

# America Between the World Wars

Class 1

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# Why Is This Important?

- The era between America's entry into World War I and America's entry into World War II is an important era – much that defines our modern world and modern America had its roots in this era
- Many of you had parents and/or grandparents who came of age and lived through this era
  - Understanding the world they lived in will help us understand them

# Some of the Innovations that Originated Between WWI and WWII

Hertz Rent-a-Car	Aerosol cans	Ballpoint pens
Daylight Saving Time	Academy Awards (Oscars)	Electronic computer
American Legion	Radar	Electron microscope
United Parcel Service	Scotch tape	<i>Superman</i>
Thompson sub-machine gun	Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade	Birdseye Frozen foods
National Football League	Drive-in movies	<i>Bugs Bunny</i>
Radio Broadcasting	<i>Time &amp; Newsweek</i>	Chanel #5
Color & Sound Motion Pictures	Xerox copies	Loudspeakers
Band-Aids	Gallop Poll	Walt Disney cartoons
Television	Paperback books	"The Big Bang Theory"
35mm cameras	Nylon	Radio astronomy
Monopoly	Canned beer	FM radio

# What We Will Cover Today

- Impacts of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles
  - Economic, Social & Political Effects
    - Financial
    - Agricultural
    - Industrial
    - Political
    - Other
  - Impacts of the Russian Revolution
  - The Influenza Pandemic
  - Immigration Restriction
- Woodrow Wilson's Four Great Mistakes
- Begin discussion of Prohibition

# Effects of World War I

- You can't understand the 1920s and 1930s without understand the impact of WWI
- Most of what happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had its roots in WWI and the resulting peace treaties
  - The Russian Revolution
  - The Great Depression
  - World War II
  - The Cold War
  - Vietnam
  - The Arab-Israeli Wars
  - The two U.S. wars with Iraq

# The Russian Revolution -1

- The war placed a major strain on the Russian economy
  - Decline in civilian production
  - Rampant inflation, especially in the cities
    - Inadequate railroad infrastructure
  - The Ottoman Empire cut Russia off from the Western Allies
    - Prevented the Allies from shipping supplies to Russia
    - Led to the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign
      - Made Kamal Ataturk and unmade Winston Churchill
      - Fostered a sense of Turkish, Australian, and New Zealand identity

# The Russian Revolution - 2

- Decline of the Russian economy led to the “February” Revolution
- The failures of the Provisional Government led to the “October” Bolshevik coup
- Intermediate result: Russian Civil War
- End Result: A Communist Russia

# Effects of a Communist Russia

- Split the World Socialist movement into a Communist wing and a Democratic Socialist wing.
  - Founding of the American Communist Party as a response to the events in Russia
- The Communist Revolution in Russia and the Founding of the American Communist Party Led to:
  - The “Red Scare” in the U.S. &
  - A fear of Communist revolution among both political elites and the political Right in Europe



# Impact of the US Involvement in WWI

- US involvement in WWI had impacts in many different areas
  - Financial
  - Agricultural
  - Industrial
  - Political
  - Other

# Financial Impact of WWI

- Sizable increase in the national debt
  - Led to postwar policies of cutting federal govt expenditures
- Income Tax becomes the dominant mode of taxation
- Mass marketing of war bonds as both an investment and as a means of showing one's patriotism
  - Made a large proportion of the American public bondholders

# Agricultural Impact of WWI - 1

- European food production declined as agricultural manpower was drafted into military service
  - Led U.S. farmers to vastly expand agricultural production
    - Farmers took on mortgages to purchase land and to mechanize agricultural production
    - Mechanization and chemical fertilizers led to a vast increase in productivity

# Agricultural Impact of WWI - 2

- A Depressed agricultural economy in the 1920s due to:
  - Post-war return of European agriculture to normal levels of production
  - The increased productivity and expanded output of American agriculture which led to:
    - Crop surpluses,
    - Low farm prices
    - Farmer agitation for measures that would restore parity

# Industrial Impact of WWI - 1

- Created a big demand for munitions, steel, motor vehicles, communications equipment, and ships
  - Turned DuPont into a chemical-industrial giant
- Created a planned economy run largely by big business interests via the Federal Government's War Industries Board (WIB)
  - WIB had over 60 commodity divisions relating to specific industries that:
    - Were largely staffed by people from the industry
    - Were interwoven with the supply departments of the Army, Navy, other Federal agencies, and even the Allies

# Industrial Impact of WWI - 2

- WIB Conservation Division standardized a whole host of products in terms of size, color, versions, and variety
  - E.g. Sizes, colors, & varieties of clothing; the shaping and sizes of drill bits & screw threads
- Prior to WWI, each company and industry had determined its own standards
  - 250 types of plow models
  - 755 types of drills

# Industrial Impact of WWI – 3

- WIB Price-Fixing Committee was responsible for:
  - Setting prices to control inflation
  - Guaranteeing a ‘fair profit’ to the producers in order to stabilize the market

# Industrial Impact of WWI - 4

- The Food Administration
  - Headed by Herbert Hoover
  - Persuaded Americans to eat fish and vegetables in place of wheat and meat
    - Promoted “wheatless’ and ‘meatless’ days
      - Popularized spaghetti (pasta with tomato sauce) as both a meat strecher and as a dish for meatless days
  - Standardized food sizes & portions
    - Standardized the size of bread loaves



# Industrial Impact of WWI – 5

- Provided a model
  - For big business, a model of what could be achieved by national coordination and cartelization
  - For liberal intellectuals, a model that was
    - An alternative to both laissez-faire capitalism and Soviet communism
    - A way of transcending the weaknesses and social conflicts of both of the above
  - For the FDR Administration, a model for many New Deal agencies and programs

# Political Impact of WWI - 1

- Wilson created the Committee on Public Information headed by George Creel (CPI) to create the war spirit necessary to fight the war
  - Led to an upsurge of anti-German hysteria
    - Based on propaganda demonizing everything German
  - Pioneered in the use of media celebrities to propagandize and sell war bonds
- Erosion of civil liberties
  - Suppression of anti-war groups
  - Suppression of the American Socialist Party

# Political Impact of WWI - 2

- Made possible the enactment of Prohibition
  - Supporters of Prohibition exploited the belief that drink impeded industrial productivity and soldierly fighting ability
  - The Anti-Saloon League successfully linked liquor to disloyalty and beer-drinking with sympathy to the kaiser and his Huns
- Led to the Post-war “Red scare”
  - The Russian Revolution and the founding of the American Communist Party led to a fear that revolution could happen here
  - This fear was intensified by the “100% Americanism” promoted by the war and the Creel Committee

## Political Impact of WWI – 3

- Anti-German hysteria (and the Red Scare) in turn led to:
  - A stress on 100% Americanism
  - Immigration Restriction
    - Immigration Act of 1917
    - Emergency Quota Act of 1921
    - Immigration Act of 1924 (National Origins Act)

# Immigration Restriction Acts

- Immigration Act of 1917
  - Barred entry to immigrants from most of Asia
  - Barred many categories of “undesirables”
  - Barred immigrants age 16 and above who were illiterate
- Immigration Act of 1921
  - Limited the annual number of immigrants from each country to 3% of the number of persons from that country living in the U.S. in 1910

# Immigration Restriction Acts -2

- Asian Exclusion Act of 1924
  - Barred immigration from an Asia-Pacific triangle from Japan, China, Korea, India, and Southeast Asia
  - Barred immigration of any persons ineligible for naturalization
    - Non-whites were not deemed eligible for naturalization
- Provoked an official diplomatic protest from Japan

# Immigration Restriction Acts -3

- National Origins Act of 1924
  - Temporarily limited the annual number of immigrants
  - After July 1, 1927 (later postponed to July 1, 1929)
    - Imposed a total annual quota of 150,000 with the annual quota for any country or nationality being proportional to their proportion of the U.S. population in 1920
    - Gave non-quota status to wives and unmarried children of U.S. citizens and natives of Western Hemisphere countries

# Other Impacts of WWI -1

- Airplane
- Gave Hollywood dominance in the motion picture industry
- Consumer products
  - Safety razors
  - Wrist watches
  - Kotex
  - Cigarettes



# Other Impacts of WWI – 2

- Spread Jazz from New Orleans to the cities of the North
- Created New Standards of What Was Considered to be Attractive
  - From full-bodied to slim
  - From Gibson Girl to Flapper
- Created the Conditions for the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1917-1919

# The Influenza Pandemic - 1

- Started on a pig farm in Haskell County Iowa
- Two events led to the virus becoming a pandemic:
  - Annual Iowa Cedar Rapids Swine Show in September 1917, and
  - Large-scale induction of Iowa farm boys at Fort Funston
- First wave in the spring and summer of 1918
  - Unlike most flu, which have U-shaped death graphs, this flu had a W-shaped graph

# The Influenza Pandemic – 2

- Flu spread from Camp Funston to other Army training camps and to Europe thanks to crowded barracks, sealed troop ships, and the fetid trenches of the Western Front
- Called “Spanish Flu” since neutral Spain did not censor news accounts of the flu
- Second (and most lethal) wave first appeared in September 1918 at Camp Devens MA

# The Influenza Pandemic – 3

- Second wave virus singled out 20- and 30-year olds
  - By the end of October 1918, 1 in 5 U.S. soldiers had been infected
- Virus provoked a hyper immune response which flooded the lungs with fluid
  - This allowed secondary bacterial infections (most commonly pneumonia) to deliver the fatal blow

# The Influenza Pandemic - 4

- An estimated 50 million people died of the flu
  - This included 550,000 Americans
  - Roughly half who died were people in their 20s and 30s
    - May have killed as many as 8%-10% of the people in the 20s-30s age group
  - In many American cities, over half the population was infected

# The Influenza Pandemic – 5

- WWI contributed to the Flu Pandemic in several ways:
  - Providing an initial funnel of infection at Fort Funston
  - Creating a malnourished population in Europe
  - By channeling more and more doctors and nurses into military-related medicine, it caused a deterioration of civilian medical care

# Other Impacts of WWI – 3

- Created a potential market for ham and broadcast radio
  - Large number of wartime radio operators
- American Legion and other veterans organizations
- Tomb of the unknown soldier
- Armistice Day (November 11<sup>th</sup>) as a national holiday
  - Later renamed Veterans' Day

# Four Key Wilson Decisions - 1

- The decision to turn the Paris peace negotiations into an extended summit
  - Led Wilson to ignore the problems of war-related inflation and postwar demobilization
    - This was to have deep implications for the Democrats in the 1920 election
  - Kept Wilson out of touch with what was going on in the U.S.



# Four Key Wilson Decisions – 2

- The decision to accept a flawed treaty in order to win foreign acceptance of the League of Nations
  - Treaty contained provisions and omissions that
    - Were politically unpalatable to the U.S. Senate
    - Were to cause future trouble
- The refusal to accept any changes or reservations in the Treaty to win Republican support

# Four Key Wilson Decisions - 3

- The Decision not to resign the Presidency after his stroke
  - Led to the U.S. being governed by Wilson's wife
    - This meant that the problems of postwar inflation, demobilization, and recession were totally ignored
  - Let the Lodge Republicans dominate the debate over ratification of the Versailles Treaty
    - This sapped support for the Treaty and led to its eventual defeat

# Impact of the Treaty of Versailles

- Led to great resentment in Germany
  - Signing the Versailles “diktat” weakened the Weimar Republic, giving the German Right (and the Nazis) a tool with which to attack the Republic
- Created instability in Eastern Europe
  - Created weak and unstable states
  - Strengthened Germany strategically
  - Constituted a peace settlement that neither Germany nor Soviet Russia supported

# Impact of Failed Ratification

- Greatly weakened the League of Nations
- Fostered a sense of disillusionment
  - With World War I and its results
  - With U.S. participation in the war
  - With U.S. engagement with the world
- This in turn fostered a spirit of isolationism that was reflected in restrictive immigration laws, high tariffs, and the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s