

World War I Engulfs the Globe

Woodrow Wilson (President from 1913-21), won the election of 1912 as a result of a split in the Republican party. Teddy Roosevelt had been displeased with the way his friend, President Taft, was running the presidency. When Taft received the presidential nomination, Roosevelt claimed he had “stolen” it and T.R. therefore decided to break away from the Republican party and form his own Progressive party.

This split in the Republican party made it possible for the Democratic presidential candidate, Woodrow Wilson, to win an easy victory. He won over 6 million popular votes, and the overwhelming majority of the electoral votes. Roosevelt won over 4 million votes, but only 88 electoral votes from six states; and President Taft received only 3.5 million popular votes.

Woodrow Wilson guided America during the troubled period of World War I. President Wilson campaigned for a second term using the slogan: “He kept us out of war!” But world events were making it more difficult for any American President to keep the U.S. out of the Great War.

What were the causes of World War I? How did America become involved in that historic struggle?

Causes of World War I

Competition for colonies — especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century — caused increased envy and rivalry among such nations as Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Holland. There was a mad scramble for colonies in Africa, as each European nation sought to stake out its claim for as much territory as possible in the Black Continent. Nations quarreled over the control of the sources of raw materials. They competed for overseas bases, and sometimes came to blows over new overseas markets for their products.

Another source of friction among the nations of Europe was the manner in which diplomacy was often conducted. Secret diplomacy was the usual rule, and this secrecy bred suspicion and deep distrust among the nations of Europe. As just one example, British Prime Minister Sir

Edward Grey promised France that Britain would provide naval aid in case of war, but he didn't tell the British Parliament of his promise.

The major European nations had engaged in wars for centuries, and had constantly resorted to various alliances as a means of preserving the "balance of power" in Europe.

In 1882, Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary signed the *Triple Alliance* — designed to prevent attack from either France or Russia. Russia and France also signed a defensive alliance in 1894. This left *Britain* isolated — without an alliance with any of the powerful nations of Europe. So in 1904, Britain and France reached an *Entente Cordiale* (a cordial understanding). This made the two nations (who had fought each other for centuries) diplomatic partners.

France then maneuvered to bring Russia and Britain together in an alliance. This she succeeded in doing in 1907, when Britain and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian Entente. Now Britain, France and Russia were all linked together by an alliance which came to be called *The Triple Entente*.

Europe was now divided into two armed camps: The Triple Alliance (Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary) and The Triple Entente (Britain, Russia and France). Deep distrust and mutual suspicions caused these nations to begin building up their military capacity. Europe was like a tinder box — just waiting to be ignited. And the Balkan Peninsula has often been called the *powder keg of Europe*.

Igniting World War I

In 1914 Austria-Hungary controlled lands which several of its neighbors thought should belong to them. Serbia (a Slavic nation) coveted the provinces of *Bosnia* and *Hercegovina* — because it wanted an outlet to the sea, and also because many Slavs lived in that area. The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 were fought over disputed territory. These Balkan states fought, first against Turkey, then against one another. During this period of turmoil, a group of Serbs formed a secret society, the "Union or Death" (also called "the Black Hand"), with the avowed purpose of terrorizing Austro-Hungarian officials into giving them Serbia's territorial aims.

Members of this secret society learned that Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the thrones of Austria and Hungary, planned to visit neighboring Bosnia in June, 1914. They therefore set about planning his assassination. A Bosnian revolutionary threw a bomb at the car in which the Archduke and his wife were riding while they were driving through Sarajevo. The bomb exploded behind his car. No one was hurt.

Later the same day, while in the city of Sarajevo, another trained assassin, Gavrilo Princip, jumped on the running board of the Arch-



WORLD WAR I IN EUROPE

- ALLIED POWERS
- CENTRAL POWERS
- CENTRAL POWER ADVANCES
- MAJOR BATTLES
- NEUTRAL COUNTRIES
- CENTRAL POWER OCCUPATION LIMIT AFTER BREST LITOVSK TREATY 1918



duke's car and fired two shots — shots which triggered World War I. One shot killed the Archduke, and the second shot killed his wife, as she tried to shield her husband with her own body. According to evidence which was later revealed, the Serbian government had plotted the assassination.

On July 23, 1914, Austria delivered an ultimatum to Serbia, demanding that it allow Austrian officials to take part in the trials of those persons involved in the assassination. Serbia rejected this demand, and suggested that the conflict be submitted to an international conference for arbitration.

Austria-Hungary flatly refused, and declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. World war was now imminent. Austria-Hungary had been assured that Germany would come to their aid if Russia came to the defense of Serbia. Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914. When France failed to satisfy the Germans that she would remain neutral (France and Russia were bound by alliance) Germany then declared war on France on August 3rd.

What was Germany's plan of strategy? She plotted an immediate invasion of France. By sending a force of seven armies through Belgium and France, she planned to envelop the French armies in a pincer movement. Germany thought she could deliver France a quick knock-out blow. She could then attack Russia, and carry out her *Drang nach Osten* (drive toward the east).

Germany asked the Belgians for permission to send troops across their territory, as they marched toward Paris. In actuality, however, German troops had already begun crossing Belgium and merely asked the Belgians for a passage across their country as a political gesture. King Albert I of Belgium flatly refused the Germans permission to use his nation as a military highway. He reportedly told the Germans: "Belgium is a nation, not a road."

German troops moved into Luxembourg on August 2nd, and then quickly advanced into Belgium on the 4th. This invasion of Belgium caused Britain to promptly declare war on Germany.

Allies Versus The Central Powers

Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire) were soon known as the Central Powers. They held an advantageous position in the center of Europe. Unlike their enemies (the Allies) the Central Powers formed a solid land block on the continent of Europe. They could easily speed supplies and reinforcements to any front. Their mobilized strength reached more than 22,800,000 men and women. Germany possessed the biggest and best-equipped fighting force in Europe. Its troops were better trained and had superior weapons.

By contrast, the Allies (Britain, France, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Japan, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and, near the end of the war, the United States) were much more scattered. They had long lines of communication and transportation to protect. But they were able to mobilize over 42 million men and women for the titanic struggle which was destined to last over four long, weary, agonizing years.

Russia had the largest army, but it was poorly equipped and badly commanded. The corrupt, moribund Czarist regime was not able to supply the dynamic leadership needed to equip, train and properly command an efficient fighting force. The French army had some good equipment, and the men had excellent spirit, but they were not trained for modern warfare. Britain's army was small, but was a superb fighting machine. She, however, didn't have enough recruits to wage total war until 1915.

The Germans Are Halted

Within about one month after the outbreak of the war, the Germans were within 30 miles of Paris, but they were stopped by the combined French-English forces in the First Battle of the Marne (Sept. 6-12). Their attempt to gain a quick knock-out victory over the French had failed. Paris was saved.

Over one and a half million troops fought in the First Battle of the Marne. This battle marked a turning point in the war, for it unnerved the Germans, and smashed their hopes of a quick victory. The Germans then retreated to the Aisne River. The two armies soon settled down to a virtual deadlock, as the opposing forces began using trench warfare.

Trench Warfare

Trench warfare was used for the first time in Europe's wars. It was the means by which two opposing armies dug themselves into positions near each other, and from which they could make infantry assaults on enemy lines. But this type of warfare proved to be a very dreary, long-drawn-out way of doing battle. Trench warfare often resulted in two opposing armies reaching a virtual stalemate, by which neither side gained or lost much ground for weeks, months or years.

On the Western front, the opposing armies became deadlocked in trench warfare for two tortuous years. When soldiers left the comparative security of their trench and went "over the top," heading toward the enemy trench they were cut down by a merciless hail of machine-gun fire.

Hand grenades, land mines, large calibre field artillery guns and other new weapons were used extensively during World War I. The

Germans used the 5.9 inch howitzer and the deadly 77 mm field gun. The French 75 mm heavy artillery was also an effective weapon.

Germans Crush The Russian Army

In August, 1914, Russia sent her First and Second armies into East Prussia. The retired German general, Paul Von Hindenburg, was recalled and given command of German reinforcements which had rushed to the defense of East Prussia.

Even though the Germans were outnumbered, they soon crushed the Russian armies, and cleared them out of Prussia. Over 300,000 Russian troops were either killed, wounded or missing.

The Russians had also sent an army into Galicia in August. There they achieved a victory — killing and wounding more than 250,000 Austrian troops, and capturing over 100,000 others.

In the meantime, Austria-Hungary failed in three attempts to invade Serbia.

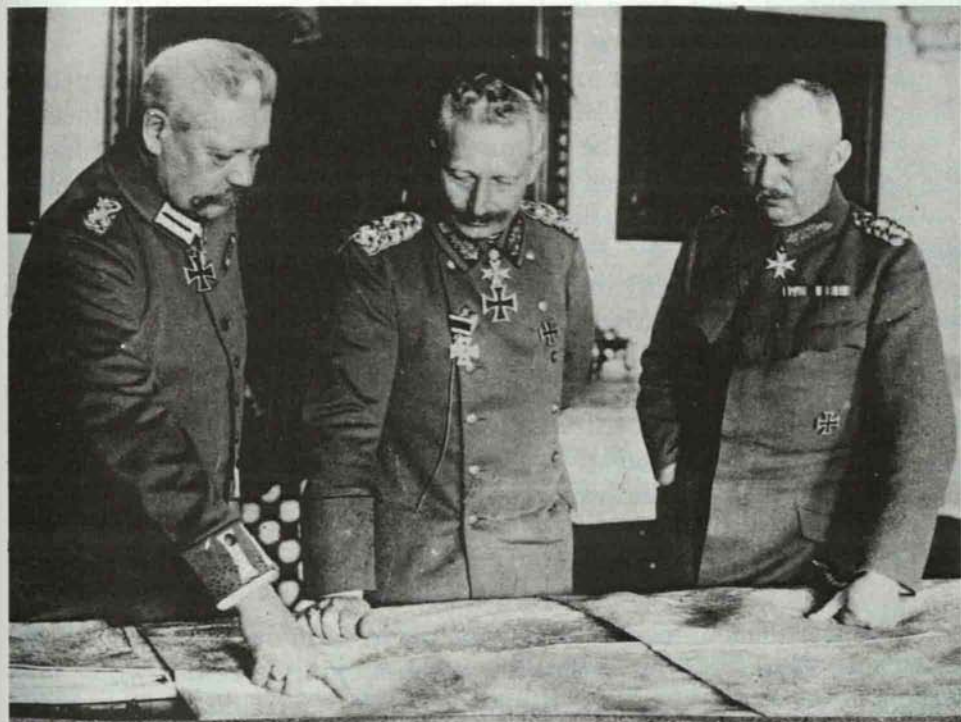
The Second Year — 1915

In the West, little ground changed hands during the second year of World War I. The Central Powers decided to make their main assault on the eastern front. Italy joined the Allies during this second year of the Great War.

It was also during 1915 that the Allies decided to invade Turkey. Russia had asked for an attack on Turkey in order to relieve pressure on its troops. The Allies planned to force open the Dardanelles so they could send convoys of supplies to Russia. They formed an expeditionary force to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula and Constantinople. The Allied fleet succeeded in destroying the Turkish forts at the entrance of the straits, and it succeeded in advancing part way up the straits. Then on March 18, the fleet had to turn back after its ships struck explosive mines. Allied soldiers landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula on April 24, but they met such strong Turkish resistance, and sustained such heavy casualties, that they were forced to withdraw by the end of the year. This military misadventure was blamed on Winston Churchill, and brought him disrepute and political eclipse.

War on the High Seas

War raged on the high seas from the very beginning. Britain had been the mistress of the sea for centuries. The Germans, however, were determined to break Britain's supremacy of the sea by using submarine warfare.



Kaiser Wilhelm II (center) studying maps with Ludendorff (on his right) and Von Hindenburg. — *Camera Press London Photo*

But during 1914 surface ships played the leading role in the war at sea. The British Grand Fleet succeeded in bottling up the German High Sea Fleet in its home waters near the Kiel Canal.

A few scattered German surface ships eluded the Allies and soon began attacking Allied shipping in the North Sea. It was the submarine attacks, however, which worried the Allies the most. These U-boat attacks gradually grew in strength.

Since the Allies held virtual command of the seas from the beginning of the war, they were able to take advantage of Germany's maritime weakness, and early in the war wrested control of Germany's isolated overseas possessions.

During the first year of the war, the New Zealanders captured Samoa, in the Pacific, and Australians occupied German New Guinea.

When Japan entered the war on the side of the Allies in late August, she seized German holdings in China, and also occupied the German-controlled islands in the Pacific, including the Carolines, Marianas, and the Marshalls.

The entrance of Italy into the war in August, 1915, helped the Allies to secure control of the Mediterranean.

Germany declared all waters surrounding Britain to be a "war zone," and warned that all merchant ships within that zone would be sunk. Germany didn't care which nation's ships were involved. She apparently didn't sufficiently realize that to provoke a nation like the U.S. into joining the Allies would only hasten her own destruction.

German Offensives

The Germans unleashed a new, secret weapon on April 22, 1915. On that date, French troops noticed an eerie-looking, greenish-white mist drifting toward them from the enemy lines. The Germans had decided to experiment with the use of poisonous chlorine gas. The use of lethal gas struck terror into the Allied troops, but was not a decisive weapon in World War I.

Then, on May 7, the Germans committed an act of barbarity. A German submarine sank the British passenger liner *Lusitania*. Only 18 minutes after a German torpedo ripped open the *Lusitania*, she went to the bottom of the Irish Sea. This uncivilized act claimed the lives of 1,198 persons — including 128 Americans. The well-known American, Elbert Hubbard, and other prominent Americans died in that tragic act of German hostility.

In fairness to the Germans, however, it needs to be admitted that the *Lusitania* was loaded with 4,500 cases of ammunition. Whether the Germans knew this ammunition was on board was highly doubtful, however.

Civilized nations condemned the attack on the liner. This barbarous act incensed the American public and was one of the main incidents which finally impelled the U.S. to declare war on Germany.

During 1915, the Allied fleet took part in the African campaign by blockading Germany's colonies in East Africa. Realizing their perilous situation, German troops in Southwest Africa and in Cameroon surrendered to the Allies.

Also, in 1915, Turkish troops, under German leadership, attacked the Suez Canal, but were turned back by British and Indian forces.

The Third Year — 1916

Much of 1914 and 1915 had been spent in *trench warfare*. The opposing armies had come to a *stalemate* on the western front, and not much ground was gained or lost by either side.

What was life like in the trenches? It was dreary and miserable — even when the soldiers weren't fighting! This was especially true during a rainy period. Rain and slush often filled the trenches and dugouts with water and mud. Death, filth, and stench seemed everywhere. Swarms of rats, flies, mosquitoes and lice became constant companions of the troops.

Life was anything but pleasant for the millions who had to spend what must have seemed like an eternity in the filthy, inhospitable trenches — realizing that an enemy bullet might put an exclamation point at the end of their lives at any time. Between Allied and German trenches (which were sometimes less than 100 yards apart) stretched *no-man's land*.

During 1916, great military drives broke out on all fronts. The Austro-Hungarians and the Italians battled each other along the Isonzo River. The Germans attacked at Verdun; and the Russians assaulted Polish Galicia.

The Battle of Verdun was one of the bloodiest of the war. When the Germans were unable to take the city, French forces counterattacked, and the Germans had to go on the defensive in order to hold onto their meager gains. During the Battle of Verdun, the French suffered more than 540,000 casualties, and the Germans lost over 430,000 men.

During this third year (1916) the British attacked the Germans at the Somme on July 1st. In that struggle the Germans lost over 500,000 men, the Allies more than 600,000.

In July, 1916, Britain introduced a major new weapon — the *tank*. She didn't have sufficient numbers of properly designed and armored tanks to have a decisive effect during the war. Nonetheless, the introduction of the tank would have far-reaching consequences on future wars.



British troops mired in mud-filled trench on the Western front during World War I. — *Wide World Photo*



During World War I British tank rumbled through devastated French village. — Culver Pictures, Inc.

During 1916, Romania decided to join the Allies. But by January of the following year, German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Turkish troops swept through Romania, capturing its capital, Bucharest.

The greatest sea battle fought during World War I was the Battle of Jutland, fought between May 31 and June 1, just off the entrance to the Skagerrak Strait. During the battle, the British lost three battle cruisers, three armored cruisers, eight destroyers, and 6,097 men. German losses were much less: one battleship, one battle cruiser, four light cruisers, five destroyers, and 2,551 killed in action.

Even though the Germans hailed the Battle of Jutland as a great victory, Britain, strangely, continued to control the seas, and the "victorious" German fleet remained inactive.

The Fourth Year — 1917

At the beginning of 1917, the Central Powers seemed to enjoy a relatively strong position. They occupied Poland, Romania, Serbia, a large portion of Belgium, Montenegro, and most of northern France.

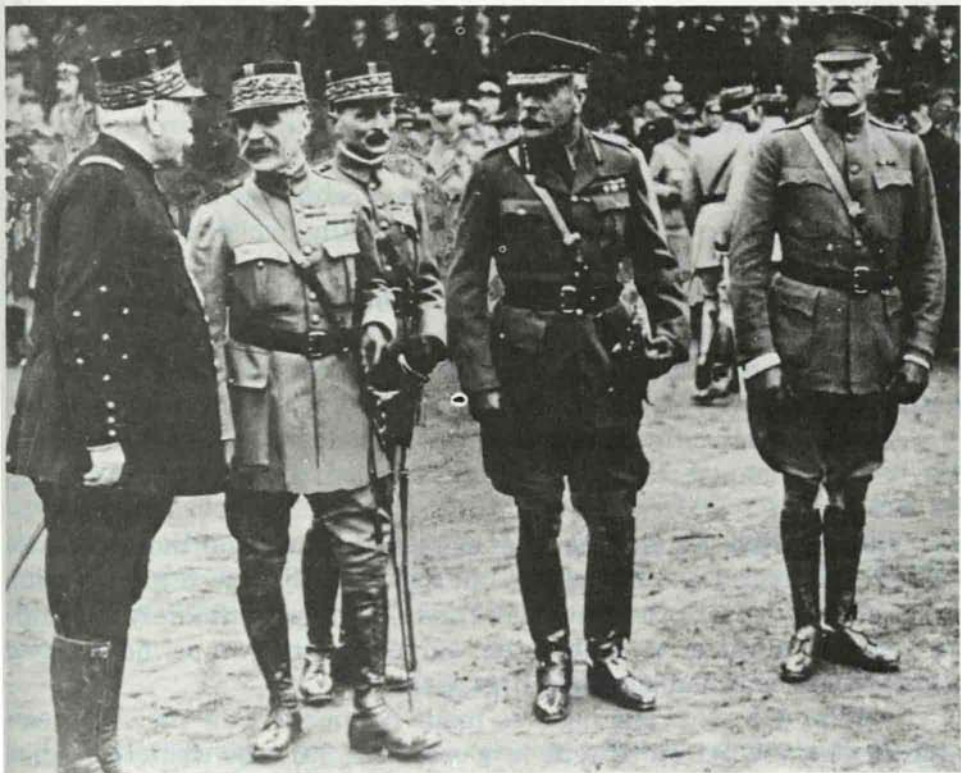
Unfortunately, the Allies received a heavy blow on the eastern front when the Russian war effort collapsed in March, 1917. During the month of March, Russian revolutionists had overthrown their government and forced Czar Nicholas II to abdicate. Then, in early November, the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky overthrew the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky and arranged an armistice with the Central Powers. The new Russian government ended hostilities on December 5, 1917, and began peace talks with the German government. The Russians agreed to the harsh German peace terms of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March, 1918.

It was on March 3, that the Russians signed the humiliating treaty. By the harsh terms imposed, Russia was forced to give up Finland, Poland, the Ukraine and the Baltic States. Also, Russia surrendered to Turkey the districts of Kars, Batum, and Ardahan, south of the Caucasus Mountains.

Romania made peace with the Central Powers only a few months after Russia had signed a peace treaty. Romania agreed to grant oil concessions and promised to give up some of its territory.

The Germans announced, in January, 1917, that they would wage "unrestricted submarine warfare." This decision prompted the U.S. to declare war on Germany. Woodrow Wilson had previously stated that America would be "neutral in fact as well as in name." Nevertheless, President Wilson had authorized U.S. merchant vessels to carry guns as protection against the growing menace of German submarines.

Then the British intercepted a German message to Mexico in January, 1917, which helped America make up her mind to enter the war on



The Allies became bogged down on the Western front until the Yanks arrived in France. Four of the top allied commanders are shown here. Left to right: Gen. Joseph Joffre, Gen. Ferdinand Foch (Allied commander-in-chief), unidentified officer (in black), Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, and Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, General in command of the American Expeditionary Force in France. — *World Wide Photo*

the side of the Allies. The German message indicated that Germany had sought an alliance with Mexico in case of war with the U.S. In return for a German-Mexican alliance, Mexico was promised the land of Texas which America had annexed in 1845.

In the meantime, German submarines continued to wreak havoc on Allied shipping. When the number of sinkings of U.S. merchant ships reached a record high in 1917, all of America's serious doubts about entering the war evaporated. In April, 1917, German subs sank 900,000 tons of Allied shipping.

America Enters the War

President Wilson now believed America could not honorably avoid war with Germany. The United States formally declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.

The Central Powers had hoped to be able to finish the war before American forces could arrive to assist the Allies. And, true to their fears, the tide began to turn against them shortly after America entered the war in 1917.

America was badly prepared when she declared war on Germany. She had not planned on getting into the conflict, and had not geared up for war.

The Selective Service Act was passed in May, and more than 24 million men registered. About 3 million eventually served after having been conscripted into the American forces, and approximately two million others volunteered. Before the war ended in Europe, nearly two million Americans had landed in France.

General John J. Pershing was made commander of the American Expeditionary Force to be sent to Europe. In 1917, he went to France without any soldiers, tactical plans, or strategic guidance. Pershing insisted that the American troops receive intensive training before they were committed to fighting in Europe. Furthermore, he insisted that they fight as separate units, rather than being mixed with the forces of the other Allies. He feared the sagging morale of the other war-weary soldiers might adversely affect the American troops if they fought alongside their continental Allies.

American troops began landing in France on June 26, 1917. The Americans remembered they had received French help during the Revolutionary War. When the American forces landed in France, one of Pershing's staff officers, Col. Charles E. Stanton, announced on July 4th: "Lafayette, we are here."

The first American units (forming the First Army) entered the trenches in October, 1917, and American forces subsequently took part in thirteen major operations during World War I.

Even though the “doughboys” (the Yanks) arrived in France rather late in the war, they did, nonetheless, play a decisive part in helping to bring that war to a swift conclusion.

The Allies eventually began to win victories in the Mideast. Their victorious armies captured Baghdad in March, 1917; and in December, General Allenby's British troops marched triumphantly into Jerusalem.

Final Year of the War — 1918

The German generals confessed that they had anticipated the war would be over before the Americans arrived in Europe. They firmly believed that the arrival of the fresh American troops was a vital factor in Germany's defeat. The American troops were in better health, high spirited and ready for action.

In April, 1918, the Allies finally decided to form a unified command. Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch was appointed General-in-Chief of all the Allied Armies in France.

Von Hindenburg had promised the Germans they would be in Paris by April 1, 1918. Accordingly, German armies, under the command of Ludendorff, attacked fiercely along a 50-mile front in March.

The Germans reached the banks of the Marne on May 31. But again, their advance was halted by the Allies. This time, it was the Americans who blocked their path. American troops stopped the German offensive at Chateau-Thierry, and helped prevent the German army from crossing the Marne to Paris.

Allies Take the Offensive

The Allies were now ready to take the offensive against the German army. Marshal Foch began a series of hammering blows between the North Sea and the Reims — blows which sent the German forces reeling back toward the Rhine. The Allied offensive which began on July 18 never stopped until the Germans decided they were ready to sit down at the armistice table.

Before long the Germans were thrown back to the “Siegfried Line” — also called the Hindenburg Line. American soldiers now took over a large portion of the battle line, and succeeded in breaking through the Hindenburg Line. Approximately 1,200,000 U.S. troops fought in the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne. Approximately one out of ten was either killed or wounded.

In June, 1918, Italy's General Armando Diaz's Italian troops halted the advancing Austro-Hungarian armies. General Diaz's army split the Austro-Hungarian armies in two — totally destroying them — in October, 1918.

Then Allied forces from Salonika broke the Bulgarian front in September. This prompted Bulgaria to sign an armistice on September 29th. Events in the Balkans now brought enormous pressure on the Austro-Hungarian empire which rapidly began crumbling.

The Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks and the Poles declared their independence in the fall of 1918. Emperor Charles I authorized his representatives to sign an armistice, which was effected on September 3.

Germany All Alone

Now Germany stood totally alone! Would she try to fight to the last ditch, and the last man, or would she realize further bloodshed was futile, and also seek an armistice?

In late October, 1918, sailors in the German High Sea Fleet at Kiel mutinied, and as the news of this mutiny spread, other revolts broke out in different parts of Germany. As food, munitions and supplies dwindled, small mutinies began flaring up among the German troops.

Hindenburg decided he had better bluntly tell the Kaiser that if Germany wished to avoid a catastrophe, she must seek an immediate armistice with the Allies. This would be better than fighting to the bitter end.

Kaiser Wilhelm II appointed Prince Max of Baden as Chancellor with the onerous task of seeking an armistice. Prince Max decided to appeal to President Wilson for terms of surrender. He knew Wilson favored leniency toward the Central Powers, and hoped Germany would not have to sign a humiliating treaty.

On November 7th, a German armistice delegation went to Marshal Foch's headquarters in the Forest of Compiègne. Marshal Foch outlined the armistice terms. The Central Powers must evacuate all occupied territories, surrender their arms and warships, withdraw all their forces back east of the Rhine, return all Allied prisoners, permit Allied troops to occupy German territory. The Germans were given three days (72 hours) to accept the terms.

While the Germans were coming to terms, German government collapsed. Socialists under Friedrich Ebert proclaimed a German Republic on November 9th, and the German leader, Kaiser Wilhelm II, abdicated and fled to Holland.

Badly beaten Germany decided to accept the terms of Foch's armistice. In German eyes, the weather seemed to suit the occasion during the signing of the armistice. The German delegates arrived at Foch's headquarters in the Compiègne Forest in drizzling rain, where they entered a railway car and, at 5 a.m. on November 11, signed the armistice.

Marshal Foch signed for the Allies, and the German Secretary of

State, Matthias Erzberger, signed on behalf of Germany. Foch then ordered that all fighting stop on all battlefronts at 11 a.m. November 11, 1918. World War I had at last ended! All over the world, there was jubilation. The war-weary nations could breathe a sigh of relief, and could begin binding up their wounds, and rebuilding their devastated cities.

Results of World War I

What were the results of World War I? The peace settlements following the war healed a few old wounds, but opened up many new ones.

The Allied leaders, President Wilson in particular, stressed the principle of self-determination for the liberated nations of Europe such as Poland, Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. This new principle of self-determination fanned the flame of nationalism, causing it to burn even more brightly than before 1914.

Following World War I, the Allies created the League of Nations, and a World Court, as agencies to settle international disputes peacefully. But Congress refused to approve U.S. membership in the League of Nations.

Its creator, Woodrow Wilson, expressed the lofty ideal that the League would be able to "guarantee" the "territorial integrity" of the big and little states. "A general association of nations," said Wilson, "must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."

The aggressive acts of Japan, Italy and Germany which followed on the heels of the Great War soon proved that the League of Nations was helpless to deal effectively with the harsh political realities of the post-war world.

What Did World War I Cost?

The greatest cost of the Great War was in human lives. Over 5,000,000 Allies servicemen died during the war, and 3,300,000 soldiers of the Central Powers also died. Many more millions were wounded.

It is estimated that during the war 5,000,000 civilians died of starvation, disease and exposure. Tens of millions died from Spanish *influenza* either during or after the war. Many believed this flu epidemic was the result of the war.

The financial drain of World War I ran over \$337 billion. During the war, the U.S. loaned her Allies billions of dollars. Britain's 4.8 billion-dollar World War I debt has now risen to about 7.4 billion dollars — including unpaid interest. And France's debt of just over 4 billion

dollars has now risen (if we include unpaid interest) to over 5 billion dollars! It is unlikely that America's World War I loans will ever be paid back.

Like all wars, World War I left a legacy of hate and bitterness in its wake. Much of France and Belgium and other nations had been devastated by the war. With many millions of civilians dead and maimed it would take many decades before the awful cost (in human lives and suffering) would be forgotten!

President Wilson's Peace Proposals

President Woodrow Wilson realized a number of secret treaties had been made between various nations during World War I. Those agreements were for the purpose of giving away large chunks of territory to the victors at the end of the war. Both the Allies and the Central Powers had such contingency arrangements.

President Wilson had enough vision to see that Europe would never cease erupting in wars if the "land grab" continued after the war. In the past, victorious nations had operated on the principle that "to the victor belong the spoils."

If the old wounds in Europe were ever to be healed, if there were to be a lasting peace, Wilson thought the Allies would have to avoid imposing harsh terms of peace on the vanquished Central Powers.

President Wilson's famous Fourteen Points were well-known in Europe — even before the armistice was signed. Thousands of allied planes had dropped countless leaflets behind enemy lines outlining President Wilson's Fourteen Points.

When the German High Command decided to abandon the struggle and asked President Wilson for an armistice, they based their action on the supposition that Wilson's Fourteen Points would form the basis of the armistice.

Wilson's Fourteen Points were as follows:

1. The peace agreements (or covenants) following World War I must be *open* — not clandestine agreements, arrived at secretly.

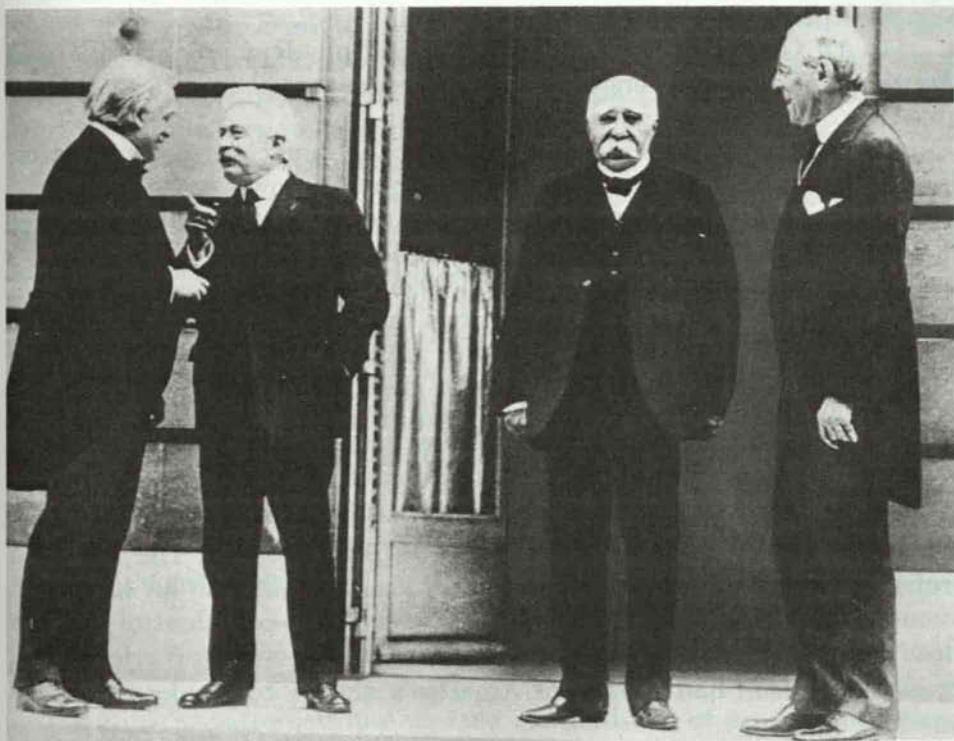
2. There must be freedom of the seas for all shipping — in international waters.

3. The removal of all possible economic barriers, and the equality of trade between nations.

4. National armaments should be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

5. All colonial claims must be settled by free, open-minded and impartial adjustment.

6. All German troops must be evacuated from all Russian territory. Russia must be able independently to determine its own political devel-



Allied leaders in Paris meet to decide Europe's fate following World War I. Left to right: Lloyd George of England, Orlando of Italy, Clemenceau of France and President Woodrow Wilson of the U.S. — *Wide World Photo*

opment and national policy. Russia must be welcomed into the society of free nations.

7. German troops must evacuate from Belgium, and that nation must be rebuilt.

8. German troops must evacuate all French territory and the Alsace-Lorraine must be returned to France.

9. Italian frontiers must be readjusted along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

10. There must be limited self-government for the peoples of Austria-Hungary.

11. All German troops must evacuate from Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and independence must be guaranteed for those Balkan countries.

12. Turkey must be independent, and the opportunity for all other nationalities under Turkish rule to develop their own self-government must be granted. The Dardanelles must be permanently opened as a free passage to ships of all nations.

13. Poland must become an independent nation.

14. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

This last point was the most important point in Wilson's mind. He wanted to make sure that a peace-keeping organization was formed so that future world wars might be prevented.

Wilson had spent much of his life at Princeton University — as student, then as professor and finally as its president. His life as a professor of the university had helped to make him into an idealistic, remote, unapproachable person. He was often over-confident of his own ideas and his own solutions. At the time of U.S. entry into World War I, President Wilson had spoken of America's aim — to "make the world safe for democracy."

In 1919 President Wilson went to Europe to fight for his Fourteen Points at the peace conference following World War I. He was everywhere hailed as a *messiah* of peace, and received tumultuous welcomes in both London and Paris. The President's vision of a world at peace had floated ahead of him to Europe, and the dazzled Paris crowds looked upon his arrival in Paris as something like a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. No previous statesman, king, premier, prime minister, president or leader of any country had ever been so received.

Opposition to Wilson's 14 Points

But Europe's elder statesmen were *not* dazzled! They didn't look upon President Wilson as savior, and they certainly didn't think he had the solution to Europe's mixed bag of long-standing difficulties.

France's octogenarian Premier, George Clemenceau, looked at things from a Frenchman's point of view. He knew that German troops had twice overpowered their French opponents. During the Franco-Prussian War, German troops had entered Paris in 1871. There were still many Frenchmen alive who remembered the German invasion during the time of the "Iron Chancellor," Bismarck. At the Paris peace treaty of 1871, France gave Germany Alsace and part of Lorraine.

The British and the Russians had suffered the ravages of Napoleon's army only one century before World War I, and they hadn't yet come to trust the French, and they certainly didn't trust the Germans. And the Russians and the Germans both entertained deep fears about each other's intentions. Furthermore, Britain and France undoubtedly wanted to take this opportunity to seize the German colonies.

In other words, there were *genuine fears* in Europe concerning what might happen if Germany were handled too gently. Many Europeans believed it better to put restraints on the Germans to make sure they didn't stir up another war in the near future.

When President Wilson got to Europe he found there were formidable obstacles in his path. He frequently found himself outwitted and out-maneuvered by Britain's wily Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and France's clever Premier, Clemenceau. In the end, Wilson had to make so many compromises that there was not much of a chance, in his eyes, of imposing a just peace settlement on the nations of Europe.

Nonetheless, Wilson fully intended even in spite of the compromises to go ahead with his Fourteen Points — or at least with as many of them as he could get accepted.

Europe's Complex Issues

Europe's statesmen had to face the realities of drawing new frontiers, deciding the claims of millions of nationals for new or enlarged homelands. Someone had to negotiate customs agreements, decide who should control a river, a railway system, a mineral-rich area like Alsace and Lorraine.

Who was going to decide these big questions? Who had the wisdom to thrash through the monstrous complexities of Europe's ethnic and nationalistic jealousies?

Europe's elder statesmen believed Wilson's offer of "self-determination" to these freed people would not solve but might only confuse them. Did such Europeans really understand the complexities of a democratic system? Did they really want the type of democracy which the Anglo-Saxon world has found suited to their tastes and temperament?

Before President Wilson had departed for Europe, where he would help work out a final peace settlement for the nations concerned, he

said: "*We (the Americans) are to be an instrument in the hands of God to see that liberty is made secure for mankind.*"

But by the time President Wilson had returned home from the peace settlement at Versailles, he was being criticized both at *home* and *abroad*. The French press accused him of being pro-German. And even though the peoples of London had given him an unprecedented hero's welcome, nonetheless the British leaders deplored Wilson's self-righteousness, and his impractical approach to the solutions of Europe's deep-seated problems.

He had wanted a peace based on his Fourteen Points (which he passionately believed in) but he had found the Europeans were more interested in a peace based on revenge, and in receiving heavy reparations.

German Bitterness

The Germans were the most bitter of all. To them the Treaty of Versailles seemed quite harsh. It declared that Germany was solely responsible for World War I. The Treaty of Versailles reduced Germany's size by one-eighth, and its population by 6,500,000! It stripped Germany of all her colonies and her overseas investments, and it took a sixth of her farm land, an eighth of her livestock, and a tenth of all her factories!

The Treaty of Versailles reduced Germany's merchant fleet, abolished her navy, and limited her army to about the size of Belgium's army.

Furthermore, the victors demanded that Germany pay heavy reparations. And the treaties which were made with the other Central Powers closely paralleled the German treaty. Germany's wartime allies (Austria-Hungary, Turkey) had to limit their armaments, pay reparations, admit their guilt in starting the war. They also had to give a written promise that minority groups within their borders would be treated fairly.

The Versailles peace conference brought into being a mandate system which was to be administered by the League of Nations. Many of the former possessions of the Ottoman Empire and of Germany became League mandates, under the supervision of one of the Allied nations.

Germans had greeted their returning veterans as heroes — since no Allied armies had sullied German soil, and because they thought Wilson's Fourteen Points guaranteed an honorable peace.

As things turned out, however, the November 11 armistice was in fact a disguised German surrender. Postwar Germans argued that Wilson's guarantee was nothing more than a high-sounding fraud. His proposed universal disarmament had in actual fact turned out to be a German disarmament. They felt betrayed, cheated, humiliated, shorn of much of their wealth.

The U.S. Congress also refused to accept Wilson's Fourteen Points.

President Wilson had not been very wise in the way he sought to get the American nation to approve his Fourteen Points. He had failed to include members of Congress on his team when he worked out his peace plan; and he didn't take any of them with him to Versailles.

Congress showed great reluctance toward acceptance of the League of Nations. They believed Wilson's League would impair American sovereignty. They didn't want foreigners regulating American immigration, tariffs, sending U.S. troops into battle, or modifying the Monroe Doctrine.

President Wilson believed the American people supported the Treaty. He planned to undertake a whirlwind speaking tour in which he would rally the nation and save the Treaty from mutilation. But the war years had taken a terrible toll on President Wilson. The strain of trying to organize the peace along the lines of his Fourteen Points had also been a superhuman task. Wilson had already suffered a slight stroke and suffered from blinding headaches. Nonetheless, in spite of these afflictions, he threw himself into the task of winning the American people to his way of thinking — hoping to override Congress's objections. He delivered nearly forty speeches in less than a month.

It looked as though he might succeed in his task, but his health gave out. He collapsed from fatigue and nervous exhaustion on September 25, 1919, and was forced to cancel the rest of his speeches.

For the next seventeen months, President Wilson was an invalid, and was hardly able to move out of the White House.

In the end, the Senate bluntly rejected the Versailles Treaty, and passed a resolution that America sign a separate peace with Germany. The U.S. rejected the League of Nations in 1919. Wilson had failed in his attempt to persuade the American people that the U.S. ought to ratify the League.

But the crowning blow came in the election of 1920, when the Republican candidate, Warren G. Harding, overwhelmed the pro-League Democrat, James Cox. Wilson now realized his work had been in vain. President Wilson lived for nearly three years after his term ended in March, 1921, but he was unable to exert himself, or do any actual work.

Woodrow Wilson remained confident that future events would prove him right. On November 11th, 1923, he declared: "I cannot refrain from saying it: I am not of those who have the least anxiety about the triumph of the principles I have stood for. *I have seen fools resist Providence before* and I have seen their destruction, as will come upon these again — utter destruction and contempt. *That we shall prevail is as sure as that God reigns.*"

Three months later, after he had told a few of his friends that he was "tired of swimming upstream," he died peacefully in his sleep on February 3, 1924.

