CHAPTER 25

War and Revolution, 1900–1918

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. A New Century, 1900–1914
   A. An Unbalanced Balance of Power
      1. The rise of Germany’s industrial and military power threatened the European balance of power.
      2. France and Russia signed a military alliance in 1894, and although Britain was aloof, it joined a Triple Entente with them by 1907.
      3. Germany signed a pact with Austria-Hungary and Italy, the Triple Alliance (1882).
      4. To avoid a two-front war against France and Russia, the Germans developed the Schlieffen Plan to strike France quickly first, and then take on the Russians.
   B. Rivalries
      1. For the French, regaining Alsace-Lorraine was a matter of pride.
      2. Russians worried that the Ottomans were so weak that another power would seize the Bosporus and Dardanelles Straits.
      3. German and British interests came into conflict in Africa, and in the 1890s, Kaiser William II publicly supported the anti-British Boers of South Africa.
      4. In central and eastern Europe, nationalism was directed against Russia and Austria-Hungary.
      5. Germany and Russia competed economically, as they both experienced industrial growth.
      6. National rivalries generated an arms race that was good business for manufacturers, who successfully lobbied their governments against any reductions in military budgets.
   C. Nationalism in the Balkans
      1. In the First Balkan War (1912), the Balkan League of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria attacked the Ottoman territory of Kosovo and Macedonia and nearly swept the Ottomans out of Europe.
      2. The Second Balkan War (1913) broke out when Serbia, Greece, Romania, and Montenegro banded together and attacked Bulgaria, whom the Ottomans later attacked as well.
      3. The two Balkan Wars resulted in a weaker Bulgaria, a stronger Serbia, and anger in Austria-Hungary over growing Serbian power.

II. The Unexpected War, 1914
   A. The Slide into War
      1. Following the assassination of the Austrian heir Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, followed by Russia, Germany, and Great Britain (because the German Schlieffen Plan of attack went through neutral Belgium).
      2. The Allied Powers, led by France, Great Britain, and Russia, also included Serbia, Romania, and Belgium, and from 1915 Italy.
      3. The Central Powers were Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire.
   B. War Enthusiasm
1. Most Europeans greeted the outbreak of war with enthusiastic patriotism.

2. In the First Battle of the Marne, the German army fought against the French army and British Expeditionary Force, who forced the German troops to retreat and began the trench warfare stalemate on the western front.

3. On the eastern front, Russia mobilized more rapidly than expected; two Russian armies invaded East Prussia on August 15 but were decisively defeated at Tannenberg.

C. Trench Warfare

1. The stalemate of trench warfare was fought over hundreds of miles of trenches separated by a narrow no man’s land.

2. Soldiers suffered shell shock and were exposed to a sea of mud, blood, rats, vermin, artillery, machine guns, and gas attacks.

3. At the battle of Verdun, the French lost more than 350,000 men and the Germans lost 330,000; at the battle of the Somme, the Allies suffered 1 million casualties and had advanced only six miles.

D. War on the Seas and in the Air

1. To try and break the trench stalemate on land, both sides also fought on sea and in the air.

2. The British Admiralty, headed by Winston Churchill, failed to eliminate the Ottoman Empire by invading the Gallipoli peninsula.

3. The British navy continued to dominate the seas, blockading Germany’s North Sea harbors; the Battle of Jutland between the two was indecisive, as was the German attempt at starving the British into submission through unrestricted submarine warfare.

4. Airplanes and vulnerable zeppelin airships bombed civilians, blurring the line between the fighting front and the home front, but not changing the war’s outcome.

E. A World at War

1. Europe’s colonial domination of the world brought nearly every continent into the conflict; eventually, twenty-four states were drawn in on the Allied side.

2. National and ethnic groups took advantage of warfare to press their own advantages, such as the Kazakhs in Russian Central Asia and the Easter Uprising in Dublin.

3. Allied and Central Powers attempted to incite minority national groups under enemy rule.

   a) Russians and Germans each sought to gain Polish loyalty.

   b) In the Ottoman Empire, the British encouraged nationalist Arabs to revolt, but then the British and French negotiated the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 and the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which favored the Jews.

4. In the genocidal Armenian Massacre, Turks murdered up to 1.5 million Armenians.

III. Total War, 1914–1918

A. State Control and Intervention

1. All governments realized that the war threatened foodstuffs and raw materials.

   a) The German government set up a Raw Materials Department to secure raw materials vital to war industries.

   b) Russia banned the distilling of vodka to reserve millions of tons of grain to feed Russian soldiers.

   c) The British government negotiated a settlement between unions and big business to assure that war production would not be interrupted by strikes.

2. Government intervention in the economy became more radical as the war continued.

   a) Britain nationalized the railroads and introduced the first daylight savings time.

   b) To prevent hunger, governments introduced food rations and food substitutes.

   c) Military conscription was the most direct form of government intervention.

   d) To pay for war, governments raised taxes and took out loans.

B. War Propaganda
1. Using war propaganda, governments controlled what citizens knew, characterizing the enemy as vicious, cunning, and inhuman, while showing a sanitized and upbeat version of events in newsreels using half-truths and outright lies.

2. It is doubtful that the large expenditures on propaganda had any significant effect on the final outcome of the war.

3. Governments restricted civil rights, such as the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA), which started martial law in Britain, and the Espionage and Sedition Acts, which outlawed agitation against the war or criticism of the government in the United States.

C. Domestic and Family Life

1. The war shaped domestic and family life because every part of society had to “do their part.”

2. Families missed fathers at the front, while women rationed food and assumed new responsibilities as munitions workers, nurses, mail carriers, and bus conductors.

IV. Russia in Revolution, 1917

A. The March Revolution

1. The March 1917 Revolution arose from the stress of war and the lack of effective leadership.

2. Tsar Nicholas II refused to send away the healer (and suspected spy) Grigory Rasputin and foolishly went to the front, personally earning blame for Russian military failures.

3. On March 8, 1917, in Petrograd, radical women rioted for bread; soon thereafter control of the city passed over to rebels, and the tsar was forced to abdicate.

B. The Provisional Government

1. The Provisional Government (under Kerensky) proclaimed a free, liberal, and democratic Russia.

2. After March 1917, the Provisional Government was internationally recognized, but it lacked power and legitimacy at home because it depended on the Petrograd Soviet.

3. Kerensky faced serious enemies on both the left (Bolshevik coup attempt in July) and the right (coup attempt by general Kornilov in September).

C. The November Revolution

1. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, seized power in the November Revolution because no one defended Kerensky and, like the tsar’s regime, the Provisional Government collapsed.

2. The Bolsheviks proclaimed Russia the first socialist state in history and issued decrees for peace, nationalized land for peasants, established worker control of factories, and affirmed equal rights.

3. They embarrassed the Allies by publishing secret treaties concerning promises about postwar settlements.

4. The Bolsheviks (Reds) formed a secret police (the Cheka) to fight internal enemies, and in 1920, they won the Russian Civil War against their enemies, the Whites, whose tsar was executed in July 1918.

V. The Turning of the Tide, 1917–1918

A. War Exhaustion

1. By 1917, the war enthusiasm was dead, and the peace movement gained momentum; calls for peace came from radical socialists, mainstream leaders like Woodrow Wilson, and the pope.

2. In Britain, France, and Germany, workers went on strike, and mutinies of French soldiers shook the military leadership.

3. Amid general war weariness, Germany’s decisive victory at Caporetto, combined with Russia’s collapse, led Germany to believe the war would end favorably, but then the United States joined the Allies.

B. The Entry of the United States
1. Despite his campaign slogan, “He kept us out of war,” U.S. president Woodrow Wilson brought the United States into the war on April 2, 1917.
2. American public opinion was altered by the Zimmermann telegram (January 1917), which asked the Mexicans for support against the United States, and the German announcement of their resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare (February 1917).
3. American loans and credits opened up fully for the Allied Powers, American factories retooled for war production, and more than 20 million men registered for military service.

C. German Victory over Russia
1. The Bolsheviks pulled Russia out of the war, agreeing to German victory in March 1918 and signing the harsh Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which signed away over a quarter of Russia’s prewar population and arable land as well as over half its coal fields and iron manufacturing.
2. The Soviets moved the Russian capital to Moscow from Petrograd.

D. German Defeat
1. In January 1918, Wilson issued his Fourteen Points, a plan of future peace based on the liberal principles of freedom, justice, and free trade; this opened up the possibility of peace negotiations.
2. When German major offensives on the western front failed in the spring of 1918, the German High Command recognized that they had lost the war.
3. Thinking that a civilian government could win milder terms from the Allies, and seeking to evade their own responsibility for the defeat, the military leadership persuaded the Kaiser to abdicate and turn power over to civilians.
4. Under the armistice agreement, the Germans promised to withdraw from Belgium, return Alsace-Lorraine to France, surrender submarines and rail stock, destroy artillery, release Allied prisoners of war, and pay for war damages.
5. Though the German generals lost the war, propaganda at home predicted victory, so ordinary Germans were utterly shocked when the Kaiser left and the new civilian government sued for peace.
6. The war ended November 11, 1918, with central and eastern Europe in chaos.

E. End of the European Era
1. The First World War marked the end of the European Era.
2. More than 8 million Europeans died, a worldwide influenza epidemic (1918–1919) killed forty million more, and four empires (German, Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg) collapsed.
3. The center of international finance shifted from London to New York as the American economy boomed; Japan also prospered during the war.
4. The European psyche suffered disorientation, depression, and rage, while their optimism about the future and notions of human progress became hollow.