Chapter 6: World War I and Beyond

Focus Question: What caused the United States to become involved in World War I, and how did the United States change as a result of its involvement?

Section 1: From Neutrality to War

Focus Question: What caused World War I, and why did the United States enter the war?

1. What Caused World War I? There are four MAIN causes of the war that started in Europe. Remember, the U.S. did not get involved until 1917 even though the war started in 114.
   1. Militarism - glorification of the military. Many European countries thought a war would happen, they just weren’t sure when it was going to happen. they all wanted to be prepared. Germany took this the most seriously. They already had the largest land army, but they needed to build up their navy.
      1. Along with creating a better army and navy, countries also began to build up their arms or weapons.
   2. Alliances - Two major alliances formed - the Triple Alliance - Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy and the Triple Entente - France, Russia, and Great Britain. This allowed leaders to act recklessly knowing that if something happened, one of the other nations was going to have their back.
   3. Imperialism - stronger countries were taking over weaker ones. This led directly to the increased nationalism
   4. Nationalism - Devotion to one’s nation. Countries no longer believed that a country was made up of different ethnicities - they wanted it to be one. As imperialism spread, countries began to want their independence again.
      1. Social Darwinism - this concept took hold in the fact that the strongest nation was going to win, and who didn’t want to be the strongest nation.
   5. The Spark - this is the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand - heir to the Austrian Hungarian throne. Ferdinand was visiting Sarajevo, Bosnia. He was coming to build better relationships. A Serbian, Gavrillo Princep, a member of the Black Hand, and several others plotted to kill him. His wife and unborn child were shot first and then Ferdinand.
2. The Fighting Begins
   1. Alliances - they come into play rather quickly.
      1. Wilhelm II, the Kaiser of Germany assured Austria-Hungary that they had their back. So Austria Hungary ends up declaring war on Serbia - July 28, 1914.
      2. Russia - had a secret alliance with Serbia - so they began to mobilize, so Germany declared war on Russia.
      3. France - who is Russia’s ally declares war on Germany
      4. Germany - declares war on neutral Belgium so they can attack France through it.
      5. England - had treaties with Belgium and France so they declare war on Germany.
      6. Ottoman Empire - later joins the Central Powers
   2. Technology and Stalemate
      1. Trenches - after the Battle of the Marne -the Germans were able to strengthen their position with trenches. The French and English then built their own after they were attacked by machine guns and artillery that killed thousands. Soon there was 450 miles of trenches
         1. No Man’s Land - this was the area of land between the two trenches.
      2. Western Front - the war lasted longer than anyone thought due to the weapons. The defensive weapons were better than the offensive ones. As a result, the attacking forces always had the heaviest loses.
      3. Stalemate - after the initial Battle of the Marne was fought, the war was in stalemate for the next several years.
   3. Conditions
      1. Weather - often was cold and wet. Many suffered from trench foot as result of standing in wet, muddy trenches for hours.
      2. Animals - the area was covered in rats and lice
      3. Constant Fear - popping your head up out of the trenches might very well get it blown off. some suffered from Shell shock which was the loss of mentality
   4. Causalities - between the wounded, killed, and missing, millions of men on both sides were affected.
3. Wilson Urges Neutrality - as the war started, President Wilson urged the American people to not take sides - but this was a lot harder said than done.
   1. Divided Loyalties
      1. Immigrants - picked the side they were from. Many Americans were immigrants from Germany, Austria Hungary. Irish immigrants thought the Central Powers actions were justified due to to English treatment of their homelands. Many Jews that had been persecuted under the Russians were hoping for their defeat as well.
      2. Americans- however sided with the British and the French. This has a lot to do with their allegiance to their trading partners as well as their ancestors.
   2. American opinion forms - from the beginning the invasion of Belgium had a significant impact on how Americans felt toward the war. Some accounts might have been exaggerated, but Americans understood that the causalities even if they didn’t understand the cause of the war
   3. Three distinct opinions
      1. Isolationists - they believed war was none of America’s business
      2. Interventionists - it affected American interests and we should intervene on the side of the Allies
      3. Internationalists - they believed the US should play an active role in world affairs and work toward achieving a just peace but not enter the war.
4. America goes to war - There are several reasons the US ended up entering the war.
   1. Britain Blockades Germany - this is a normal tactic - to block contraband or war goods. the problem was that the British also blocked food and fertilizer. This caused thousands of Germans to starve.
   2. German U-boats or submarines - the Germans responded by blockading any ship that came into British waters. The problem was that it sank them versus just stopping them. In May 1915, the Germans sunk the Luisitania. Germany said it was carrying ammunition while Britain said its as unarmed. Wilson used diplomacy and Germany agreed to not attack neutral ships. This only lasted so long though.
   3. Wilson Prepares for war - although he wanted to stay at peace, he saw the writing on the wall.
      1. The National Defense Act - this expanded the size of the army through the use of the Selected Service Act - which required men 21-26 to register for a draft.
      2. Naval Construction Act - ordered the building of more warships.
   4. America goes to War - two events led the US into war.
      1. Zimmerman Note - knowing that they would need help as the Blockade was causing so many shortages the German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmerman wrote a note to Mexico asking them to join them in the war. When they won they would receive lands in the Southwest they had lost to America.
      2. Unrestricted Submarine Warfare was declared
      3. Although no one really thought Mexico would join the war, Wilson asked for a declaration of War on April 2, 1917. It was passed on April 6.

Section 2: The Homefront

Focus Question: How did the war affect Americans at home?

1. America Mobilizes for War
   1. Building an Army - our army was pretty small when the war broke out in Europe.
      1. Selective Service Act - passed in May 1917. This required all men ages 21-26 to register for the draft. Over the course of the war 24 million were registered, but only 2.8j million were actually drafted.
      2. Volunteers - along with the draft another 2 million volunteered.
   2. Shaping Public Opinion - along with getting a new army, American support of the war still needed to be grown.
      1. Committee on Public Information - CPI. This was led by George Creel. Its whole mission was to shape public opinion in support of the war effort.
         1. Propaganda - various forms were used form ads to flyers, rallies, and speeches to get America to support the war effort.
         2. 4 Minute Men - men who would speak for 4 minutes to try and get the support. Often times at the beginning of movies and theater events.
         3. Focused on the cruelty and evilness of the enemy. This also spread toward German Americans as well.
2. Wartime Economy
   1. Council of National Defense was created in August of 1916 that created a bunch of new government agencies that would regulated food production, coal and gas distribution and railway use.
      1. Government regulation - now the government was in charge of what was being produced, how much it was going to cost, and how it was going to be transported.
   2. War Industries Board - this was created to fix many of the problems of the various agencies. It was led by Bernard Baruch. It regulated all industries engaged in the war effort. Free enterprise no longer existed - if it was made for the war effort, the government regulated it.
   3. Food Administration - led by Herbert Hoover. He set up high prices for wheat and other types of food so production would be increased.
      1. less days - he also asked America to conserve their food, for whatever was not consumed by the American public would be consumed by our soldiers. There were Meatless Mondays, Wheatless Wednesdays and Sugarless Sundays.
3. Opposition - the CPI was very important since there were still two large groups that opposed Allied support - German Americans and Irish Americans.
   1. Resistance to the Draft - the draft was not welcomed by many Americans. Some thought it was an invasion of privacy, some avoided it altogether, while others Conscientious objectors opposed the war on moral or religious reasons.
   2. Women - some women also opposed the war
      1. Women’s Peace Party - this was started by Jane Addams as well as Pacifist women from other countries.
      2. NAWSA - originally was in support of the Peace Party, but when they dropped it, its membership doubled in size
   3. Crackdown on Dissent - although many did not want to stop our freedom of speech, the job of the CPI was to influence everyone to feel one way. Those that did not were not treated very kindly.
      1. Espionage Act - passed in June 1917 - allowed the post office to ban treasonable or seditious newspapers, magazines, or pamphlets. Basically anything that opposed the war could not be sent through the mail. It also stopped anyone form interfering with the draft, aiding the enemy, or the war effort at all.
         1. Consequences were a 10,000 fine and up to 20 years in prison.
      2. Sedition Act - freedom of speech was limited even further with this act. It was now illegal to use “disloyal, profane, scurrilous or abusive language” about the American form of government, the Constitution or the military. Now you couldn’t say you didn’t like our democracy or the military was bad.
         1. Schenck v. U.S. - was a court case that upheld the Sedition Act. Saying that national security came above freedom of speech.
   4. Prejudice Against German Americans - the CPI did such a good job at painting Germans as evil, that some German Americans were treated extremely harsh. As a result, German was no longer taught in schools, German music was no longer played. Names of foods was changed. German Americans were pressured into showing their loyalty by no longer reading the German American paper and participating in patriotic drives - especially to raise money.
4. Changes to American Society - women and minorities were able to experience a lot of different opportunities that were not availed to them previously.
   1. Women - they filled many jobs that were left by the men as they went to fight. They also joined the Red Cross and the Army Corps of Nurses
      1. Women’s Suffrage - Wilson used their role in the war effort to encourage others to support suffrage.
   2. African Americans - this presented the same opportunities for African Americans. Many thought supporting the war was a way for them to show how loyal African Americans were.
      1. In the military - they fought in segregated units led by whites.
      2. Great Migration - this was a time period where many African Americans moved from the South to the North for jobs in the war industries.
   3. Mexican Americans - many Mexicans crossed into the U.S. for the same reasons.- they wanted to escape poverty and violence. Many moved to the Southwest where they worked on farms and ranches. Others moved to the Pacific coast. Many filled the jobs needed by the increased demand for food on the farms.
      1. Seasonal workers - many moved based on where the jobs were.
      2. Barrios - hispanic neighborhoods were formed, especially in California and the Southwest where the Mexicans began to settle.

Section 3: Wilson, War, and Peace

Focus Question: How did Americans affect the end of World War I and its peace settlements?

1. America Gives the Allies the Edge - no one was quite sure what impact the U.S. would have on the war. The Allies hoped they would join on their side and the Central Powers did everything they could to keep them out of the war.
   1. Convoys - one of the biggest issues was getting supplies to the war. Allied ships were being sunk faster than they could be built. To fix this they came up with the convoy system in which a group of merchant ships sailed together protected by warships.
   2. Russia makes separate treaty - on land, the Central Powers were dominating. In march 1917, Czar Nicholas II was overthrown by radical Lenin. Russia stopped fighting by December and by mid March made a separate treaty with Germany - the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Now that Germany was no longer fighting a two front war they were able to put all their men in the Western Front.
   3. America joins the fight - led by General John Pershing (man who chased Pancho Villa) American forces arrive in France in early 1918. For the most part, the German offensive was about to stall and by the end of March the German forces were weak. As the war continued, the Americans took more responsibility for the fighting and the tide turned in favor of the Allies.
   4. Distinguished Fighters - American troops were called doughboys. The spring and summer of 1918 they fought in defensive actions, but soon they moved toward the offensive winning several battles in mid 1918.
      1. Alvin York - trapped behind enemy lines he was able to silence a machine gun nest and continued on to defeat many other Germans.
      2. 369th Infantry was an African American that received the Croix de Guerre a French medal of distinction.
   5. End of the war - by the fall of 1918, the German front was collapsing. Some deserted while others mutinied ( or tuned on their leaders). Some just refused to fight.
      1. Cease Fire - On November 11, 1918 Germany surrendered.
      2. Cost - 13 million dead -both sides. 6.5 million civilians were also killed.
2. Wilson Promotes Peace Without Victory - although the war for many of the countries was about land acquisition, this was not the case for the United States. It was about peace and freedom.
   1. Peace Without Victory - in Jan 1917 Wilson made a speech saying that victory causes peace to be forced upon the loser which would only lead to more devastation later on.
   2. 14 Points - January 1918, Wilson again addressed Congress laying out his design for peace after the war. They called for freedom of seas, free trade, ending colonialism, and a general reduction of arms. He encouraged Self determination and a a league of Nations that would be a peace keeping organization.
3. Paris Peace Conference -
   1. Wilson attended himself, but did not take any of the leading Republicans with him, including Senator Henry Cabot Lodge a leader on foreign policy. This was a big mistake since the Republicans had control of the Senate who would later have to approve the treaty that Wilson made.
   2. Allied leaders - they wanted to blame someone and wanted reparation or payment for the war. They wanted to make sure that Germany would not be strong enough to ever do this again.
      1. England - David Lloyd George - wanted to keep the colonial status quo and punish Germany
      2. France - Clemenceau - wanted Germany to pay and demanded the return of Alsace-Lorraine and other German colonies
   3. Treaty of Versailles - as the Peace Conference wore on the majority of Wilson’s 14 points were dropped. The one aspect that did survive was the League of Nations.
      1. Terms - nine new countries were created - without any concern for self determination. For example - non German populations were now attached to non German nations. The same happened in the Middle East.
4. America Rejects the Peace Treaty
   1. Too Harsh - some Americans believed that the war guilt clause was too much causing humiliation.
   2. Irreconcilables - these were isolationist senators that opposed the League of Nations believing it would pull the US into other countries problems. They particularly disliked Article 10 that called for mutual defense by the signers of the treaty.
   3. Reservationists - they were opposed to the treaty as it was written, but wanted changes. Some didn’t like Article 10 - they said it was unconstitutional because only Congress had the right to declare war. They wanted the language changed so it didn’t go against this.
   4. No Compromise - Wilson had already compromised when he made the treaty - he was not going to compromise anymore. Wilson went directly to the people, but on this mission he suffered from a stroke.
   5. Rejection - In November 1919, the Senate was given a treaty that had eliminated the complaints of the Reservationists, but Wilson refused and told his supporters to vote with the irreconcilables to vote against it. The second time its as presented without any changes, both the irreconcilables and reservationists voted it down.. It was introduced a third time with moderate changes but again Wilson’s democrats and irreconcilables defeated the treaty.
   6. League of Nations - this was the downfall of the treaty and without the support of the united States, the league of nation couldn’t maintain the peace.