

Chapter 7 Lesson 3

The western front quickly became a stalemate, as both sides dug trenches for shelter. The trenches stretched across France from the English Channel to Switzerland. The western front was trapped in **trench warfare** (fighting from ditches protected by barbed wire). Neither side significantly changed positions for years. The eastern front was a totally different type of war. The eastern front was one of mobility not trenches. The Russian army moved into Germany quickly but was defeated in two major battles. (Battle of Tannenberg and Battle of Masurian Lakes) The Russians were no longer a significant threat to Germany.

Trench and Air Warfare and other new technologies:

By 1916, the trenches dug in 1914 had become elaborate defense systems.

Both the French and the Germans had hundreds of miles of trenches. Each trench was protected by barbed wire, concrete machine gun nests and heavy artillery. Troops lived in the trenches separated from the enemy by a strip called no man's land. The trenches were difficult to live in and fight from. They were very unsanitary and rats roamed freely. Most of the soldiers had lice and many suffered from trench related health issues such as trench foot.

Trench warfare was difficult for the leadership of the military. It was not the type of battle that they and their men had trained for. Military leaders would sometimes request that the men mount an offensive charge against the enemy's trench. This was called going over the top. It usually began with an artillery barrage, and then the soldiers would climb out of their trenches and try to cross no man's land. These efforts were rarely successful. The approaching soldiers were often easy targets for machine gunners. Millions of soldiers died in the years of 1916 and 1917, seeking that one chance to get to the enemy. In Verdun, France, 700,000 men lost their lives in a 10 month period trying to gain just a few miles of land.

WWI had turned into a **war of attrition** (a war fought based on the concept of wearing down the enemy with constant attacks and heavy losses).

By the end of 1915, planes had begun to see some use in the war. In the beginning they were used to spot targets but not to attack. Later, they were used to attack ground targets. As planes increased in use, there were fights for control of the air space. This led to pilots shooting at each other with handguns from the cockpit. In time machine guns were mounted on the noses of the planes. French planes had basic interrupter gear to protect the blades of the propeller. After a French plane was captured by the Germans in 1915, the Germans created the new and improved interrupter gear, which timed the machine gun blast to the propellers timing. This made planes much more dangerous weapons than they had previously been. Battles in the air between planes were called dogfights. Planes were also used to drop small bombs on the enemy.

The Germans also used zeppelins in warfare. They were used to bomb targets. They caused little damage but great amounts of fear. The zeppelins became less useful once the Allied Powers learned

that the hydrogen gas in them would explode when hit by gunfire. Poison gases were used by the Germans in 1915 and the Allies used them shortly thereafter. Chlorine gas was the first to be used but was easily detected and dealt with. The next poison gas used was phosgene either alone or in combination with chlorine. This was a much more deadly gas than chlorine. In 1917, the Germans introduced mustard gas, which is a vesicant or blistering agent. Although it is not an effective killing agent, it was effective in disrupting the enemy and when it did cause death, it was quite painful.

The Americans Arrive:

The Americans were not experienced however they were fresh and enthusiastic as they entered the war. In 1917-1918, the Americans started to win the war at sea through the use of convoys. Convoys allowed for better protection of ships as they moved across the Atlantic and also allowed for the rescue of survivors if a ship was sunk.

Russia leaves the War:

As America is entering the war, the Russians are exiting the war. Russia was unprepared for WWI. They had lost to the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and had not advanced significantly since that time. Russia had no competent military leaders and in WWI Czar Nicholas II decided to lead the armed forces himself. Russia was so behind industrially, that they were unable to produce the necessary weapons for training or war. Because of these issues, it is not surprising that millions of Russians either died or were wounded in the first two years of the war. By 1917, the will to fight had disappeared.

By March of 1917, Russia was in the midst of great upheaval. There was a series of strikes, some led by women. These strikes were bread strikes. The price of bread had jumped and there were bread shortages. The women were upset about their starving children and working 12 hour days, followed by hours in a bread line (sometimes to find no bread). Soon the strikes were shutting down factories. Nicholas demanded that his soldiers break up the protests even if it required shooting the protestors. The soldiers eventually joined the protests. The Duma met and they set up a provisional government and advised Nicholas to abdicate. He did so on March 15, 1917. The provisional government made the decision to carry on with WWI.

During 1917, the Bolsheviks grew in numbers and power. On November 6th, they seized the power from the provisional government. The power was handed to the Russian Congress of the Soviets but it really rested in the hands of a small committee headed by Lenin. The Bolsheviks renamed themselves the Communists. Lenin had to make a difficult decision. He decided to remove Russia from WWI. On March 3, 1918 he signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany. Russia gave up western Poland, Ukraine, Finland and the Baltic provinces.

Americans enter combat:

When the Americans enter the war, the French want to integrate the two forces together, General Pershing refuses. Later the African American unit, the 93rd Infantry Division, is turned over to French control.

1917 was not a good year for the Allies but America's entry into the war gave the Allies a needed boost. For the Germans, the withdrawal of Russia, offered the hope that the war would quickly come to an end. Based on this change and the concern about the Americans entering the war, German leadership (General Ludendorff) decided to throw everything into one grand offensive battle on the western front. The German attack started in March of 1918 and moved toward Paris. The American forces launched their first major offensive in late May and quickly capture a village and begin to block the path of the Germans toward Paris. The Germans were stopped at the Second Battle of the Marne, on July 18. The Allies pushed Germany back over the Marne and began an advance on Germany. This advance was bolstered by the influx of American troops. Throughout September the Americans defeated the Germans in the area around the Argonne Forest. By September of 1918, Ludendorff informs the German leadership that the war is lost. By late October to early November, the Americans had created a huge hole in the German lines and the Germans began to retreat.

The Allies refused to make peace with the autocratic government of the Kaiser. In November, groups of soldiers and workers began to form and take over government offices. On November 9, the Kaiser left Germany. The Social Democrats, led by Friedrich Ebert, formed a democratic republic and on November 11, 1918 signed an armistice agreement to end the war.

The Peace:

In January of 1919, the Allies met in Paris to work out the final settlement of WWI. President Woodrow Wilson (US) proposed a peace based on open diplomacy. His proposal is known as the Fourteen Points.

The Fourteen Points were as follows:

- 1) Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at,...after which...diplomacy shall proceed...frankly and in public view.
- 2) Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas...alike in peace and in war...
- 3) The removal...of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all nations consenting to the peace...
- 4) Adequate guarantees...that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
- 5) A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims
- 6) The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will...assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing...
- 7) Belgium...must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations.
- 8) All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine...should be righted...
- 9) A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality

- 10) The peoples of Austria-Hungary...should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development
- 11) Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro should be evacuated, occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined...along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality
- 12) The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty...
- 13) An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputable Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea...
- 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

Wilson's plan promoted cooperation and democracy but he soon discovered that other nations were driven by more practical motives.

The Paris Peace Conference:

One of the first issues that arose at the Paris Peace was that secret agreements concerning territorial gains conflicted with Wilson's proposals of self-determination. Each Allied nation had their own agenda. GB was motivated by the desire to make Germany pay for the war. France was motivated by a need for national security and protection from future German aggression. France wanted Germany to pay, to give up all weapons and they wanted a buffer state to be created between the two countries.

The major decisions were made by the Big Three. Wilson (US), Clemenceau (France) and Lloyd George (GB). Germany was not allowed to participate and Russia was in the throes of a civil war. The Big Three quarreled but finally did compromise. The League of Nations was approved as an international peacekeeping organization. In return Wilson compromised on territorial arrangements.

The Treaty of Versailles:

The final peace settlement contained five separate treaties with the defeated nations. The Treaty of Versailles with Germany was the most significant. It was considered by the Germans to be a harsh peace. Germany was required to take responsibility for the war in the War Guilt Clause and was required to pay reparations (about 33 billion). They also had to give up territory to Poland and to France (Alsace-Lorraine). Germany was required to reduce its military forces and eliminate the air force. A demilitarized zone was created along the Rhine River as a buffer between Germany and France.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ottoman Empire and the German Empire were broken apart and new nations were created. Many of these new nations consisted of mainly one major ethnic group, however Poland and Czechoslovakia both contained large numbers of ethnic Germans. Germany was also split into two pieces to give Poland access to the Baltic Sea. The Treaty ignored the concept of freedom of the seas, and fair settlement of colonial concerns. None of the colonial possessions in Africa or Asia gained independence. Great Britain, France and Japan all gained new colonial possessions.

President Wilson was confident that Americans would support the treaty but many were opposed to the League of Nations. Wilson refused to compromise on the treaty and the Senate refused to approve it. After Wilson left office, in 1921, the United States negotiated separate treaties with each of the Central Powers. Although the League of Nations did exist, it did so without American involvement.

Country	Total Mobilized Forces	Killed	Wounded	Prisoners and Missing	Total Casualties	Casualties as % of Forces
<i>ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED POWERS</i>						
Russia	12,000,000	1,700,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,150,000	76.3
British Empire	8,904,467	908,371	2,090,212	191,652	3,190,235	35.8
France	8,410,000	1,357,800	4,266,000	537,000	6,160,800	73.3
Italy	5,615,000	650,000	947,000	600,000	2,197,000	39.1
United States	4,355,000	116,516	204,002	4,500	323,018	7.1
Japan	800,000	300	907	3	1,210	0.2
Romania	750,000	335,706	120,000	80,000	535,706	71.4
Serbia	707,343	45,000	133,148	152,958	331,106	46.8
Belgium	267,000	13,716	44,686	34,659	93,061	34.9
Greece	230,000	5,000	21,000	1,000	27,000	11.7
Portugal	100,000	7,222	13,751	12,318	33,291	33.3
Montenegro	50,000	3,000	10,000	7,000	20,000	40.0
TOTAL	42,188,810	5,142,631	12,800,706	4,121,090	22,062,427	52.3
<i>ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED POWERS</i>						
Germany	11,000,000	1,773,700	4,216,058	1,152,800	7,142,558	64.9
Austria-Hungary	7,800,000	1,200,000	3,620,000	2,200,000	7,020,000	90.0
Turkey	2,850,000	325,000	400,000	250,000	975,000	34.2
Bulgaria	1,200,000	87,500	152,390	27,029	266,919	22.2
TOTAL	22,850,000	3,386,200	8,388,448	3,629,829	15,404,477	67.4
GRAND TOTAL	65,038,810	8,528,831	21,189,154	7,750,919	37,466,904	57.5