the age limits to eighteen and forty-five. By the end of the war, some 24 million men had registered. Of the 2.8 million men eventually called up for service, about 340,000, or 12 percent, failed to show up. Another 2 million Americans volunteered for the various armed services.

The vast, polyglot army posed unprecedented challenges of organization and control. But progressive elements within the administration also saw opportunities...
for pressing reform measures involving education, alcohol, and sex. Army psychologists gave the new Stanford-Binet intelligence test to all recruits, and were shocked to find illiteracy rates as high as 25 percent. The low test scores among recent immigrants and rural African Americans undoubtedly reflected the cultural biases embedded in the tests and a lack of proficiency in English for many test takers. After the war, intelligence testing became a standard feature of America’s educational system.

Ideally, the army provided a field for social reform and education, especially for the one-fifth of U.S. soldiers born in another country. “The military tent where they all sleep side by side,” Theodore Roosevelt predicted, “will rank next to the public schools among the great agents of democratization.” The recruits themselves took a more lighthearted view, while singing the army’s praises:

Oh, the army, the army, the democratic army,
They clothe you and feed you because the army needs you
Hash for breakfast, beans for dinner, stew for suppertime,
Thirty dollars every month, deducting twenty-nine.
Oh, the army, the army, the democratic army,
The Jews, the Wops, and the Dutch and Irish Cops,
They’re all in the army now!

Racism in the Military
But African Americans who served found severe limitations in the U.S. military. They were organized into totally segregated units, barred entirely from the marines and the Coast Guard, and largely relegated to working as cooks, laundrymen, stevedores, and the like in the army and navy. Thousands of black soldiers endured humiliating, sometimes violent treatment, particularly from southern white officers. African American servicemen faced hostility from white civilians as well, North and South, often being denied service in restaurants and admission to theaters near training camps. The ugliest incident occurred in Houston, Texas, in August 1917.

African American soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment fighting in the trenches on the Western front, 1918. Nearly 400,000 black men served in World War I, but due to the racist beliefs held by most military and political leaders, only 42,000 went into combat. “Many of the white field officers,” wrote black Lieutenant Howard H. Long, “seemed far more concerned with reminding their Negro subordinates that they were Negroes than they were in having an effective unit that would perform well in combat.”

The Granger Collection, New York.
Black infantrymen, incensed over continual insults and harassment by local whites, seized weapons from an armory and killed seventeen civilians. The army executed thirty black soldiers and imprisoned forty-one others for life, denying any of them a chance for appeal.

More than 200,000 African Americans eventually served in France, but only about one in five saw combat, as opposed to two out of three white soldiers. Black combat units served with distinction in various divisions of the French army. The French government awarded the Croix de Guerre to the all-black 369th U.S. Infantry regiment, and 171 officers and enlisted men were cited individually for exceptional bravery in action. African American soldiers by and large enjoyed a friendly reception from French civilians as well. The contrast with their treatment at home would remain a sore point with these troops upon their return to the United States.

**Americans in Battle**

President Wilson appointed General John J. Pershing, recently returned from pursuing Pancho Villa in Mexico, as commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). Pershing insisted that the AEF maintain its own identity, distinct from that of the French and British armies. He was also reluctant to send American troops into battle before they had received at least six months’ training. The AEF’s combat role would be brief but intense: not until early 1918 did AEF units reach the front in large numbers; eight months later, the war was over (see Map 22-2).
Like Ulysses S. Grant, Pershing believed the object of war to be total destruction of the enemy’s military power. He expressed contempt for the essentially defensive tactics of trench warfare pursued by both sides. But the brutal power of modern military technology had made trench warfare inevitable from 1914 to 1917. The awesome firepower of the machine gun and long-range artillery made the massed frontal confrontations of the Civil War era obsolete. The grim reality of life in the trenches—cold, wet, lice-ridden, with long periods of boredom and sleeplessness—also made a mockery of older romantic notions about the glory of combat.

In the early spring of 1918, the Germans launched a major offensive that brought them within fifty miles of Paris. In early June, about 70,000 AEF soldiers helped the French stop the Germans in the battles of Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood. In July, Allied forces led by Marshal Ferdinand Foch of France, began a counteroffensive designed to defeat Germany once and for all. American reinforcements began flooding the ports of Liverpool in England and Brest and Saint-Nazaire in France. The “doughboys” (a nickname for soldiers dating back to Civil War-era recruits who joined the army for the money) streamed in at a rate of over 250,000 a month. By September, General Pershing had more than a million Americans in his army.

In late September 1918, the AEF took over the southern part of a 200-mile front in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. In seven weeks of fighting, most through terrible mud and rain, U.S. soldiers used more ammunition than the entire Union army had in the four years of the Civil War. The Germans, exhausted and badly outnumbered, began to fall back and look for a cease-fire. On November 11, 1918, the war ended with the signing of an armistice.

The massive influx of American troops and supplies no doubt hastened the end of the war. About two-thirds of the U.S. soldiers saw at least some fighting, but even they managed to avoid the horrors of the sustained trench warfare that had marked the earlier years of the war. For most Americans at the front, the war experience was a mixture of fear, exhaustion, and fatigue. Their time in France would remain a decisive moment in their lives. In all, more than 52,000 Americans died in battle. Another 60,000 died from influenza and pneumonia, half of these while still in training camp. More than 200,000 Americans were wounded in the war. These figures, awful as they were, paled against the estimated casualties (killed and wounded) suffered by the European nations: 9 million for Russia, more than 6 million for Germany, nearly 5 million for France, and over 2 million each for Great Britain and Italy.

In one sense, World War I can be understood as the ultimate progressive crusade, a reform movement of its own. Nearly all the reform energy of the previous two decades was turned toward the central goal of winning the war. The federal government would play a larger role than ever in managing and regulating the wartime economy. Planning, efficiency, scientific analysis, and cooperation were key principles for government agencies and large volunteer organizations. Although much of the regulatory spirit was temporary, the war experience started some important and lasting organizational trends in American life.

**Over Here**

The federal agency that reorganized industry for maximum efficiency and productivity during World War I.

**War Industries Board (WIB)**

In the summer of 1917, President Wilson established the War Industries Board (WIB) as a clearinghouse for industrial mobilization to support the war effort. Led by the successful Wall Street speculator Bernard M. Baruch, the WIB proved a major innovation in expanding the regulatory power of the federal government. Given broad authority
over the conversion of industrial plants to wartime needs and the manufacture of war materials, the WIB had to balance price controls against war profits. Only by ensuring a fair rate of return on investment could it encourage stepped-up production.

The WIB eventually handled 3,000 contracts worth $14.5 billion with various businesses. Standardization of goods brought large savings and streamlined production. Baruch continually negotiated with business leaders, describing the system as “voluntary cooperation with the big stick in the cupboard.” At first Elbert Gary of U.S. Steel refused to accept the government’s price for steel, and Henry Ford balked at limiting private car production. But when Baruch warned that he would instruct the military to take over their plants, both industrialists backed down.

In August 1917, Congress passed the Food and Fuel Act, authorizing the president to regulate the production and distribution of the food and fuel necessary for the war effort. To lead the Food Administration (FA), Wilson appointed Herbert Hoover, a millionaire engineer who had already won fame for directing a program of war relief for Belgium. He became one of the best-known figures of the war administration. Hoover imposed price controls on certain agricultural commodities, such as sugar, pork, and wheat. These were purchased by the government and then sold to the public through licensed dealers. The FA also raised the purchase price of grain, so that farmers would increase production. But Hoover stopped short of imposing mandatory food rationing, preferring to rely on persuasion, high prices, and voluntary controls.

Hoover’s success, like George Creel’s at the CPI, depended on motivating hundreds of thousands of volunteers in thousands of American communities. The FA coordinated the work of local committees that distributed posters and leaflets urging people to save food, recycle scraps, and substitute for scarce produce. The FA directed patriotic appeals for “Wheatless Mondays, Meatless Tuesdays, and Porkless Thursdays.” Hoover exhorted Americans to “go back to simple food, simple clothes, simple pleasures.” He urged them to grow their own vegetables. These efforts resulted in a sharp cutback in the consumption of sugar and wheat as well as a boost in the supply of livestock. The resultant increase in food exports helped sustain the Allied war effort.

The enormous cost of fighting the war, about $33 billion, required unprecedentedly large expenditures for the federal government. The tax structure shifted dramatically as a result. Taxes on incomes and profits replaced excise and customs levies as the major source of revenue. The minimum income subject to the graduated federal income tax, in effect only since 1913, was lowered to $1,000 from $3,000, increasing the number of Americans who paid income tax from 437,000 in 1916 to 4,425,000 in 1918. Tax rates were as steep as 70 percent in the highest brackets.

The bulk of war financing came from government borrowing, especially in the form of the popular Liberty Bonds sold to the American public. Bond drives became highly organized patriotic campaigns that ultimately raised a total of $23 billion for the war effort. The administration also used the new Federal Reserve Banks to expand the money supply, making borrowing easier. The federal debt jumped from $1 billion in 1915 to $20 billion in 1920.

**The Business of War**

Overall, the war meant expansion and high profits for American business. Between 1916 and 1918, Ford Motor Company increased its workforce from 32,000 to 48,000, General Motors from 10,000 to 50,000. Total capital expenditure in U.S. manufacturing jumped from $600 million in 1915 to $2.5 billion in 1918. Corporate profits as a whole nearly tripled between 1914 and 1919, and many large businesses did much better than that. Annual prewar profits for United States Steel, for example,
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had averaged $76 million; in 1917, they were $478 million. The total value of farm
produce rose from $9.8 billion in 1914 to $21.3 billion by 1918. Expanded farm
acreage and increased investment in farm machinery led to a jump of 20–30 per-
cent in overall farm production.

The most important and long-lasting economic legacy of the war was the orga-
nizational shift toward corporatism in American business. The wartime need for effi-
cient management, manufacturing, and distribution could be met only by a greater
reliance on the productive and marketing power of large corporations. Never before
had business and the federal government cooperated so closely. Under war admin-
istrators like Baruch and Hoover, entire industries (such as radio manufacturing)
and economic sectors (such as agriculture and energy) were organized, regulated,
and subsidized. War agencies used both public and private power—legal authority and
voluntarism—to hammer out and enforce agreements. Here was the genesis of the
modern bureaucratic state.

Some Americans worried about the wartime trend toward a greater federal pres-
ence in their lives. As The Saturday Evening Post noted, “All this government activity
will be called to account and re-examined in due time.” Although many aspects of the
government–business partnership proved temporary, some institutions and practices
grew stronger in the postwar years. Among these were the Federal Reserve Board, the
income tax system, the Chamber of Commerce, the Farm Bureau, and the growing
horde of lobbying groups that pressed Washington for special interest legislation.

LABOR AND THE WAR

Organized labor’s power and prestige, though by no means equal to those of busi-
ness or government, clearly grew during the war. The expansion of the economy,
combined with army mobilization and a decline in immigration from Europe, caused
a growing wartime labor shortage. As the demand for workers intensified, the federal
government was forced to recognize that labor, like any other resource or commod-
ity, would have to be more carefully tended to than in peacetime. For the war’s dura-
tion, working people generally enjoyed higher wages and a better standard of living.
Trade unions, especially those affiliated with the American Federation of Labor
(AFL), experienced a sharp rise in membership. In effect, the government took in
labor as a junior partner in the mobilization of the economy.

Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL, emerged as the leading spokesman
for the nation’s trade union movement. An English immigrant and cigar maker by
trade, Gompers had rejected the socialism of his youth for a philosophy of “business
unionism.” By stressing the concrete gains that workers could win through collec-
tive bargaining with employers, the AFL had reached a total membership of about
2 million in 1914. Virtually all its members were skilled white males, organized in
highly selective crafts in the building trades, railroads, and coal mines.

Gompers pledged the AFL’s patriotic support for the war effort, and in April
1918, President Wilson appointed him to the National War Labor Board (NWLB).
During 1917, the nation had seen thousands of strikes involving more than a mil-
ion workers. Wages were usually at issue, reflecting workers’ concerns with spiraling
inflation and higher prices. The NWLB, cochaired by labor attorney Frank
Walsh and former president William H. Taft, acted as a kind of supreme court for
labor, arbitrating disputes and working to prevent disruptions in production. The
great majority of these interventions resulted in improved wages and reduced hours
of work.

Most important, the NWLB supported the right of workers to organize unions,
and furthered the acceptance of the eight-hour day for war workers—central aims of

QUICK REVIEW

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the labor movement. It also backed time-and-a-half pay for overtime, as well as the principle of equal pay for women workers. AFL unions gained more than a million new members during the war, and overall union membership rose from 2.7 million in 1914 to more than 5 million by 1920.

Wartime conditions often meant severe disruptions and discomfort for America’s workers. Overcrowding, rapid workforce turnover, and high inflation rates were typical in war-boom communities. In Bridgeport, Connecticut, a center for small-arms manufacturing, the population grew by 50,000 in less than a year. In 1917, the number of families grew by 12,000, but available housing stock increased by only 6,000 units.

In the Southwest, the demand for wartime labor temporarily eased restrictions against the movement of Mexicans into the United States. The Immigration Act of 1917, requiring a literacy test and an $8 head tax, had cut Mexican immigration nearly in half, down to about 25,000 per year. But employers complained of severe shortages of workers. Farmers in Arizona’s Salt River Valley and southern California needed hands to harvest grain, alfalfa, cotton, and fruit. El Paso’s mining and smelting industries, Texas’s border ranches, and southern Arizona’s railroads and copper mines insisted they depended on unskilled Mexican labor as well.

Responding to these protests, in June 1917, the Department of Labor suspended the immigration law for the duration of the war, and negotiated an agreement with the Mexican government permitting some 55,000 Mexican contract laborers to enter the United States. Mexicans let in through this program had to demonstrate they had a job waiting before they could cross the border. They received identification cards and transportation to their place of work from American labor contractors. Pressure from Southwestern employers kept the exemptions in force until 1921, well after the end of the war, demonstrating the growing importance of cheap Mexican labor to the region’s economy.

If the war boosted the fortunes of the AFL, it also spelled the end for more radical elements of the U.S. labor movement. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), unlike the AFL, had concentrated on organizing unskilled workers into all-inclusive industrial unions. The Wobblies denounced capitalism as an unreformable system based on exploitation, and they opposed U.S. entry into the war. IWW leaders advised their members to refuse induction for “the capitalists’ war.”

The IWW had grown in 1916 and 1917. It gained strength among workers in several areas crucial to the war effort: copper mining, lumbering, and wheat harvesting. In September 1917, just after the vigilante attack in Bisbee and the IWW’s efforts to expose it, the Wilson administration responded to appeals from Western business leaders for a crackdown on the Wobblies. Justice Department agents, acting under the broad authority of the recently passed Espionage Act, swooped down on IWW offices in more than sixty towns and cities, arresting more than 300 people and confiscating files. The mass trials and convictions that followed, broke the back of America’s radical labor movement and marked the beginning of a powerful wave of political repression.

**Women at Work**

For many of the 8 million women already in the labor force, the war meant a chance to switch from low-paying jobs, such as domestic service, to higher-paying industrial employment. About a million women workers joined the labor force for the first time. Of the estimated 9.4 million workers directly engaged in war work, some 2.25 million were women. Of these, 1.25 million worked in manufacturing. Female munitions plant workers, train engineers, drill press operators, streetcar conductors, and mail workers joined the labor force.

**Espionage Act** Law whose vague prohibition against obstructing the nation’s war effort was used to crush dissent and criticism during World War I.
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Carriers became a common sight around the country. World War I also marked the first time that women were mobilized directly into the armed forces. Over 16,000 women served overseas with the AEF in France, where most worked as nurses, clerical workers, telephone operators, and canteen operators. Another 12,000 women served stateside in the navy and U.S. Marine Corps, and tens of thousands of civilian women were employed in army offices and hospitals. But the war’s impact on women was greatest in the broader civilian economy.

In response to the widened range of female employment, the Labor Department created the Women in Industry Service (WIS). Directed by Mary Van Kleeck, the service advised employers on using female labor and formulated general standards for the treatment of women workers. The WIS represented the first attempt by the federal government to take a practical stand on improving working conditions for women. Its standards included the eight-hour day, equal pay for equal work, a minimum wage, the prohibition of night work, and the provision of rest periods, meal breaks, and restroom facilities. These standards had no legal force, however, and WIS inspectors found that employers often flouted them. They were accepted nonetheless as goals, by nearly every group concerned with improving the conditions of working women.

At war’s end, women lost nearly all their defense-related jobs. Wartime women railroad workers, for example, were replaced by returning servicemen, through the application of laws meant to protect women from hazardous conditions. But the war accelerated female employment in fields already dominated by women. By 1920, more women who worked outside the home did so in white-collar occupations—as telephone operators, secretaries, and clerks, for example—than in manufacturing or domestic service. The new awareness of women’s work led Congress to create the Women’s Bureau in the Labor Department, which continued the WIS wartime program of education and investigation through the postwar years.

Woman Suffrage

The presence of so many new women wageworkers, combined with the highly visible volunteer work of millions of middle-class women, helped finally to secure the vote for women. Volunteer war work—selling bonds, saving food, organizing benefits—was very popular among housewives and clubwomen. These women played a key role in the success of the Food Administration, and the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense included a variety of women’s organizations.

Until World War I, the fight for woman suffrage had been waged largely within individual states. Western states and territories had led the way. Various forms of woman suffrage had become law in Wyoming in 1869, followed by Utah (1870), Colorado (1893), and Idaho (1896). Rocky Mountain and Pacific coast states did not have the sharp ethnocultural divisions between Catholics and Protestants that hindered suffrage efforts in the East. For example, the close identification in the East between the suffrage and prohibition movements, led many Catholic immigrants...
and German Lutherans to oppose the vote for women, because they feared it would lead to prohibition (see Map 22-3).

The U.S. entry into the war provided a unique opportunity for suffrage groups to shift their strategy to a national campaign for a constitutional amendment granting the vote to women. The most important of these groups was the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Before 1917, most American suffragists had opposed the war. Under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, the NAWSA threw its support behind the war effort and doubled its membership to 2 million. Catt gambled that a strong show of patriotism would help clinch the century-old fight to win the vote for women. The NAWSA pursued a moderate policy of lobbying Congress for a constitutional amendment and calling for state referendums on woman suffrage.

At the same time, more militant suffragists led by the young Quaker activist Alice Paul, injected new energy and more radical tactics into the movement. Dissatisfied with the NAWSA’s conservative strategy of quiet lobbying and orderly

**QUICK REVIEW**

- Woman suffrage movement began in the mid-nineteenth century.
- Early twentieth-century leaders adopted activist tactics.
- Nineteenth Amendment ratified in 1920.

**MAP 22-3**

*Woman Suffrage by State, 1869–1919* Dates for the enactment of woman suffrage in the individual states. Years before ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, a number of Western states had legislated full or partial voting rights for women. In 1917, Montana suffragist Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to Congress.


**WHAT WERE** the reasons behind the regional differences in support of woman suffrage?
demonstrations, Paul left the organization in 1916. She joined forces with Western women voters to form the National Woman’s Party. Borrowing from English suffragists, this party pursued a more aggressive and dramatic strategy of agitation. Paul and her supporters picketed the White House, publicly burned President Wilson’s speeches, and condemned the president and the Democrats for failing to produce an amendment. In one demonstration, they chained themselves to the White House fence, and after their arrest, went on a hunger strike in jail. The militants generated a great deal of publicity and sympathy.

Although some in the NAWSA objected to these tactics, Paul’s radical approach helped make the NAWSA position more acceptable to Wilson. Carrie Chapman Catt used the president’s war rhetoric as an argument for granting the vote to women. The fight for democracy, she argued, must begin at home, and she urged passage of the woman suffrage amendment as a “war measure.” She won Wilson’s support, and in 1917, the president urged Congress to pass a woman suffrage amendment as “vital to the winning of the war.” The House did so in January 1918 and a more reluctant Senate approved it in June 1919. Another year of hard work was spent convincing the state legislatures. In August 1920, Tennessee gave the final vote needed to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, finally making woman suffrage legal nationwide.

Prohibition

Another reform effort closely associated with women’s groups triumphed at the same time. The movement to eliminate alcohol from American life had attracted many Americans, especially women, since before the Civil War. Temperance advocates saw drinking as the source of many of the worst problems faced by the working class, including family violence, unemployment, and poverty. By the early twentieth century, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, with a quarter-million members, had become the single largest women’s organization in American history.

The moral fervor that accompanied America’s entry into the war provided a crucial boost to the cause. With so many breweries bearing German names, the movement benefited as well from the strong anti-German feeling of the war years. Outlawing beer and whiskey would also help to conserve precious grain, prohibitionists argued.

In 1917, a coalition of progressives and rural fundamentalists in Congress pushed through a constitutional amendment providing for a national ban on alcoholic drinks. The Eighteenth Amendment was ratified by the states in January 1919, and became the law of the land one year later. Although Prohibition would create a host of problems in the postwar years, especially as a stimulus for the growth of organized crime, many Americans, particularly native Protestants, considered it a worthy moral reform.

Public Health

Wartime mobilization brought deeper government involvement with public health issues, especially in the realm of sex hygiene, child welfare, and disease prevention. The rate of venereal disease among draftees was as high as 6 percent in some states,
presenting a potential manpower problem for the army. In April 1917, the War Department mounted a vigorous campaign against venereal disease, which attracted the energies of progressive-era sex reformers—social hygienists and antivice crusaders. Under the direction of Raymond Fosdick and the Commission on Training Camp Activities, the military educated troops on the dangers of contracting syphilis and gonorrhea and distributed condoms to soldiers. “A Soldier who gets a dose,” warned a typical poster, “is a Traitor.”

The scientific discussions of sex, to which recruits were subjected in lectures, pamphlets, and films were surely a first for the vast majority of them. Venereal disease rates for soldiers declined by more than 300 percent during the war. The Division of Venereal Diseases, created in the summer of 1918 as a branch of the U.S. Public Health Service, established clinics offering free medical treatment to infected persons.

The wartime boost to government health work continued into the postwar years. The Children’s Bureau, created in 1912 as a part of the Labor Department, undertook a series of reports on special problems growing out of the war: the increase in employment of married women, the finding of day care for children of working mothers, and the growth of both child labor and delinquency. In 1918, Julia C. Lathrop, chief of the bureau, organized a “Children’s Year” campaign designed to promote public protection of expectant mothers and infants, and to enforce child labor laws. In 1917, Lathrop, who had come to the Children’s Bureau from the settlement house movement, proposed a plan to institutionalize federal aid to the states for protection of mothers and children. Congress finally passed the Maternity and Infancy Act in 1921, appropriating over $1 million a year to be administered to the states by the Children’s Bureau. In the postwar years, clinics for prenatal and obstetrical care grew out of these efforts, and greatly reduced the rate of infant and maternal mortality and disease.

The disastrous influenza epidemic of 1918–19 offered the most serious challenge to national public health during the war years. Part of a worldwide pandemic that claimed as many as 20 million lives, few Americans paid attention to the disease until it swept through military camps and Eastern cities in September 1918. A lethal combination of the “flu” and respiratory complications (mainly pneumonia) killed roughly 550,000 Americans in ten months. Most victims were young adults between the ages of twenty and forty. Professional groups such as the American Medical Association, called for massive government appropriations to search for a cure. Congress did appropriate a million dollars to the Public Health Service to combat and suppress the epidemic, but it offered no money for research. The Public Health Service found itself overwhelmed by calls for doctors, nurses, and treatment facilities. Much of the care for the sick and dying came from Red Cross nurses and volunteers working in local communities across the nation. With a war on, and the nation focused on reports from the battlefront, even a public health crisis of this magnitude went relatively unnoticed.
CHAPTER 22
WORLD WAR I, 1914–1920

Repression and Reaction

World War I exposed and intensified many of the deepest social tensions in American life. On the local level, as exemplified by the Bisbee deportations, vigilantes increasingly took the law into their own hands to punish those suspected of disloyalty. The push for national unity led the federal government to crack down on a wide spectrum of dissenters from its war policies. The war inflamed racial hatred, and the worst race riots in the nation’s history exploded in several cities. At war’s end, a newly militant labor movement briefly asserted itself in mass strikes around the nation. Over all these developments loomed the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Radicals around the world had drawn inspiration from what looked like the first successful revolution against a capitalist state. Many conservatives worried that similar revolutions were imminent. From 1918 through 1920, the federal government directed a repressive antiradical campaign that had crucial implications for the nation’s future.

Muzzling Dissent: The Espionage and Sedition Acts

The Espionage Act of June 1917 became the government’s key tool for the suppression of antiwar sentiment. It set severe penalties (up to twenty years’ imprisonment and a $10,000 fine) for anyone found guilty of aiding the enemy, obstructing recruitment, or causing insubordination in the armed forces. The act also empowered the postmaster general to exclude from the mails any newspapers or magazines he thought treasonous. Within a year, the mailing rights of forty-five newspapers had been revoked. These included several anti-British and pro-Irish publications, as well as such leading journals of American socialism as the Kansas-based Appeal to Reason, which had enjoyed a prewar circulation of half a million, and The Masses.

To enforce the Espionage Act, the government had to increase its overall police and surveillance machinery. Civilian intelligence was coordinated by the newly created Bureau of Investigation in the Justice Department. This agency was reorganized after the war as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In May 1918, the Sedition Act, an amendment to the Espionage Act, outlawed “any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language intended to cause contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute” to the government, Constitution, or flag.

These acts became a convenient vehicle for striking out at Socialists, pacifists, radical labor activists, and others who resisted the patriotic tide. The most celebrated prosecution came in June 1918, when federal agents arrested Eugene V. Debs in Canton, Ohio, after he gave a speech defending antiwar protesters. Sentenced to ten years in prison, Debs defiantly told the court: “I have been accused of having obstructed the war. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose the war if I stood alone.” Debs served thirty-two months in federal prison before being pardoned by President Warren G. Harding on Christmas Day 1921.

The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the acts in several 1919 decisions. In Schenck v. United States, the Court unanimously agreed with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes’s claim that Congress could restrict speech if the words “are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger.” The decision upheld the conviction of Charles Schenck for having mailed pamphlets urging potential army inductees to resist conscription. In Debs v. United States, the Court affirmed the guilt of Eugene V. Debs for his antiwar speech in Canton, even though he had not explicitly urged violation of the draft laws. Finally, in Abrams v. United States, the Court upheld Sedition Act convictions of four Russian immigrants who had printed pamphlets denouncing American military intervention in the

WHAT STEPS did the federal government take to suppress the antiwar movement?

AP* Guideline 18.3

Class Discussion Question 22.4

Sedition Act Broad law restricting criticism of America’s involvement in World War I or its government, flag, military, taxes, or officials.
Russian Revolution. The nation’s highest court thus endorsed the severe wartime restrictions on free speech.

The deportation of striking miners in Bisbee offered an extreme case of vigilante activity. Thousands of other instances took place as government repression and local vigilantes reinforced each other. The American Protective League, founded with the blessing of the Justice Department, mobilized 250,000 self-appointed “operatives” in more than 600 towns and cities. Members of the league, mostly businessmen, bankers, and former policemen, spied on their neighbors and staged a series of well-publicized “slacker” raids on antiwar protesters and draft evaders. Many communities, inspired by Committee on Public Information campaigns, sought to ban the teaching of the German language in their schools or the performance of German music in concert halls.

**THE GREAT MIGRATION AND RACIAL TENSIONS**

Economic opportunity brought on by war prosperity triggered a massive migration of rural black southerners to northern cities. From 1914 to 1920, somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 African Americans left the rural South for the North. Chicago’s black population increased by 65,000, or 150 percent; Detroit’s by 35,000, or 600 percent. Acute labor shortages led northern factory managers to recruit black migrants to the expanding industrial centers. The Pennsylvania Railroad alone drew 10,000 black workers from Florida and south Georgia. Black workers eagerly left low-paying jobs as field hands and domestic servants for the chance at relatively high-paying work in meatpacking plants, shipyards, and steel mills (see Table 22.1).

Kinship and community networks were crucial in shaping what came to be called the Great Migration. They spread news about job openings, urban residential districts, and boardinghouses in northern cities. Black clubs, churches, and fraternal

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**Great Migration** The mass movement of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North, spurred especially by new job opportunities during World War I and the 1920s.

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*Guideline 17.5*

Letters from the Great Migration (1917)

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*This southern African American family is shown arriving in Chicago around 1910. Black migrants to northern cities often faced overcrowding, inferior housing, and a high death rate from disease. But the chance to earn daily wages of $6 to $8 (the equivalent of a week’s wages in much of the South), as well as the desire to escape persistent racial violence, kept the migrants coming.*

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lodge in southern communities frequently sponsored the migration of their members, as well as return trips to the South. Single African American women often made the trip first, because they could more easily obtain steady work as maids, cooks, and laundresses. Relatively few African American men actually secured high-paying skilled jobs in industry or manufacturing. Most had to settle for such low-paying occupations as construction laborers, teamsters, janitors, or porters.

The persistence of lynching and other racial violence in the South no doubt contributed to the Great Migration. But racial violence was not limited to the South. Two of the worst race riots in American history occurred as a result of tensions brought on by wartime migration. On July 2, 1917, in East St. Louis, Illinois, a ferocious mob of whites attacked African Americans, killing at least 200. Before this riot, some of the city’s manufacturers had been steadily recruiting black labor as a way to keep local union demands down. Unions had refused to allow black workers as members, and politicians had cynically exploited white racism in appealing for votes. In Chicago, on July 27, 1919, antiblack rioting broke out on a Lake Michigan beach. For two weeks, white gangs hunted African Americans in the streets and burned hundreds out of their homes. Twenty-three African Americans and fifteen whites died, and more than 500 were injured. Yet in both East St. Louis and Chicago, local authorities held African Americans responsible for the violence. President Wilson refused requests for federal intervention or investigation.

In terms of service in the armed forces, compliance with the draft, and involvement in volunteer work, African Americans had supported the war effort as faithfully as any group. In 1917, despite a segregated army and discrimination in defense industries, most African Americans thought the war might improve their lot. But black disillusionment about the war grew quickly, as did a newly militant spirit. A heightened sense of race consciousness and activism was evident among black veterans and the growing black communities of northern cities. Taking the lead in the fight against bigotry and injustice, the NAACP held a national conference in 1919 on lynching. It pledged to defend persecuted African Americans, publicize the horrors of lynching law, and seek federal legislation against “Judge Lynch.” By 1919, membership in the NAACP had reached 60,000 and the circulation of its journal exceeded half a million.

**Labor Strife**

The relative labor peace of 1917 and 1918 dissolved after the armistice. More than 4 million American workers were involved in some 3,600 strikes in 1919 alone. This unprecedented strike wave had several causes. Most of the modest wartime wage gains were wiped out by spiraling inflation and high prices for food, fuel, and housing. With the end of government controls on industry, many employers withdrew their recognition of unions. Difficult working conditions, such as the twelve-hour day in steel mills, were still routine in some industries.

Several of the postwar strikes received widespread national attention. They seemed to be more than simple economic conflicts, and they provoked deep fears...
about the larger social order. In February 1919, a strike in the shipyards of Seattle, Washington, over wages escalated into a general citywide strike involving 60,000 workers. The local press and Mayor Ole Hanson denounced the strikers as revolutionaries. Hanson effectively ended the strike by requesting federal troops to occupy the city. In September, Boston policemen went out on strike when the police commissioner rejected a citizens’ commission study that recommended a pay raise. Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge called in the National Guard to restore order, and won a national reputation by crushing the strike. The entire police force was fired.

The biggest strike took place in the steel industry, and involved some 350,000 steelworkers. Centered in several Midwestern cities, this epic struggle lasted from September 1919 to January 1920. The AFL had hoped to build on wartime gains in an industry that had successfully resisted unionization before the war. The major demands were union recognition, the eight-hour day, and wage increases. The steel companies used black strikebreakers and armed guards to keep the mills running. Elbert Gary, president of U.S. Steel, directed a sophisticated propaganda campaign that branded the strikers as revolutionaries. Public opinion turned against the strike and condoned the use of state and federal troops to break it. The failed steel strike proved to be the era’s most bitter and devastating defeat for organized labor.

An Uneasy Peace

The armistice of November 1918 ended the fighting on the battlefield, but the war continued at the peace conference. In the old royal palace of Versailles near Paris, delegates from twenty-seven countries spent five months hammering out a settlement. Yet neither Germany nor Russia was represented. The proceedings were dominated by leaders of the “Big Four”: David Lloyd George (Great Britain), Georges Clemenceau (France), Vittorio Orlando (Italy), and Woodrow Wilson (United States). President Wilson saw the peace conference as a historic opportunity to project his domestic liberalism onto the world stage. But the stubborn realities of power politics would frustrate Wilson at Versailles and lead to his most crushing defeat at home.

The Fourteen Points

Wilson arrived in Paris with the United States delegation in January 1919. He believed the Great War revealed the bankruptcy of diplomacy based on alliances and the “balance of power.” Peacemaking, he thought, meant an opportunity for America to lead the rest of the world toward a new vision of international relations. He brought with him a plan for peace that he had outlined a year earlier in a speech to Congress on U.S. war aims. The Fourteen Points, as they were called, had originally served wartime purposes: to appeal to antiwar factions in Austria-Hungary and Germany, to convince Russia to stay in the war, and to help sustain Allied morale. As a blueprint for peace, they contained three main elements. First, Wilson offered a series of specific proposals for setting postwar boundaries in Europe and creating new countries out of the collapsed Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The key idea here was the right of all peoples to “national self-determination.” Second, Wilson listed general principles for governing international conduct, including freedom of the seas, free trade, open covenants instead of secret treaties, reduced armaments, and mediation for competing colonial claims. Third, and most important, Wilson called for a League of Nations to help implement these principles and resolve future disputes.

The Fourteen Points offered a plan for world order deeply rooted in the liberal progressivism long associated with Wilson. The plan reflected a faith in efficient...
government and the rule of law as means for solving international problems. It advocated a dynamic democratic capitalism as a middle ground between Old World autocracy and revolutionary socialism.

The most controversial element, both at home and abroad, would prove to be the League of Nations. The heart of the League covenant, Article X, called for collective security as the ultimate method of keeping the peace: “The members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members.” In the United States, Wilson’s critics would focus on this provision as an unacceptable surrender of the nation’s sovereignty and independence in foreign affairs.

Wilson in Paris

Despite Wilson’s devotion to “open covenants”, much of the negotiating at Versailles was in fact done in secret among the Big Four. The ideal of self-determination found limited expression. The independent states of Austria, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia were carved out of the homelands of the beaten Central Powers. But the Allies resisted Wilson’s call for independence for the colonies of the defeated nations. A compromise mandate system of protectorates gave the French and British control of parts of the old German and Turkish empires in Africa and West Asia. Japan won control of former German colonies in China. Among those trying, but failing, to influence the treaty negotiations were the sixty-odd delegates to the first Pan African Congress, held in Paris at the same time as the peace talks. The group included Americans W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter as well as representatives from Africa and the West Indies. All were disappointed with the failure of the peace conference to grant self-determination to thousands of Africans living in former German colonies.

Another disappointment for Wilson came with the issue of war guilt. He had strongly opposed the extraction of harsh economic reparations from the Central Powers. But the French and British, with their awful war losses fresh in mind, insisted on making Germany pay. The final treaty contained a clause attributing the war to “the aggression of Germany,” and a commission later set German war reparations at $33 billion. Bitter resentment in Germany over the punitive treaty helped sow the seeds for the Nazi rise to power in the 1930s.

The final treaty was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Hall of Mirrors at the Versailles palace. The Germans had no choice but to accept its harsh terms. President Wilson had been disappointed by the secret deals and the endless compromising of his ideals, no doubt underestimating the stubborn reality of power politics in the wake of Europe’s most devastating war. He had nonetheless won a commitment to the League of Nations, the centerpiece of his plan, and he was confident that the American people would accept the treaty. The tougher fight would be with the Senate, where a two-thirds vote was needed for ratification.

The Treaty Fight

Preoccupied with peace conference politics in Paris, Wilson had neglected politics at home. His troubles had actually started earlier. Republicans had captured both the House and the Senate in the 1918 elections. Wilson had then made a tactical error by including no prominent Republicans in the U.S. peace delegation. He therefore faced a variety of tough opponents to the treaty he brought home.
Wilson’s most extreme enemies in the Senate were a group of about sixteen “irreconcilables,” opposed to a treaty in any form. Some were isolationist progressives, such as Republicans Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin and William Borah of Idaho, who opposed the League of Nations as steadfastly as they opposed American entry into the war. Others were racist xenophobes like Democrat James Reed of Missouri. He objected, he said, to submitting questions to a tribunal “on which a nigger from Liberia, a nigger from Honduras, a nigger from India, and an unlettered gentleman from Siam, each have votes equal to the great United States of America.”

The less dogmatic, but more influential, opponents were led by Republican Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, powerful majority leader of the Senate. They had strong reservations about the League of Nations, especially the provisions for collective security in the event of a member nation being attacked. Lodge argued that this provision impinged on congressional authority to declare war, and placed unacceptable restraints on the nation’s ability to pursue an independent foreign policy. Lodge proposed a series of amendments that would have weakened the League. But Wilson refused to compromise, motivated in part by the long-standing hatred he and Lodge felt toward each other.

In September, Wilson set out on a speaking tour across the country to drum up support for the League and the treaty. The crowds were large and responsive, but they did not change any votes in the Senate. The strain took its toll. On September 25, after speaking in Pueblo, Colorado, the sixty-three-year-old Wilson collapsed from exhaustion. His doctor canceled the rest of the trip. A week later, back in Washington, the president suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. In November, Lodge brought the treaty out of committee for a vote, having appended to it fourteen reservations—that is, recommended changes. A bedridden Wilson stubbornly refused to compromise, and instructed Democrats to vote against the Lodge version of the treaty. On November 19, Democrats joined with the “irreconcilables” to defeat the amended treaty, 39 to 55.

Wilson refused to budge. In January, he urged Democrats to either stand by the original treaty or vote it down. The 1920 election, he warned, would be “a great and solemn referendum” on the whole issue. In the final vote, on March 19, 1920, twenty-one Democrats broke with the president and voted for the Lodge version, giving it a majority of 49 to 35. But this was seven votes short of the two-thirds needed for ratification. As a result, the United States never signed the Versailles Treaty, nor did it join the League of Nations. The absence of the United States weakened the League and made it more difficult for the organization to realize Wilson’s dream of a peaceful community of nations.

The Russian Revolution and America’s Response

Since early 1917, the turmoil of the Russian Revolution had changed the climate of both foreign affairs and domestic politics. The repressive and corrupt regime of Czar Nicholas II had been overthrown in March 1917 by a coalition of forces demanding change. The new provisional government, headed by Alexander Kerensky, vowed to keep Russia in the fight against Germany. But the war had taken a terrible toll on Russian soldiers and civilians, and had become very unpopular. The radical Bolsheviks, led by V. I. Lenin, gained a large following by promising “peace, land, and bread,” and they began plotting to seize power. The Bolsheviks followed the teachings of German revolutionary Karl Marx, emphasizing the inevitability of class struggle and the replacement of capitalism by communism.

In November 1917, the Bolsheviks took control of the Russian government. In March 1918, to the dismay of the Allies, the new Bolshevik government negotiated...
a separate peace with Germany, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Russia was now lost as a military ally, and her defection made possible a massive shift of German troops to the Western Front. As civil war raged within Russia, British and French leaders wanted to help counterrevolutionary forces overthrow the new Bolshevik regime, as well as reclaim military supplies originally sent for use against the Germans.

Although sympathetic to the March revolution overthrowing the czar, President Wilson refused to recognize the authority of the Bolshevik regime. Bolshevism represented a threat to the liberal-capitalist values that Wilson believed to be the foundation of America’s moral and material power, and that provided the basis for the Fourteen Points. At the same time, however, Wilson at first resisted British and French pressure to intervene in Russia, citing his commitment to national self-determination and noninterference in other countries’ internal affairs.

By August 1918, as the Russian political and military situation became increasingly chaotic, Wilson agreed to British and French plans for sending troops to Siberia and northern Russia. Meanwhile, Japan poured troops into Siberia and northern Manchuria in a bid to control the commercially important Chinese Eastern and Trans-Siberian railways. After the Wilson administration negotiated an agreement that placed these strategic railways under international control, the restoration and protection of the railways became the primary concern of American military forces in Russia.

Wilson’s idealistic support for self-determination had succumbed to the demands of international power politics. Eventually, some 15,000 American troops served in northern and eastern Russia, with some remaining until 1920. They stayed for two reasons: to counter Japanese influence, and to avoid alienating the British and French, who opposed withdrawal. The Allied armed intervention widened the gulf between Russia and the West. In March 1919, Russian Communists established the Third International, or Comintern. Their call for a worldwide revolution deepened Allied mistrust, and the Paris Peace Conference essentially ignored the new political reality posed by the Russian Revolution.

**The Red Scare**

The revolutionary changes taking place in Russia became an important backdrop for domestic politics. In the United States, it became common to blame socialism, the IWW, trade unionism in general, and even racial disturbances on foreign radicals and alien ideologies. The accusation of Bolshevism became a powerful weapon for turning public opinion against strikers and political dissenters of all kinds. In truth, by 1919, the American radicals were already weakened and badly split. The Socialist Party had around 40,000 members. Two small Communist Parties, made up largely of immigrants, had a total of perhaps 70,000. In the spring of 1919, a few extremists mailed bombs to prominent business and political leaders. That June, simultaneous bombings in eight cities killed two people and damaged the residence of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. With public alarm growing, state and federal officials began a coordinated campaign to root out subversives and their alleged Russian connections.

Palmer used the broad authority of the 1918 Alien Act, which enabled the government to deport any immigrant found to be a member of a revolutionary organization prior to or after coming to the United States. In a series of raids in late 1919, Justice Department agents in eleven cities arrested and roughed up several hundred members of the IWW and the Union of Russian Workers. Little evidence of revolutionary intent was found, but 249 people were deported, including prominent anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. In early 1920,
1903  U.S. obtains Panama Canal rights
1905  President Theodore Roosevelt mediates peace treaty between Japan and Russia at Portsmouth Conference
1908  Root-Takahira Agreement with Japan affirms status quo in Asia and Open Door policy in China
1911  Mexican Revolution begins
1914  U.S. forces invade Mexico
        Panama Canal opens
        World War I begins in Europe
        President Woodrow Wilson issues proclamation of neutrality
1915  Germany declares war zone around Great Britain
        German U-boat sinks Lusitania
1916  Pancho Villa raids New Mexico, is pursued by General Pershing
        Wilson is reelected
        National Defense Act establishes preparedness program
1917  February: Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare
        March: Zimmermann Note, suggesting a German-Mexican alliance, shocks Americans
        April: United States declares war on the Central Powers
        May: Selective Service Act is passed
        June: Espionage Act is passed
        November: Bolshevik Revolution begins in Russia
1918  January: Wilson unveils Fourteen Points
        May: Sedition Act is passed
        June: U.S. troops begin to see action in France
        November: Armistice ends war
1919  January: Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition) is ratified
        Wilson serves as Chief U.S. negotiator at Paris Peace Conference
        June: Versailles Treaty is signed in Paris
        July: Race riot breaks out in Chicago
        Steel strike begins in several Midwestern cities
        November: Palmer raids begin
1920  March: Senate finally votes down Versailles Treaty and League of Nations
        August: Nineteenth Amendment (woman suffrage) is ratified
        November: Warren G. Harding is elected president

Red Scare  Post-World War I public hysteria over Bolshevik influence in the United States directed against labor activism, radical dissenters, and some ethnic groups.

some 6,000 people in thirty-three cities, including many U.S. citizens and non-communists, were arrested and herded into prisons and bullpens. Again, no evidence of a grand plot was found, but another 600 aliens were deported. The Palmer raids had a ripple effect around the nation, encouraging other repressive measures against radicals. In New York, the state assembly refused to seat five duly elected Socialist Party members.

A report prepared by a group of distinguished lawyers questioned the legality of the attorney general’s tactics. Palmer’s popularity had waned by the spring of 1920, when it became clear that his predictions of revolutionary uprisings were wildly exaggerated. But the Red Scare left an ugly legacy: wholesale violations of constitutional rights, deportations of hundreds of innocent people, fuel for the fires of nativism and intolerance. Business groups, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, found “Red-baiting” to be an effective tool in postwar efforts to keep unions out of their factories. Indeed, the government-sanctioned Red Scare reemerged later in the century as a powerful political force.

The Red Scare took its toll on the women’s movement as well. Before the war, many suffragists and feminists had maintained ties and shared platforms with Socialist and labor groups. The suffrage movement in particular had brought together women from very different class backgrounds and political perspectives. But the calls for “100 percent Americanism” during and after the war, destroyed the fragile alliances that had made a group such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association
Selling War

The world War I posters generally defined the war as a clear struggle between good and evil, in which American democracy and freedom opposed German militarism and despotism. Yet artists used a wide range of visual themes to illustrate these stark contrasts. World War I posters drew upon traditional ideas about gender differences (men as soldiers, women as nurturers), but they also illustrated the new wartime expectations of women working outside the home in support of the war effort. Appeals to American patriotism cutting across lines of ethnic and religious difference were common, as was the demonizing of the German enemy. And just as the wartime economy blurred the boundaries between public and private enterprises, businesses adapted patriotic appeals to their own advertising.

Creel aptly titled the memoir of his war experience *How We Advertised America*. These three images illustrate the range of World War I propaganda posters.

**HOW WOULD** you contrast the different kind of patriotic appeals made by “Pershing’s Crusaders,” “Americans All,” and “And They Thought We Couldn’t Fight”? Which of these posters do you think makes the most compelling case for supporting the war? How do the artists portray gender differences as part of a visual strategy for winning the war?

![Image 1: Pershing’s Crusaders](image1.jpg)

![Image 2: Americans All](image2.jpg)

![Image 3: Victory Liberty Loan](image3.jpg)

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

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so powerful. Hostility to radicalism marked the political climate of the 1920s, and this atmosphere narrowed the political spectrum for women activists.

The Election of 1920

Woodrow Wilson had wanted the 1920 election to be a “solemn referendum” on the League of Nations and his conduct of the war. Ill and exhausted, Wilson did not run for reelection. A badly divided Democratic Party compromised on Governor James M. Cox of Ohio as its candidate. A proven vote-getter, Cox distanced himself from Wilson’s policies, which had come under withering attack from many quarters.

The Republicans nominated Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio. A political hack, the handsome and genial Harding had virtually no qualifications to be president, except that he looked like one. Harding’s campaign was vague and ambiguous about the Versailles Treaty and almost everything else. He struck a chord with the electorate in calling for a retreat from Wilsonian idealism. “America’s present need,” he said, “is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration.”

The notion of a “return to normalcy” proved very attractive to voters exhausted by the war, inflation, big government, and social dislocation. Harding won the greatest landslide in history to that date, carrying every state outside the South and taking the popular vote by 16 million to 9 million. Republicans retained their majorities in the House and Senate as well. Socialist Eugene V. Debs, still a powerful symbol of the dream of radical social change, managed to poll 900,000 votes from jail. But the overall vote repudiated Wilson and the progressive movement. Americans seemed eager to pull back from moralism in public and international controversies. Yet many of the economic, social, and cultural changes wrought by the war would accelerate during the 1920s. In truth, there could never be a “return to normalcy.”

Conclusion

Compared to the casualties and social upheavals endured by the European powers, the Great War’s impact on American life might appear slight. Yet the war created economic, social, and political dislocations that helped reshape American life long after Armistice Day. Republican administrations invoked the wartime partnership between government and industry to justify an aggressive peacetime policy fostering cooperation between the state and business. Wartime production needs contributed to what economists later called “the second industrial revolution.” Patriotic fervor and the exaggerated specter of Bolshevism were used to repress radicalism, organized labor, feminism, and the entire legacy of progressive reform.

The wartime measure of national prohibition evolved into perhaps the most contentious social issue of peacetime. Sophisticated use of sales techniques, psychology, and propaganda during the war helped define the newly powerful advertising and public relations industries of the 1920s. The growing visibility of immigrants and African Americans, especially in the nation’s cities, provoked a xenophobic and racist backlash in the politics of the 1920s. More than anything else, the desire for “normalcy” reflected the deep anxieties evoked by America’s wartime experience.
CHAPTER 22  WORLD WAR I, 1914–1920

AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Assess the extent to which World War I altered the status of women and African Americans in the United States, 1914–1920. If changes occurred, by what means were those changes accomplished and were they permanent?

Document A
Examine the Red Cross poster on page 774 and compare it with the YWCA poster below. During World War I, some 2.25 million women were engaged in war-related work, including 1.25 million in manufacturing. For the first time women were officially admitted into the military, with 11,000 serving in the navy and 269 in the marines in noncombat roles. By the end of the war, most of these women had been dismissed and returned to “female pursuits.”

- What do the posters reveal about the role assigned to women in the war effort?
- Did this activity change the immediate perception of women’s place in society?
- How would the involvement of women in the war effort affect the long-range social perception of women’s place?

Suggested Answer:
Successful essays should note:
- The role assigned to women in the war effort (Image p. 774 and Document A)
- How women’s involvement in the war effort changed the immediate perception of their role within society (Document A)
- How the involvement of women in the war effort affected the long-range social perception of women’s place in society (Document A)
- The hopes and opinions of the Chicago Defender during World War I (Document B)
- How World War I altered the status of African Americans in some ways, but not in others (Document B)
- How World War I changed the ways in which African Americans viewed themselves and their place in post-war American society (Document B)
- The creation of the “New Negro” in post-World War I society (p. 831 and Document B)
- What changed President Wilson’s mind regarding his support for woman suffrage and his new view that woman suffrage was “vital for winning the war” (Image p. 784 and Document B)
- What caused Congress to pass the woman suffrage amendment, 19th, despite its refusals to authorize the amendment for many previous years (Document C)
**Document B**

Examine the photo on the left of the African American soldiers headed for France during World War I.

- **What hopes did the Chicago Defender express at that time?**
- **Were such hopes well founded?**

A generation after World War I, the sign on the right hung above the Greyhound bus station in Rome, Georgia (1943).

- **Had World War I altered the status of African Americans?**
- **Had it altered the status of African Americans in some ways, but not in others?**
- **Had it altered their status in some places, but not in others?**
- **Had a change occurred inside the minds of African Americans about themselves and their place in society?**

Before you consider these questions, examine the discussion beginning on page 831 about the “New Negro.”

- **Does that discussion change your perspective?**

![Photo of African American soldiers](National Archives)

![Sign above Greyhound bus station](Library of Congress)

**Document C**

Women worked as riveters at the Puget Sound Navy Yard in Washington State during World War I. The photo on the right was taken after the war had ended. Notice that the photo shows African American women also serving as riveters. Compare it against the photo of woman suffragettes protesting in front of the White House in 1917 on page 784. Wilson would eventually support the right to vote for women as “vital for winning the war.”

- **Why did he change his mind?**
- **Why did the Congress and the state pass the woman’s suffrage amendment when they had refused to authorize it for many years previously?**

![Photo of African American women working as riveters](National Archives and Records Administration)
AP® PREP TEST

Select the response that best answers each question or best completes each sentence.

1. Between 1900 and 1917:
   a. weak presidential leadership diminished the role that the United States played in world affairs.
   b. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson favored globalism while William Howard Taft did not.
   c. the United States employed a variety of policies that made the nation an emerging world power.
   d. the United States consistently relied on Theodore Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” approach to diplomacy.
   e. the United States resisted all matters concerning European affairs and instead focused on liberal policies on the home front.

2. One important legacy of Theodore Roosevelt’s administration was the:
   a. New Deal.
   b. Good Neighbor Policy.
   c. trans-China Railroad.
   d. Dollar Diplomacy.
   e. Panama Canal.

3. A critical element in the events leading to the Great War was:
   a. a complex and vulnerable system of secret alliances between European nations.
   b. the collapse of the League of Nations as an effective peacemaking organization.
   c. an aggressive American foreign policy that sparked the conflict with Germany.
   d. the communist uprising in Russia that led Austria to declare war out of self-defense.
   e. the rise of socialism in Europe that sparked social unrest and anti-nationalist policies.

4. Once war broke out in Europe in 1914:
   a. all Americans patriotically and enthusiastically supported the nation’s war effort.
   b. all Americans sought to immediately join the war to assist the Central Powers.
   c. the United States began to supply the English and the French with weapons.
   d. everybody in the United States insisted that America should stay out of the war.
   e. the official policy of the United States was to be a strict and impartial neutrality.

5. An immediate cause for America’s direct involvement in the war was:
   a. the German sinking of the luxury ocean liner _Lusitania._
   b. a surprise attack against the United States at Pearl Harbor.
   c. the Austrian effort to establish a blockade of the United States.
   d. Germany’s resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare.
   e. the German U-boat torpedoed the _Sussex._

6. For most of the conflict, World War I was:
   a. quite similar to the American Civil War.
   b. conducted based on mobility and movement.
   c. fought as brutal and deadly trench warfare.
   d. fought by American troops.
   e. primarily a war on the seas using submarines.

7. The American war effort:
   a. reflected and employed many of the concepts of progressive reformers.
   b. ended progressives’ efforts to enact social reforms in the United States.
   c. dramatically altered the military but had little other domestic influence.
   d. was financed by enacting higher taxes to avoid expanding the federal debt.
   e. focused solely on military needs and did little to address American social programs.

8. World War I:
   a. provided women with job opportunities but did little else to improve their status.
   b. marked the first time in American history that women served in the military.
   c. produced short-term as well as long-term improvements in the status of women.
   d. did very little to change social attitudes or to improve women’s place in society.
   e. did not give women any new opportunities or freedoms during wartime.

9. The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution:
   a. called for the direct election of U.S. Senators.
   b. gave Congress the authority to enact prohibition.
c. established the income tax and created the IRS.
d. guaranteed equal social rights for all Americans.
e. gave Congress the authority to repeal prohibition.

10. The Great Migration of African Americans was influenced by all of the following except:
a. the efforts of black families and civic organizations.
b. the racial violence and lynchings occurring in the South.
c. southern segregation and Jim Crow discrimination.
d. acute labor shortages in northern factories.
e. guarantees of high-paying skilled jobs in the North.

11. The Fourteen Points:
a. reflected a realistic approach to the geo-politics that would shape the postwar world.
b. guaranteed peace for all times and ensured that no more major wars would ever occur.
c. were deeply rooted in the progressive and moralistic views of President Woodrow Wilson.
d. were established and institutionalized by the negotiations that took place at Versailles.
e. included the creation of the League of Nations, which was fully supported in the U.S.

12. In 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution:
a. established a moderate Austrian government.
b. brought radical Marxists to power in Russia.
c. overthrew Kaiser William II and ended the war.
d. led to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.
e. led to a fascist government in Italy.

13. Warren G. Harding’s idea of a “return to normalcy”:
a. seemed to repudiate Woodrow Wilson in particular and progressivism in general.
b. meant that all the changes that occurred during World War I would come to an end.
c. succeeded in making sure that life in the 1920s was just the same as life in the 1890s.
d. meant that the Democrats would dominate politics the way they had prior to the Civil War.
e. appeared to most as the return to life before suffrage and prohibition.

14. World War I:
a. eliminated virtually all of the social tensions that had previously existed in the United States.
b. had little long-term influence on American society in the years after the war came to an end.
c. was an important event but not as significant as most historians have believed in the past.
d. led to economic, social, and political changes in the United States that lasted long after 1918.
e. stimulated a crucial and strong sense of monitoring and participation of European affairs in U.S. politics.