

The Great War: A Timeline

- I. The long-term preconditions that led to the war
 - II. The short-term triggers that sparked the conflict
 - III. The type of war it was
 - IV. The early course of the fighting, 1914-16
 - V. The four changes of 1917-18
 - VI. World War I in America
 - VII. The end of the conflict
 - VIII. The repercussions of the war
-
-

- I. The long-term preconditions that led to the war
 - A. Unification of Italy (1861) and Germany (1871)
 - B. European imperial struggle in Africa and Asia
 - C. Breakdown of Bismarck's Alliance system
 - D. Establishment of Triple Alliance (1882) – Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy
 - E. Establishment of Triple Entente (1907) – England, France, and Russia
 - F. Balkan Crisis of 1878-1913
 - G. Russian support of pan-Slavism in the area Serbians called "Greater Serbia," which included Bosnia-Herzegovina – an area annexed by Austria in 1908.
- II. The short-term triggers that sparked the conflict
 - A. Assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Francis Ferdinand (June 28, 1914) by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo, Bosnia, which was part of the Austrian Empire.
 - B. "Blank Check" from Germany to Austria-Hungary (July 6, 1914)
 - C. Austrian ultimatum to Serbia (July 23, 1914) – not accepted when reply returned (July 25)
 - D. Austria declared war on Serbia (July 28, 1914)
 - E. In support of Serbia, Russian general mobilization began against Austria and its ally Germany on July 30.
 - F. 1 August 1914: Germany declares war on Russia which declared its solidarity with Serbia.
 - G. 3 August 1914: Germany declares war on France.
 - H. 3 August 1914: Beginning of the First World War: the Germans invade Belgium to get to France.
 - I. 4 August 1914: Britain declares war of Germany after her troops invade neutral Belgium to get to France.
 - J. 5 August 1914: Declaration of war of Austria against Russia.
 - K. 6 August 1914: Declaration of war of Serbia against Germany.
 - L. 11 August 1914: Declaration of war of France against Austria.
 - M. 13 August 1914: Declaration of war of Great Britain against Austria.
 - N. 23 August 1914: Declaration of war of Japan against Germany.
- III. Type of War: Total War
 - A. Parts of society mobilized
 - B. Number of people involved in the military
 - C. New types of weaponry
- IV. The Course of the Early Fighting, 1914-16
 - A. Initial sides:
 1. Central powers: Austria-Hungary and Germany
 2. Allied powers: France, Russia, and Britain
 3. United States declares neutrality
 4. Japan joined the Allied Powers in 1914, as did Italy in 1915 (though Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance it said that Germany and Austria were not fighting a defensive war, and thus it was not required to aid them).
 5. The Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers in 1914, as did Bulgaria in 1915.
 - B. Early Western Front: Deadlock after early German gains against Belgium, France, and Britain
 1. German Schlieffen Plan
 2. First Battle of the Marne (Sept 1914)
 3. Trenches established
 4. Battle of Verdun (Feb-Dec. 1915)
 5. Battle of the Somme (July-Nov. 1916)
 - C. Early Eastern Front: Germany and Austria-Hungary winning
 1. Battle of Tannenberg (Aug 1914)
 2. Battle of Masurian Lakes (Sept 1914)
 3. Galicia (Aug-Sept 1914)
 4. Germans aid Austria at Galicia (Nov 1914)
 5. Italians enter war on Allied side (May 1915)
 6. Gallipoli (Feb-Aug 1915)
 7. Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria eliminate Serbia (Sept 1915)

V. Four changes of 1917-1918

A. March 1917 – First Russian Revolution: Alexander Kerensky and Republican Government

B. April 1917 – Americans enter WWI

1. Originally neutral, the United States was slowly drawn into the war by
2. Early Ship Sinkings
 - a. May 7, 1915 German U-boats sink the Lusitania carry 1200 passengers including 128 Americans. Wilson warns Germany against attacking ships with Americans aboard, and said they would be held to "strict accountability"
 - b. March 24, 1916 German U-boats sink the French ship Sussex, four Americans aboard Wilson presented the Germans with an ultimatum that unless they immediately abandoned their present methods of submarine warfare (shooting passenger or merchant ships), the U.S. would sever relations. Germans make Sussex pledge, that they will not shoot merchant or passenger ships
3. November 1916, Wilson reelected on campaign that "He kept us out of war."
Charles Evans Hughes Republican candidate-they want preparedness Wilson believes that the people want peace. Remember: George Washington's Farewell Address, last war with Europe War of 1812 (Spanish American war had been in the Western Hemisphere), Monroe Doctrine.
4. Immediately after his reelection, Wilson began working for peace. He sent letters to the belligerent powers asking for their war aims. The Allies said that they intended to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire and destroy German power. For Germany this would not do.
5. January 22, 1917 Wilson's last effort for peace. He gave one of his most famous addresses declaring that only a "peace without victory" would prove durable.
6. January 31, 1917 Germans announced that they intended to wage unlimited submarine warfare, sinking all ships, including America's in the war zone starting February 1.
7. February 1917, Wilson breaks diplomatic ties with Germany, but will not move to war unless Germans undertook "overt" acts against American lives and property.
8. March 1917 Zimmerman Note
 - a. The Zimmerman note was a coded message sent to von Eckhardt, German minister in Mexico, by German foreign secretary Alfred Zimmerman. Said that if war broke out between Germany and America, the Eckhardt was to propose an alliance with Mexico, who would get Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona from the United States if Germany won.
 - b. The note was intercepted and decoded by the British and sent to Walter Hines Page, U.S. ambassador to Britain, who sent it to the State Dept., which then sent it to the press, who published it in March 1917.
9. March 1917 Germany sinks four U.S. merchant vessels in the first two weeks of March 1917. These were the overt acts, Wilson was waiting on.
10. March 1917, Russian Revolution: March 1917, Czar overthrown, Russian Republic begun. This provided Wilson the chance to say that US entry into the war would be based on shared republican government, with England, France, and Russia. [In November 1917, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky took power with the Bolsheviks and took Russia out of the war].
11. April 2, 1917, Wilson asked for a declaration of war against Germany.
12. April 6, 1917, Declaration of War against Germany.

C. November 1917 – Bolsheviks take power in Russia [mentioned above]

D. March 1918 – Russians sign Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany

VI. World War I in America

A. Wilson's Idealistic Approach to the War

1. To get the people behind the war effort Wilson needed a strong moral appeal.
2. Fighting to make the world safe from the submarine would not unite the people of the United States, many of who still wanted to be neutral.
3. Wilson declared twin goals, "a war to end war" and a crusade to "make the world safe for democracy."

B. January 8, 1918 Wilson's Fourteen points

1. Wilson delivered his fourteen points address to Congress.
2. These were idealistic goals
 - a. open covenants (treaties) of peace openly arrived at
 - b. freedom of the seas
 - c. removal of international trade barriers (like tariffs)
 - d. reduction of armaments
 - e. impartial adjustment of colonial claims with due regard for the interests of native people
 - f. adjustment of European boundaries in accordance with the principle of nationality. Also called "self-determination" for minority groups
 - g. establishment of the League of Nations.

C. Forging an American War Machine

1. Committee on Public Information
 - a. created by Executive Order in April 1917
 - b. led by George Creel; hence, known as "Creel Committee"
 - c. employed 150,000 workers

- d. authorized to keep the American public informed about the war
 - e. promoted patriotism for the war effort through propaganda, posters, leaflets, movies
 - f. glorified the Boys in Blue
 - g. promoted the sale of Liberty Bonds
2. War Industries Board
- a. created by Executive Order in July 1917
 - b. Wilson started this Board to impose order on the economic confusion of the period
 - c. In March 1918, he appointed Bernard Baruch as its head.
 - d. approved all American and Allied purchases from American businesses
 - e. allocated raw materials to American businesses
 - f. directed production decisions
 - g. yearly rate of steel production doubled during the war
 - h. wages went up
 - i. middle class grew
 - j. supervised labor relations until April 1918
3. Fuel Administration
- a. created by an act of Congress (Lever Act, August 1917)
 - b. authorized to fix the price of coal
 - c. authorized to make allocation decisions (for example: between factories, offices, and homes)
4. Food Administration
- a. created by act of Congress (Lever Act, August 1917)
 - b. Herbert Hoover headed the organization
 - c. controlled prices farmers received for wheat, pork, and other food products
 - d. managed the distribution of food and promoted conservation of food
 - e. Voluntary compliance, rejected issuing ration cards, used in Europe, instead propaganda campaign: posters, newspapers, billboards.
 - f. TO SAVE FOOD FOR EXPORT. Meatless Tuesdays, and wheat-less Wednesdays. Vegetable victory gardens.
 - g. Congress also restricted the use of foodstuffs for the production of alcohol.
 - h. 1919 Eighteenth Amendment--prohibition.
 - i. Farm production increased by 1/4 and food exports to the allies tripled in volume.
5. Railway Administration
- a. created by Executive Order in December 1917
 - b. operated all railroads for the duration of the war
 - c. forced improvements and standardization of equipment
 - d. built, maintained, and improved track and terminal facilities
 - e. bargained collectively with railway worker unions
6. National War Labor Board
- a. created by Executive Order in April 1918
 - b. Former President Taft Co-chairman of NWLB
 - c. because there was a labor shortage during the war, business and government were forced to accept labor unions
 - d. AFofL grew from 2.7 million in 1915 to 5 million in 1920--Gompers gave "complete support" to the war effort
 - e. 6,000 strikes during the war
 - f. investigated labor disputes and recommended solutions
 - g. standardized labor practices in industries with government contracts
 - h. Because it communicated with labor unions and heard both sides of labor disputes, it legitimized the right of workers to organize and seek a "living wage."
 - i. Although wages doubled between 1914 and 1918, the war caused inflationary prices that kept pace with the wage scale.
7. Loyalty Measures
- a. Espionage Act of 1917 *Espionage- crime to give aid or comfort to the enemy*
 - 1. prohibited any form of aid to the enemy
 - 2. prohibited any form of obstructing recruitment
 - 3. prohibited any form of inciting rebellion within the armed services
 - 4. penalties of up to 20 years in prison and 10,000 fine
 - b. Trading with the Enemy Act (1917)
 - 1. prohibited trading with U.S. enemies
 - 2. authorized U.S. government to censor foreign language newspapers
 - c. Sedition Act (1918) *Sedition- crime to many statements involving abusive language to cause disrepute to the government*
 - 1. prohibited any form of expression that was "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive" of the American system of government, flag, or uniform
 - 2. Under Espionage and Sedition Acts there were 1900 prosecutions.

Eugene Debs, IWW William D. Haywood and about 300 other IWW leaders were arrested under the Espionage Act.

8. Military Conscription (May 1917)

- a. In April and May of 1917 it became clear that the United States would have to do more than economically support the allies. Food and goods were not enough. They needed men.
- b. Conscription was the only answer to the need for raising an immense army with all possible speed.
- c. The draft act required the registration of all males between the ages of 18 and 45. Within a few months the army increased from 200,000 to over 4 million.

VII. The End of the Conflict (1918)

A. Situation in Germany

1. Germany had some hope the separate peace signed with Russia (1918)
2. Yet, in reality, American involvement sealed Germany's fate
3. Conditions on the Western Front grew increasingly worse
4. German generals told Kaiser Wilhelm II to surrender (September 1918)
5. Wilhelm II abdicated the throne and left the country (November 1918)
6. Establishment of Weimar Republic

B. Armistice signed on 11 November 1918

C. Paris Peace Conference (January 1919)

1. The victorious Allies met in Paris to draw up a peace treaty (January 1919)
2. Although 27 nations attended (not Russia or Germany), Britain, US, France, & Italy dominated
3. However they had different ideas about what the peace treaty should include
 - a. George Clemenceau/France: aggressively called for harsh terms for Germany
 - b. David Lloyd George/Britain: for moderate treaty, but had promised to punish Germany
 - c. Woodrow Wilson/US: for moderate treaty based on "14 Points" Address (8 Jan 1918)

D. Treaty of Versailles

1. Compromise between four major powers, Britain, US, France, & Italy
2. Forced on Germany, who signed it on June 28, 1919
 - a. Germany was deprived of portions of its European territory, like Alsace-Lorraine and Polish corridor
 - b. Germany was deprived of its colonial empire.
 - c. Germany was disarmed and forced to accept Allied military occupation of the Rhineland
 - d. Germany was required to accept responsibility (blame) for the war
 - e. Germany was forced to pay 33 billion dollars in reparations.

E. Treaty fight in the United States over the League of Nations

1. League contained in the Versailles Treaty, which still had to be ratified by the U.S. Senate
2. Opposition to the League and Treaty in the Senate -- led by Henry Cabot Lodge
 - a. Head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
 - b. Lodge hated Woodrow Wilson, angry that Wilson took no Republicans to peace conference
3. Reasons for general opposition to League of Nations:
 - a. Some opposed it on purely personal or political grounds
 - b. Other opposed it on ground that it could drag the US into the problems of the world
 1. Article 10. - Collective security:
2. "The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in the case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligations shall be fulfilled."
4. With Senate opposition to the Treaty, Wilson went to the people in an ambitious train tour
5. Wilson was physically exhausted -- suffered a severe stroke (2 Oct. 1919)
6. Senate voted to reject the treaty
7. Eventually, Senate ratified new treaty (1921)

VIII. General Global Results of World War I

- A. Of the 65 million men who were mobilized, more than 10 million killed and more than 20 million wounded
- B. The Central Powers were defeated
- C. The German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires destroyed.
- D. Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland independent from Austria (Treaty of St. Germain).
- D. The war helped precipitate the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, leading to communism there.
- E. The enormous cost of the war undermined the financial stability of the countries involved, leading to a Depression in the 1930s.
- F. The financial losses, when combined with the battlefield deaths and physical destruction, weakened the European powers, especially Germany, where Adolph Hitler soon rose to power.