

# Chapter 29: World War I

## 1. The Early War

### Outbreak of War

On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire toured the city of Sarajevo. Many people wanted the Empire out of that region. When Ferdinand's car escort stopped in the street, Serbian revolutionary Gavrilo Princip approached the archduke's car and shot and killed the archduke and his wife.

The assassination set off a chain reaction. Countries began forming alliances either supporting Serbia or supporting Austro-Hungary. Austria-Hungary and Germany made up the Central Powers. Serbia, Russia, France, and Great Britain made up the Allies. War began on July 28, 1914.

### Stalemate

In the west, the Germans invaded France but the French and British pushed them back. Both sides dug trenches and fought each other for years without either side gaining an advantage. This **trench warfare** caused millions of casualties.

In the east, Russia invaded German held territory but the Germans held firm. As the war became unpopular in Russia, the **communists** took over the country in 1917 and pulled Russia out of the war.

## 2. The United States

### Neutrality

President Woodrow Wilson tried to keep America out of the war by declaring **neutrality**, not taking sides. Yet, the

United States kept trading with European powers on both sides of the conflict.

Germany, using U-boats or submarines, began attacking any ships around Britain, including U.S. ships. This angered many Americans. In 1915, a U-boat sank the British ocean liner *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. Almost 2,000 people died including 128 Americans. It was discovered that the passenger ship was carrying military weapons, however.

Over the next two years, German attacks on ships in the waters off Europe caused more American ships to sink and more Americans to die. Then, in February 1917, the British gave President Wilson an intercepted telegram sent from Germany to Mexico. In the notorious Zimmermann Telegram the Germans offered to help Mexico attack the United States to get Texas and the Southwest back. Mexico never took it seriously.

Backed by public outrage at Germany, on April 2, 1917, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war against Germany. Wilson announced: "The world must be made safe for democracy." On April 6, the Congress approved the declaration and the United States entered World War I.

### Over There

The American Expeditionary Force under the command of John "Black Jack" Pershing arrived in Europe in late 1917. The Americans made the difference in the balance of power between the Allies and the Central Powers. The Allies attacked the Germans and pushed them back. The German government collapsed and a new government took its place. On October 3, 1918, the Germans asked for peace. Both sides signed an **armistice** on November 11, essentially ending the war.



John J. “Black Jack” Pershing led American forces in the invasion of Mexico to capture Pancho Villa and led American forces in World War I. Source: Bain News Service, Publisher. *General J.J. Pershing*. Ca. 1920. Photograph. Library of Congress.

### 3. The Peace

#### Treaty of Versailles

President Wilson hoped to establish a lasting peace. He had a plan made up of fourteen points or ideas he wanted to establish. Britain and France chose to ignore many of them. For the Allies who had fought for four bloody years, they wanted to punish Germany and they did so with the Treaty of Versailles.

France and Britain redrew the map of Europe without asking anyone affected if they agreed with the new boundaries for countries. The Allies took away huge amounts of German land and made Germany pay for the war—a debt so great it destroyed the German economy and left many Germans bitter. This bitterness later caused the German people to turn to a former Austrian officer for guidance: Adolf Hitler.

#### League of Nations

One of Wilson’s goals was to create a world organization that would solve international problems before they turned into wars. This organization became known as the League of Nations

and was included in the Treaty of Versailles.

When Wilson returned to the United States to get Senate approval of the treaty, many Senators refused to ratify it. They feared the League would draw the U.S. into world conflicts. Many Americans preferred **isolationism**, staying out of the problems of other countries. When some Senators wanted to make changes to the treaty, Wilson refused to compromise. The Senate eventually rejected the treaty and the United States never joined the League of Nations.



In late 1919, Woodrow Wilson suffered a series of strokes that left him paralyzed on one side and with only partial vision. White House officials kept the public ignorant of the president’s condition. For several months, First Lady Edith Wilson secretly ran the presidency. For this, some have claimed she was the first female president of the United States. Source: *Mrs. Woodrow Wilson Edith Bolling Galt*. Between 1915-1920. Photo. Library of Congress.