23

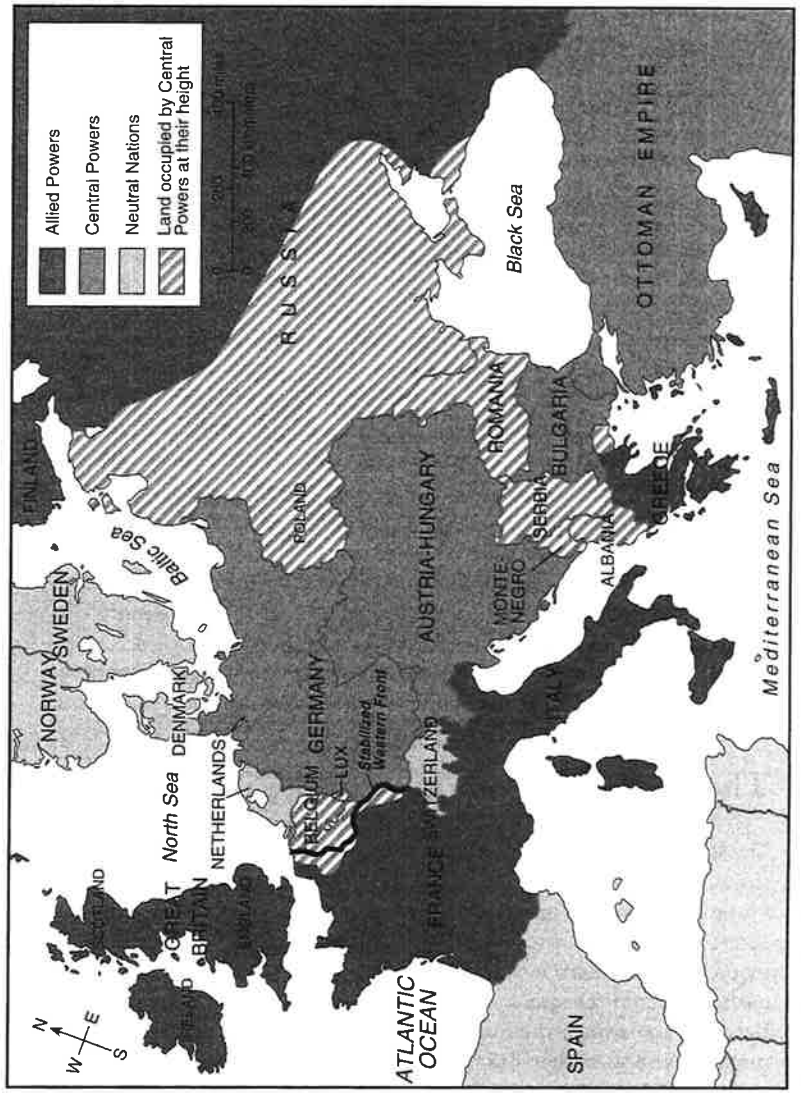
World War I and Its Consequences

Europe and the World, 1914–1920

■ HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Europe that so many non-European intellectuals sought to imitate or reject between 1880 and 1920 came very close to self-destructing between 1914 and 1918, and bringing many of the world's peoples from Asia, Africa, and the Americas down with it. The orgy of bloodletting, then known as the "Great War," put seventy million men in uniform, of whom ten million were killed and twenty million were wounded. Most of the soldiers were Western European, though Russia contributed more soldiers than France or Germany, while Japan enlisted as many as the Austro-Hungarian Empire that began the war. Enlisted men also came from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the colonies: India, French West Africa, and German East Africa, among others. The majority of soldiers were killed in Europe, especially along the German Western Front—four hundred miles of trenches that spanned from Switzerland to the English Channel, across Belgium and France. But battles were also fought along the borders of German, French, and English colonies in Africa, and there were high Australian casualties on the coast of Gallipoli in Ottoman Turkey.

The selections in this chapter focus on the lives and deaths of the soldiers, as well as the efforts of some of their political leaders to redefine the world around them. We examine the experiences of soldiers and how the war changed the lives of those who survived its devastating toll. We compare the accounts of those who fought on both sides of the great divide. Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, joined by the Ottoman Empire, formed an alliance called the Central Powers (see Map 23.1). In opposition, England, France, and Russia,



Map 23.1 Allied Powers and Central Powers in World War I.

the Allied Powers, were later joined by Italy, Greece, Japan, and the United States. We compare views across the generational divide as well as from the trenches and government offices.

■ THINKING HISTORICALLY

Understanding Causes and Consequences

From 1914 to 1920, the greatest divide was the war itself. It marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. Few events have left the participants with such a profound sense of fundamental change. And so our study of the war is an appropriate place to ask two of the universal questions of major historical change: What caused it? What were the consequences?

The *causes* are those events or forces that came before; the *consequences* are the results, what the war itself prompted to occur. Thus, causes and consequences are part of the same continuum. Still, we must remember that not everything that happened before the war was a cause of the war. Similarly, not everything that happened afterward was a result of the war.

In this chapter we explore specific ideas about cause and consequence. Our goal is not to compile a definitive list of either but, rather, to explore some of the ways that historians and thoughtful readers can make sense of the past.

1

The "Willy-Nicky" Telegrams, 1914

The immediate cause of the Great War was the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on his visit to the Bosnian city of Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. The assassin was a Bosnian Serb who was acting as part of a Bosnian nationalist group called "Young Bosnia," with help from recently independent Serbia, in an effort to detach Bosnia from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The damage might have ended there if it were not for the alliances that knit

The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar: Copied from Government Archives in Petrograd, and Brought from Russia by Isaac Don Levine, ed. Neil Grant (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920).

Europe into competing camps, which were already armed and expecting a fight. Serbia was allied with Russia, which was, in turn, allied with England and France. Austria-Hungary was allied with Germany, as well as with Italy (briefly) and the Ottoman Empire. On July 28, 1914 the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia.

The nationalist sentiment percolating up through national armies, propaganda machines, and political parties throughout Europe might have been managed by its array of kings and emperors who had unusually international backgrounds and actually were members of the same extended family. But it was not managed. The ruling families of Europe contained numerous first cousins who were all grandchildren of England's Queen Victoria. Among them were Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Czar Nicholas II of Russia. This selection contains the telegrams sent between Wilhelm II and Nicholas II (Willy and Nicky) from July 29 to August 1, 1914. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What do they tell you about the origins of World War I? How might the war have been avoided?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

This selection directs our attention to the short-term or immediate causes of the war. It also raises the question of the importance of specific individuals. Historians often disagree about the relative importance of individuals as opposed to social forces in history. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: Do either of these individuals seem more prone to go to war? What does this selection lead you to think about the importance of the individual in history?

Russian Tsar Nicholas II to German Kaiser Wilhelm II

29 July 1914, 1 a.m.
Peter's Court Palais
Sa Majesté l'Empereur
Neues Palais

Am glad you are back. In this serious moment, I appeal to you to help me. An ignoble war has been declared to a weak country. The indignation in Russia shared fully by me is enormous. I foresee that very soon I shall be overwhelmed by the pressure forced upon me and be forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war. To try and avoid such a calamity as a European war I beg you in the name of our old friendship to do what you can to stop your allies from going too far.

Kaiser to Tsar

29 July 1914, 1.45 a.m. (this and the previous telegraph crossed)
It is with the gravest concern that I hear of the impression which the action of Austria against Serbia is creating in your country.

The unscrupulous agitation that has been going on in Serbia for years has resulted in the outrageous crime, to which Archduke Francis Ferdinand fell a victim. The spirit that led Serbians to murder their own king and his wife still dominates the country.

You will doubtless agree with me that we both, you and me, have a common interest as well as all Sovereigns to insist that all the persons morally responsible for the dastardly murder should receive their deserved punishment. In this case politics plays no part at all.

On the other hand, I fully understand how difficult it is for you and your Government to face the drift of your public opinion. Therefore, with regard to the hearty and tender friendship which binds us both from long ago with firm ties, I am exerting my utmost influence to induce the Austrians to deal straightly to arrive to a satisfactory understanding with you. I confidently hope that you will help me in my efforts to smooth over difficulties that may still arise.

Your very sincere and devoted friend and cousin
Willy

Kaiser to Tsar

29 July 1914, 6.30 p.m.
Berlin

I received your telegram and share your wish that peace should be maintained.

But as I told you in my first telegram, I cannot consider Austria's action against Servia an "ignoble" war. Austria knows by experience that Servian promises on paper are wholly unreliable. I understand its action must be judged as trending to get full guarantee that the Servian promises shall become real facts. This my reasoning is borne out by the statement of the Austrian cabinet that Austria does not want to make any territorial conquests at the expense of Servia.

I therefore suggest that it would be quite possible for Russia to remain a spectator of the austro-servian conflict without involving Europe in the most horrible war she ever witnessed. I think a direct understanding between your Government and Vienna possible and desirable, and as I already telegraphed to you, my Government is continuing its exercises to promote it.

Of course military measures on the part of Russia would be looked upon by Austria as a calamity we both wish to avoid and jeopardize my position as mediator which I readily accepted on your appeal to my friendship and my help.

Willy

Tsar to Kaiser

29 July 1914, 8.20 p.m.
Peter's Court Palace

Thanks for your telegram conciliatory and friendly. Whereas official message presented today by your ambassador to my minister was conveyed in a very different tone. Beg you to explain this divergency! It would be right to give over the Austro-servian problem to the Hague conference. Trust in your wisdom and friendship.

Your loving Nicky

Tsar to Kaiser

30 July 1914, 1.20 a.m.
Peter's Court Palais

Thank you heartily for your quick answer. Am sending Tatischev this evening with instructions.

The military measures which have now come into force were decided five days ago for reasons of defence on account of Austria's preparations.

I hope from all my heart that these measures won't in any way interfere with your part as mediator which I greatly value. We need your strong pressure on Austria to come to an understanding with us.

Nicky

Kaiser to Tsar

30 July 1914, 1.20 a.m.
Berlin

Best thanks for telegram. It is quite out of the question that my ambassador's language could have been in contradiction with the tenor of my telegram. Count Pourtalès was instructed to draw the attention of your government to the danger & grave consequences involved by a mobilisation; I said the same in my telegram to you. Austria has only mobilised

against Servia & only a part of her army. If, as it is now the case, according to the communication by you & your Government, Russia mobilises against Austria, my rôle as mediator you kindly intrusted me with, & which I accepted at you[r] express prayer, will be endangered if not ruined. The whole weight of the decision lies solely on you[r] shoulders now, who have to bear the responsibility for Peace or War.

Willy

Kaiser to Tsar

31 July 1914
Berlin

On your appeal to my friendship and your call for assistance began to mediate between your and the austro-hungarian Government. While this action was proceeding your troops were mobilised against Austro-Hungary, my ally. [T]hereby, as I have already pointed out to you, my mediation has been made almost illusory.

I have nevertheless continued my action.

I now receive authentic news of serious preparations for war on my Eastern frontier. Responsibility for the safety of my empire forces preventive measures of defence upon me. In my endeavours to maintain the peace of the world I have gone to the utmost limit possible. The responsibility for the disaster which is now threatening the whole civilised world will not be laid at my door. In this moment it still lies in your power to avert it. Nobody is threatening the honour or power of Russia who can well afford to await the result of my mediation. My friendship for you and your empire, transmitted to me by my grandfather on his deathbed has always been sacred to me and I have honestly often backed up Russia when she was in serious trouble especially in her last war.

The peace of Europe may still be maintained by you, if Russia will agree to stop the milit. measures which must threaten Germany and Austro-Hungary.

Willy

Tsar to Kaiser

31 July 1914 (this and the previous telegram crossed)
Petersburg, Palace
Sa Majesté l'Empereur, Neues Palais

I thank you heartily for your mediation which begins to give one hope that all may yet end peacefully.

It is *technically* impossible to stop our military preparations which were obligatory owing to Austria's mobilisation. We are far from wishing war. As long as the negotiations with Austria on Servia's account are taking place my troops shall not make any provocative action. I give you my solemn word for this. I put all my trust in God's mercy and hope in your successful mediation in Vienna for the welfare of our countries and for the peace of Europe.

Your affectionate,
Nicky

Tsar to Kaiser

1 August 1914
Peter's Court, Palace
Sa Majesté l'Empereur
Berlin

I received your telegram. Understand you are obliged to mobilise but wish to have the same guarantee from you as I gave you, that these measures do not mean war and that we shall continue negotiating for the benefit of our countries and universal peace dear to all our hearts. Our long proved friendship must succeed, with God's help, in avoiding bloodshed. Anxiously, full of confidence await your answer.

Nicky

Kaiser to Tsar

1 August 1914
Berlin

Thanks for your telegram. I yesterday pointed out to your government the way by which alone war may be avoided.

Although I requested an answer for noon today, no telegram from my ambassador conveying an answer from your Government has reached me as yet. I therefore have been obliged to mobilise my army.

Immediate affirmative clear and unmistakable answer from your government is the only way to avoid endless misery. Until I have received this answer alas, I am unable to discuss the subject of your telegram. As a matter of fact I must request you to immediatly [sic] order your troops on no account to commit the slightest act of trespassing over our frontiers.

Willy

World War I Propaganda Posters, 1915–1918

Posters were the communication medium of the First World War. In an age when governments had still not taught most people how to read but increasingly needed their consent or compliance, images often spoke louder than words, but those images had to be *persuasive*.

The American poster from 1917 and the German poster from 1915–1916 (Figures 23.1 and 23.2) implore men to enlist in the army; the Canadian poster (Figure 23.3) encourages people to buy war

Figure 23.1 Recruiting poster for U.S. Army, 1917.
Source: Library of Congress, 3g03859.

Figure 23.2 Recruiting poster for German Army, 1915–1916.
Source: Library of Congress, 3g11546.

bonds. What do you think accounts for the similar graphic style used in these three posters? How effective do you think the posters were, and why?

Another strategy for promoting loyalty, patriotism, and support for a war that was lasting far longer than anyone had anticipated was to demonize or ridicule the enemy. What feelings does the U.S. anti-German poster from 1917–1918 (Figure 23.4) attempt to provoke in viewers, and how does the scene shown achieve this?

Figure 23.3 Canadian War Bond poster, 1917–18.
Source: Swim Ink 2, LLC/Corbis via Getty Images

Women were viewed in various ways: damsels in distress in 23.4, critical workers in 23.5, and victims with children in 23.6 and 23.7. Were they needed as the equals of men during the war, but as mainly mothers when it was over?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

When war broke out overseas in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson declared it a European matter that had nothing to do with the

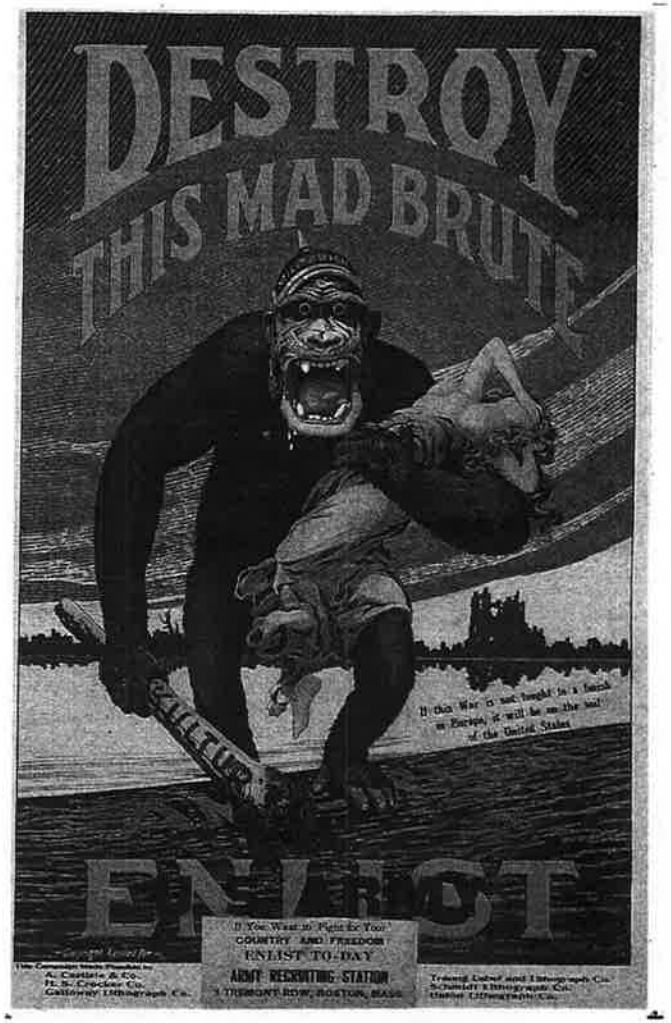


Figure 23.4 Propaganda poster, United States, 1917–1918.
Source: Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ds-03216.

United States, and most Americans agreed. Indeed, the United States did not join the war and throw its crucial weight behind the Allied Powers until April 1917. What role do you think propaganda such as Figure 23.4 played in swaying public opinion? This and the other posters illustrate both sides' efforts to promote and sustain the cause of war. What do they tell you about the causes of the war? What do they tell you about the consequences?

Figure 23.5 British poster recruiting women to munitions jobs, 1916.
Source: Hulton-Deutsch/Corbis via Getty Images

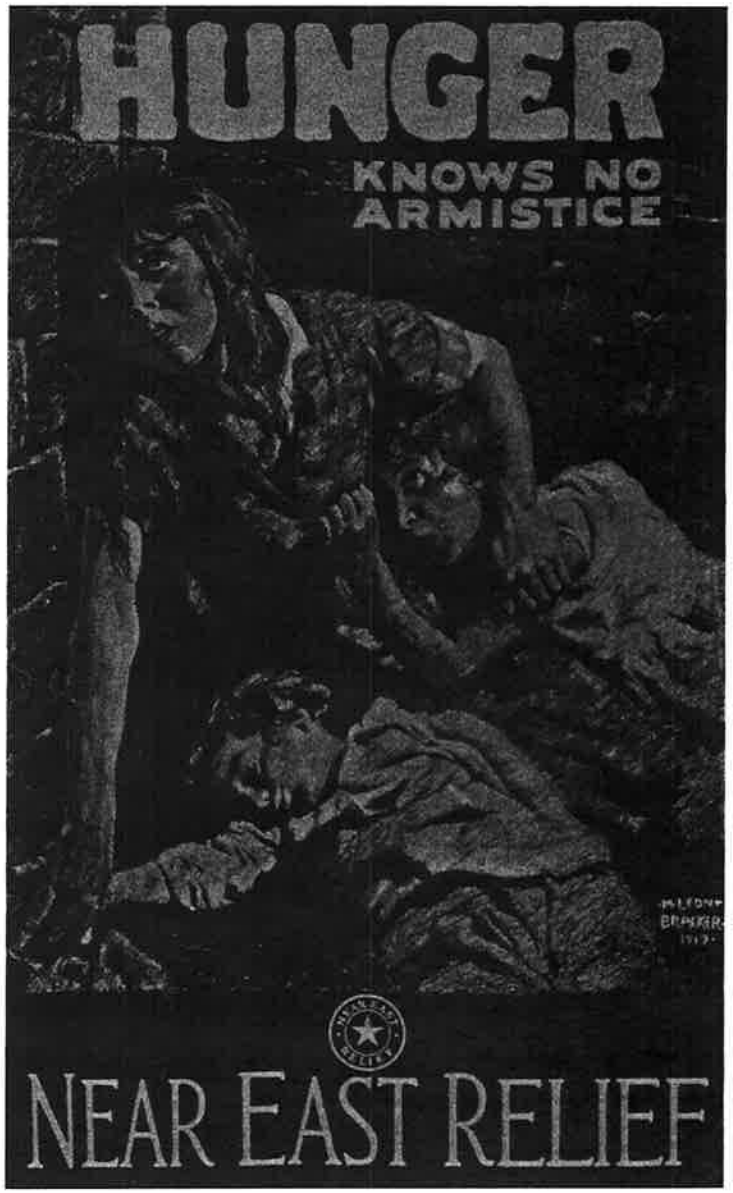


Figure 23.6 Appeal for aiding refugees of Ottoman Empire in 1919.
Source: Library of Congress, 3g09655

Figure 23.7 German appeal in 1919: Join militias and defend Eastern provinces or Germans will have no bread and no life.

Source: Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-38898

3

WILFRED OWEN

Dulce et Decorum Est, 1917

Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) enlisted in the British Army in 1915, was wounded in 1917, and was hospitalized, released, and sent back to the front, where he died on November 4, 1918, one week before the end of the war. In this poem, he describes a poison gas attack. Like the machine gun and the airplane, gas was a common element of the new mechanized mass warfare. Owen describes how physically debilitating the effects of gas were. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: Why was gas such an effective and deadly weapon? How, according to Owen, had the nature of war changed?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

The concluding phrase, which means "Sweet and proper it is to die for one's country," was a Latin declaration of patriotic duty that English students repeated as a lesson, not only in Latin classes but, more important, in their political education as subjects of the British Empire. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How does Owen portray this lesson as a cause of the war? What does he imagine to be the consequences of fighting a war with such patriotic slogans in mind?

Dulce et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began the trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines[1] that dropped behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime. . . .

[1] German artillery shells. [Ed.]

Wilfred Owen, *Poems*, ed. Siegfried Sassoon (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920).

Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest,
To children ardent for some desperate glory.
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

4

Memories of Senegalese Soldiers, 1914–1918/1981–1999

Not only did the roots of the First World War lie in competing imperial claims, but some of the fighting took place along imperial divides of colonies as well. Africans in French and English colonies were mobilized to fight Africans in neighboring German colonies, and vice versa. In addition, many Africans were mobilized to fight in Europe, especially after European troops suffered heavy losses along the Western Front. Over 140,000 West Africans were recruited into the French Army between 1914 and 1918 to serve in Europe. Some 45,000 never returned. Senegal mobilized more than other colonies: 29,000, probably more than one-third of the men of military age.

The historian Joe Lunn interviewed eighty-five of these Senegalese veterans for his book *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History*

of the First World War, from which these accounts are drawn. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What do these various Senegalese voices tell you about the African experience in the First World War? How was their experience of the war different from that of European soldiers? How were Senegalese soldiers recruited, and why did they enlist? What were their expectations?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

These memories provide greater insight into the consequences than the causes of World War I. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How did the war change the lives of those African troops who survived? How did it change the way the Senegalese and French thought of themselves and each other?

[Recruitment]

Many of the young men fled from the village [when the *chef de canton* came to take soldiers]. [But] they used to arrest their fathers [if] they [did not] come back. [And] often their mothers used to say to their sons [when they returned from the countryside for food]: "You know that your name has been written [down by the *chef de canton*] and [yet] you ran away. And now your father has been arrested and he will be taken [to] prison. So go and enter the army." And often they used to go and enter the army [so that] their fathers [would be] released.

In each family they only took one young man, never two. And my father decided that I should go and enter the army instead of my elder brother. Because, he told me: "If I die, your elder brother could care for the family, but you are too young for that." That's why he sent me into the army. I was not happy to go, [but] because I was very close to my father . . . I felt obliged to.

I was in Bamako [on leave] when Blaise Diagne and Galandou Diouf[1] came to recruit soldiers. [And my friend and I] attended the meeting he called for recruitment. [And] Blaise Diagne's propaganda [at] this meeting [was very effective]. Because, before he came, he had made the son

[1] Blaise Diagne (1872–1934), from Senegal, became in 1914 the first black African elected to the French national parliament where he fought for and won the right of urban Senegalese to be citizens and soldiers. He was appointed by French prime minister George Clemenceau to head the recruitment drive in French West Africa during the war. Galandou Diouf (1875–1941), the first black African elected (in 1909) to the Senegalese assembly, was Diagne's assistant. They argued that military service was a vehicle to full and equal citizenship for Africans. [Ed.]

of the *chef de quartier* in Bamako a lieutenant. [So] almost all the town was there, because the chief had called everybody, and there were a lot, a lot, a lot of people! The fact that Blaise Diagne had made his son a lieutenant was a very important thing for him personally, because . . . for the Bambara becoming an officer in the army was a very great honor. [And Diagne came] with many, many people—August Brunet [the lieutenant governor of Haut-Sénégal et Niger] and [other] French administrators. [And] he was [accompanied by] some Bambara soldiers too. But they were not simple soldiers; all of them had "*grades.*"[2] [And after speeches by Galandou Diouf, the *chef de quartier*, and his son, Diagne spoke.] [And although] I have forgotten almost all his speech, I remember that he told them that he was sent by the President of the Republic of France who needed [more] soldiers to go on fighting. And after [he finished], he introduced the son of the *chef de quartier* to [all] the other parents that were at the meeting. [And he told them:] "I want some other soldiers to enter the army, so perhaps they too can become lieutenants." So as soon as he said that, everybody gave him the name of his son. And the secretary was writing down their names. [And] that's why he succeeded with his recruitment mission [among the Bambara]—[because] everybody was expecting his son to become an officer one day.

[Becoming Soldiers]

We all joined the same army—the French army. . . . So we did not think about our [previous] way of living, our behavior, our [former] kingdoms. We were bound to follow the French regulations and their way of thinking about all these things. [And although] little arguments sometimes [occurred] between soldiers from the same country, [the status of a man's family] wasn't stressed. . . . There wasn't any [social] differentiation [with regard to slaves] because we were following another system—another [way of] life—which was the French one.

[Departures]

We [sailed from Dakar] on a boat called *l'Afrique* on May 9, 1916. There was a French officer with us—[a lieutenant called Oeuvre]—[who] was a very very bad man. We spent [the first] three days [being allowed to go on deck] in the boat . . . and we had a good journey. [But] when we arrived at a place called "the Gulf" [Golfe de Gascogne] . . . this French

[2] Ranks. [Ed.]

officer said that all the soldiers had to go downstairs—deep inside the ship. And he put [a guard] at the door [to prevent] any of us from going out. . . . And we [were confined for] the [next] six days in the bottom [of the boat near] the keel. [And] we suffered a lot in the bottom of the ship because there was no air. From time to time they opened the [portholes] to let some air [in, but] after that they closed them [again]. And even during meals, we were eating in the bottom of the ship. And it was very hot [there] and it was very tight.

[In France]

When we went [to the camps in France,] Diagne joined us [there] to see about our conditions. Whenever you had problems, he came and solved them. Sometimes the food was bad or insufficient, for example. [So] when Diagne came, if we said the food was not good, he called the officers together and asked [them] why. He said, "I brought soldiers to fight for you and to help you. And I don't see why you treat them like this!" So he would tear off the ranks [of insignia] of the officers and put them on the table.

We felt very proud after the attack because the French had tried many times to retake the fort, but finally, we [were the ones] that took it. . . . And when we were leaving the fort, our officers told us not to wash our uniforms even though they were very dirty and covered with mud. But we were told: "Don't wash your uniforms. Cross the country as you are so that everyone who meets you will know that you made the attack on Fort Douaumont." And we took the train [and traveled] for three days between Douaumont and St. Raphäel. And in every town we crossed, the French were clapping their hands and shouting: "*Vive les tirailleurs sénégalais!*" . . . And afterwards, whenever we were walking in the country—everywhere we used to go—if we told people that we made the attack on Fort Douaumont, the French were looking at us with much admiration.

One day I was in the [mess hall] in the camp [where] we used to eat. And often after eating, we used to drink coffee in cups. But before drinking it, we used to make "cheers" with the other soldiers. So on this day, I took my cup and I wanted to make "cheers" with a French soldier who was sitting next to me. So I made the "cheers," [but] the soldier said to me, "don't touch my cup, you are too dirty!" And [this made] me very angry. [So] I punched him and we began to fight. And when they went to get the captain, the captain told me that I was right, and he told the French soldier that he would be punished. But afterwards, I became very friendly with this same soldier.

I had a very good [French] friend—his name was Perout—[and we] were in the same unit. . . . I was his only African friend, [but] we spent a lot of time together. [And] I often went to his house [when on leave]. He invited me [there] for lunch, or dinner, and sometimes I spent the night. . . . And when his [family] came to visit him, they kissed me before they kissed him—his father, his mother, and his sisters.

"*Marraine de guerre*" . . . was the term used by the soldiers to say "my girlfriend"; instead of saying "my girlfriend," they said "my *marraine de guerre.*" [And] the African soldiers in France had their *marraines de guerre* too. They were not prostitutes. They were girls of good families who saw us and knew that we were [far from] our countries. [And they realized] we needed some affection and some money . . . to buy cigarettes with, to go to the movies, and so on.

[And we met them] on the street or in cafés. A French girl saw you and felt very pleased by [your appearance]. And she said to you that she wanted to take you to her house to present you to her parents. And you got [an adopted] French family in that way. [But] it wasn't necessary to have love affairs [with them]. From time to time some *marraines de guerre* fell in love with the soldiers they invited home. But generally, they were only friendly relations.

Some of the French who had never seen a "black" man used to pay to come and see us. [And the European soldiers] were making money selling tickets. [They] used to take us to a hidden place and told us: "Stay here. We are going to bring some Frenchmen who have never seen 'black' people before." [But] we didn't know they were making money in that way.

[And after they] got the money, they used to bring the *Tubabs*[3] to look at us. And [they] said: "This one is a Senegalese, this one is a Somalian, [and so forth]." And the *Tubabs* were touching us, and peeking, creeping very close to us because we [looked so different].

[Return]

One day [we were on] the ship that brought us back to Senegal from Bordeaux. . . . There were [many] Senegalese soldiers [aboard, and sometimes] they got into arguments with some of the "white" men who treated them like "dirty niggers." . . . And one of these soldiers—a citizen from Goree—was [called] a "*sale nègre*" by a "white" man. . . . I think maybe the [French] man was not well educated, or perhaps he

[3] Europeans. [Ed.]

was drunk. [And the soldier hit] him hard . . . and [they] started fighting. [And] we all [joined in] and started to give our friend some help. And we beat [the Frenchman] badly until he asked to be forgiven. He was crying and said that he would never do it again.

So what happened [afterwards]? Nothing! We were within our rights, because discrimination between people [was no longer tolerated] at that time, [and] we were French citizens like anybody else. [If] the "white" man wanted to start acting like that, we [could retaliate] and nothing happened. [But] if the same thing had happened before the war, [we] would not have done the same thing. Because we had less power then, and [we] were treated badly like this [by the French] all the time.

[The parents of those who had been killed] knew the number of soldiers who went to the war together, and they [also] knew the number of soldiers who came back. So no one [had to tell] them that their sons were dead; they guessed it [on their own]. [But afterward], we told them how they died. Those [of us who] knew their sons had died explained to their families [what had happened to them]. . . . [I had to do this once.] . . . A son [from my grandfather's family] was lost in Champagne. . . . And [they] knew that we went [to the war] together. But when I came back, they didn't see him. And after a while, they began to ask me where he was. And I told them: "He is dead; you have to make the sacrifices."

[After the War]

We went to France, we fought for France, and the French took us by force to fight for them. [But] we learned nothing [there]—[not] even the French language. They only taught us some rudimentary [commands], [in order] to use us in the war. But they didn't care about teaching us the structure and the sound of their language. So [although we] went to the war, [we] came back here without any real knowledge of the French language.

I received many lasting things from the war. I demonstrated my dignity and courage, and [I] won the respect of the people and the [colonial] government. And whenever the people of the village had something to contest [with the French]—and they didn't dare do it [themselves] because they were afraid of them—I used to do it for them. And many times when people had problems with the government, I used to go with my decorations and arrange the situation for [them]. Because whenever the *Tubabs* saw your decorations, they knew that they [were dealing with] a very important person. . . . And I gained this ability—of obtaining justice over a *Tubab*—from the war.

The war changed many, many things. At first, when we joined the army, when you had an argument or a problem with a "white" man, what happened? You were wrong; you were [always] wrong. But later, those things changed. [Then] they looked into the matter and determined who was wrong or right. [But] before that time, the "black" man didn't mean anything. So that [change] was something [very important]. [And] the respect we gained [from] the war [continued] increasing; it never [diminished]. [And this] respect [continued] increasing day to day—up until [it culminated in] the Independence Day.

5

Zimmermann Telegram, 1917

By the beginning of 1917, the war was at a stalemate. German troops were well fortified along their western front from the Ardennes Forest in northern France across Belgium to the Atlantic. Neither the Germans nor the French and English on the other side of this line could advance. A British naval blockade of Germany led to a German decision to begin unrestricted submarine warfare, hoping to force a British surrender before a likely American intervention. The United States remained neutral, but after the sinking of the ocean liner *Lusitania* in 1916, Washington threatened to become involved if there were further submarine attacks.

On January 11, 1917, German Foreign Secretary Albert Zimmermann telegrammed the German ambassador to Mexico in code. British intelligence intercepted the telegram and sent the following translation to the United States. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What did Zimmermann propose? What did he hope to gain? What were the risks?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

It is difficult to distinguish between the immediate or precipitant role of the Zimmermann telegram and the longer-term role of German expansion, especially Germany's submarine attacks in the Atlantic, in U.S. intervention. President Woodrow Wilson, reelected in 1916 because "he kept us out of war," made full use of the telegram to declare war. For him, the telegram was the smoking gun. He declared war despite the doubts of German sympathizers, who thought that the telegram was a forgery intended to provoke the United States, and despite the fact that he was prevented from proving its authenticity by the British, who did not want the Germans to know that they had broken German codes. For both Wilson and the opponents of war, the telegram was crucial.

Zimmermann saw the telegram differently. He admitted sending it, affirming its authenticity (thus inadvertently undermining the American antiwar movement) because he thought it would keep the United States out of the war. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How could he have imagined the telegram would keep the United States neutral? Why is it also likely that Zimmermann thought the submarine attacks would not be a cause of war?

U.S. National Archives Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, 1756–1979, National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier 302025.

Berlin, January 19, 1917

On the first of February we intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this, it is our intention to endeavour to keep neutral the United States of America.

If this attempt is not successful, we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico: That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left to you for settlement. . . .

You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in the greatest confidence as soon as it is certain that there will be an outbreak of war with the United States and suggest that the President of Mexico, on his own initiative, should communicate with Japan suggesting adherence at once to this plan; at the same time, offer to mediate between Germany and Japan.

Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.

Zimmermann
(Secretary of State)

6

V. I. LENIN

War and Revolution, 1917

One of the great casualties of the First World War was the Russian Empire, including the czar, his family, many of the members of their class, and its centuries-old autocratic system. The burden of war was simply too much for Russian society to bear. The disillusionment in the army and civilian society, along with the overwhelming costs of war, fueled uprisings among civilians and the army, and Czar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate in February of 1917. The government that emerged, under Alexander Kerensky, proved unable to satisfy the growing demands of peasants, veterans, and urban workers for "land, peace, and bread," a slogan that V. I. Lenin (1870–1924) and the communists exploited, successfully seizing power from the moderate parliamentarians in October of that year.

As a Marxist, Lenin believed that he could establish a socialist society in Russia, but he argued that Russian conditions (such as economic underdevelopment; the devastation of war; and the opposition of Europe, the United States, and Russian nobles to the revolution) made a democratic transition impossible. According to Lenin, a self-appointed government acting in the interests of the working class was the only way to a socialist Soviet Union. Lenin called this government "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Lenin delivered his "War and Revolution" address in May of 1917, during the fateful summer that followed the liberal February revolution and preceded the Bolshevik Revolution in October. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: How did Lenin view the First World War and Russia's continued participation in it? What did he hope to accomplish in the summer of 1917? How did he hope to accomplish it? What was Lenin's reaction to the United States' entry into the war on behalf of England and France?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: According to Lenin, what were the causes of the First World War? What did he believe to be the main cause of the Russian Revolution that occurred in February? What were the consequences of that revolution? What did he think would be the causes of a new revolution in Russia?

V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 24:398–421.

What we have at present is primarily two leagues, two groups of capitalist powers. We have before us all the world's greatest capitalist powers—Britain, France, America, and Germany—who for decades have doggedly pursued a policy of incessant economic rivalry aimed at achieving world supremacy, subjugating the small nations, and making threefold and tenfold profits on banking capital, which has caught the whole world in the net of its influence. That is what Britain's and Germany's policies really amount to. . . .

These policies show us just one thing—continuous economic rivalry between the world's two greatest giants, capitalist economies. On the one hand we have Britain, a country which owns the greater part of the globe, a country which ranks first in wealth, which has created this wealth not so much by the labour of its workers as by the exploitation of innumerable colonies, by the vast power of its banks which have developed at the head of all the others into an insignificantly small group of some four or five super-banks handling billions of rubles, and handling them in such a way that it can be said without exaggeration that there is not a patch of land in the world today on which this capital has not laid its heavy hand, not a patch of land which British capital has not enmeshed by a thousand threads. . . .

On the other hand, opposed to this, mainly Anglo-French group, we have another group of capitalists, an even more rapacious, even more predatory one, a group who came to the capitalist banqueting table when all the seats were occupied, but who introduced into the struggle new methods for developing capitalist production, improved techniques, and superior organization, which turned the old capitalism, the capitalism of the free-competition age, into the capitalism of giant trusts, syndicates, and cartels. This group introduced the beginnings of state-controlled capitalist production, combining the colossal power of capitalism with the colossal power of the state into a single mechanism and bringing tens of millions of people within the single organization of state capitalism. Here is economic history, here is diplomatic history, covering several decades, from which no one can get away. It is the one and only guide-post to a proper solution of the problem of war; it leads you to the conclusion that the present war, too, is the outcome of the policies of the classes who have come to grips in it, of the two supreme giants, who, long before the war, had caught the whole world, all countries, in the net of financial exploitation and economically divided the globe up among themselves. They were bound to clash, because a redivision of this supremacy, from the point of view of capitalism, had become inevitable. . . .

The present war is a continuation of the policy of conquest, of the shooting down of whole nationalities, of unbelievable atrocities committed by the Germans and the British in Africa, and by the British and the

Russians in Persia—which of them committed most it is difficult to say. It was for this reason that the German capitalists looked upon them as their enemies. Ah, they said, you are strong because you are rich? But we are stronger, therefore we have the same "sacred" right to plunder. That is what the real history of British and German finance capital in the course of several decades preceding the war amounts to. That is what the history of Russo-German, Russo-British, and German-British relations amounts to. There you have the clue to an understanding of what the war is about. That is why the story that is current about the cause of the war is sheer duplicity and humbug. Forgetting the history of finance capital, the history of how this war had been brewing over the issue of redivision, they present the matter like this: Two nations were living at peace, then one attacked the other, and the other fought back. All science, all banks are forgotten, and the peoples are told to take up arms, and so are the peasants, who know nothing about politics. . . .

What revolution did we make? We overthrew Nicholas. The revolution was not so very difficult compared with one that would have overthrown the whole class of landowners and capitalists. Who did the revolution put in power? The landowners and capitalists—the very same classes who have long been in power in Europe. . . . The [February] Russian revolution has not altered the war, but it has created organizations which exist in no other country and were seldom found in revolutions in the West. . . . We have all over Russia a network of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies. Here is a revolution which has not said its last word yet. . . .

In the two months following the revolution the industrialists have robbed the whole of Russia. Capitalists have made staggering profits; every financial report tells you that. And when the workers, two months after the revolution, had the "audacity" to say they wanted to live like human beings, the whole capitalist press throughout the country set up a howl.

On the question of America entering the war I shall say this. People argue that America is a democracy, America has the White House. I say: Slavery was abolished there half a century ago. The anti-slave war ended in 1865. Since then multimillionaires have mushroomed. They have the whole of America in their financial grip. They are making ready to subdue Mexico and will inevitably come to war with Japan over a carve-up of the Pacific. This war has been brewing for several decades. All literature speaks about it. America's real aim in entering the war is to prepare for this future war with Japan. The American people do enjoy considerable freedom and it is difficult to conceive them standing for compulsory military service, for the setting up of an army pursuing any aims of conquest—a struggle with Japan, for instance. The Americans have the example of Europe to show them what this leads to. The American capitalists have stepped into this war in order to

have an excuse, behind a smoke-screen of lofty ideals championing the rights of small nations, for building up a strong standing army. . . .

Tens of millions of people are facing disaster and death; safeguarding the interests of the capitalists is the last thing that should bother us. The only way out is for all power to be transferred to the Soviets, which represent the majority of the population. Possibly mistakes may be made in the process. No one claims that such a difficult task can be disposed of offhand. We do not say anything of the sort. We are told that we want the power to be in the hands of the Soviets, but they don't want it. We say that life's experience will suggest this solution to them, and the whole nation will see that there is no other way out. We do not want a "seizure" of power, because the entire experience of past revolutions teaches us that the only stable power is the one that has the backing of the majority of the population. "Seizure" of power, therefore, would be adventurism, and our Party will not have it. . . .

Nothing but a workers' revolution in several countries can defeat this war. The war is not a game, it is an appalling thing taking a toll of millions of lives, and it is not to be ended easily.

. . . The war has been brought about by the ruling classes and only a revolution of the working class can end it. Whether you will get a speedy peace or not depends on how the revolution will develop.

Whatever sentimental things may be said, however much we may be told: Let us end the war immediately—this cannot be done without the development of the revolution. When power passes to the Soviets the capitalists will come out against us. Japan, France, Britain—the governments of all countries will be against us. The capitalists will be against, but the workers will be for us. That will be the end of the war which the capitalists started. There you have the answer to the question of how to end the war.

7

ROSA LUXEMBURG

The Problem of Dictatorship, 1918

Events moved very quickly in Russia in 1917. In May, Lenin insisted that the February revolution was incomplete. Remaking Russian society could not be achieved by a seizure of the state alone, but would also require mobilizing the support of a majority of the

Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1961), 68–72. Introduction by Bertram D. Wolfe.

country's workers. The new Soviets, or workers' organizations, were to provide the foundation for this grassroots revolution. Further, Lenin believed that workers throughout Europe needed to be liberated through revolution before peace and stability could be attained. The realities of the October revolution, however, obscured many of these original ideas. By the fall, Lenin and his Bolshevik party seized power without majority support while civil war still raged in Russia. The success of the Bolshevik Revolution in October required a new revolutionary ideology, centered on "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919) was born in Russian Poland, but at the age of nineteen fled to Switzerland, where she earned a doctorate in law and political science. At twenty-five she migrated to Germany where, as a journalist and theorist, she became an impassioned and influential voice in the German democratic socialist movement. She criticized its bureaucratic leadership and excoriated its submission to war hysteria. Her opposition to the war led to frequent imprisonment. While Luxemburg was imprisoned, Lenin seized power, and she composed her thoughts on the Russian Revolution in 1918.

As a cofounder of the German Spartacus League (which later became the German Communist Party), Luxemburg believed that the Bolshevik Revolution could mean the liberation of working people throughout Russia, then Germany and the rest of Europe. But since 1904 she disagreed with Lenin's ideas of centralized control and party discipline.

Ironically, the apparent success of Lenin's strategy in Russia led many in the German Spartacus League to agitate for a similar seizure of power in Germany at the end of the war. Rosa Luxemburg tried to dissuade them, believing it to be suicidal. Outvoted, she joined their uprising in Berlin in January 1919 and was subsequently arrested and murdered by the police. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What objections does Luxemburg make to Lenin's revolution? What do you think of her arguments?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Causes and consequences are often different sides of the same event. We might say that the First World War was a cause of the Russian Revolution or, conversely, that the Russian Revolution was a consequence of the First World War. Lenin argued that one of the consequences of the First World War was the particular sort of revolution he advocated, on the grounds that a democratic revolution was impossible under the circumstances. Rosa Luxemburg disagreed that such draconian measures were necessary, and she argued that Lenin's revolutionary strategy would have its own consequences. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: What do you think of her argument? Why did she think a dictatorial revolution could lead only to a dictatorial society?

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of "justice" but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege.

The Bolsheviks themselves will not want, with hand on heart, to deny that, step by step, they have to feel out the ground, try out, experiment, test now one way now another, and that a good many of their measures do not represent priceless pearls of wisdom. Thus it must and will be with all of us when we get to the same point—even if the same difficult circumstances may not prevail everywhere.

The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is, unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—not the case. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied, the practical realization of socialism as an economic, social and juridical system is something which lies completely hidden in the mists of the future. What we possess in our program is nothing but a few main signposts which indicate the general direction in which to look for the necessary measures, and the indications are mainly negative in character at that. Thus we know more or less what we must eliminate at the outset in order to free the road for a socialist economy. But when it comes to the nature of the thousand concrete, practical measures, large and small, necessary to introduce socialist principles into economy, law and all social relationships, there is no key in any socialist party program or textbook. That is not a shortcoming but rather the very thing that makes scientific socialism superior to the utopian varieties.

The socialist system of society should only be, and can only be, an historical product, born out of the school of its own experiences, born in the course of its realization, as a result of the developments of living history, which—just like organic nature of which, in the last analysis, it forms a part—has the fine habit of always producing along with any real social need the means to its satisfaction, along with the task simultaneously the solution. However, if such is the case, then it is clear that socialism by its very nature cannot be decreed or introduced by *ukase*. It has as its prerequisite a number of measures of force—against property, etc. The negative, the tearing down, can be decreed; the building up, the positive, cannot. New Territory. A thousand problems. Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative new force, itself

corrects all mistaken attempts. The public life of countries with limited freedom is so poverty-stricken, so miserable, so rigid, so unfruitful, precisely because, through the exclusion of democracy, it cuts off the living sources of all spiritual riches and progress. (Proof: the year 1905 and the months from February to October 1917.)[1] There it was political in character; the same thing applies to economic and social life also. The whole mass of the people must take part in it. Otherwise, socialism will be decreed from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals.

Public control is indispensably necessary. Otherwise the exchange of experiences remains only with the closed circle of the officials of the new regime. Corruption becomes inevitable. (Lenin's words, Bulletin No. 29) Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquers all suffering, etc., etc. No one knows this better, describes it more penetratingly; repeats it more stubbornly than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconian penalties, rule by terror—all these things are but palliatives. The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralizes.

[1] In both 1905 and February/March of 1917, uprisings could not become revolutions because democracy was so thin. Only authoritarian regimes could carry out a revolution, as Lenin did in October/November 1917. [Ed.]

8

Syrian Congress Memorandum, 1919

As it became clear that the Allies would defeat the Central Powers, they began considering the nature of the peace and how they would construct the postwar world. On the issue of how to treat a defeated Germany after the war, the insistence of the French on stiff financial retribution fanned the embers for the next generation. Almost as important in the eyes of the victors was how to treat the defeated Ottoman Empire. In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson gave a speech to the U.S. Congress in which he listed "Fourteen Points" intended to ensure a just and lasting peace. An overall theme was the need for "national self-determination."

"The King-Crane Commission Report," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1947), 12:780–81.

Point XII began: "The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development." The Arabs of the Middle East constituted at least one of these "other nationalities," and many of them expected their independence after the war. Instead the Paris Peace Conference instituted a system of "mandates" by which the victorious European powers maintained control over enemy colonies, including the Ottoman Arab territories, until the Europeans determined the colonies were prepared for independence.

This selection details the Syrians' objections to this arrangement, sent as a memorandum to the King-Crane Commission, the body responsible for overseeing the transfer of Ottoman territory. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What were the Syrians' objections? What evidence did they give to support their position? What did they want?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: Do you think this conflict could have been an expected consequence of the First World War? Did Wilson's Fourteen Points made the Syrian demands more likely? Do you think the European powers expected this response? What were the consequences of the failure of the Allies to settle these grievances?

We the undersigned members of the General Syrian Congress, meeting in Damascus on Wednesday, July 2nd 1919, . . . provided with credentials and authorizations by the inhabitants of our various districts, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, have agreed upon the following statement of the desires of the people of the country who have elected us to present them to the American Section of the International Commission; the fifth article was passed by a very large majority; all the other articles were accepted unanimously.

1. We ask absolutely complete political independence for Syria within these boundaries. The Taurus System on the North; Rafah and a line running from Al Jauf to the south of the Syrian and the Hejazian line to Akaba on the south; the Euphrates and Khabur Rivers and a line extending east of Abu Kamal to the east of Al Jauf on the east; and the Mediterranean on the west.

2. We ask that the Government of this Syrian country should be a democratic civil constitutional Monarchy on broad decentralization principles, safeguarding the rights of minorities, and that the King be the Emir Feisal, who carried on a glorious struggle in the cause of our liberation and merited our full confidence and entire reliance.

3. Considering the fact that the Arabs inhabiting the Syrian area are not naturally less than other more advanced races and that they are by no means less developed than the Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks, and Romanians at the beginning of their independence, we protest against Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, placing us among the nations in their middle stage of development which stand in need of a mandatory power.

4. In the event of the rejection by the Peace Conference of this just protest for certain considerations that we may not understand, we, relying on the declarations of President Wilson that his object in waging war was to put an end to the ambition of conquest and colonization, can only regard the mandate mentioned in the Covenant of the League of Nations as equivalent to the rendering of economical and technical assistance that does not prejudice our complete independence. And desiring that our country should not fall a prey to colonization and believing that the American Nation is furthest from any thought of colonization and has no political ambition in our country, we will seek the technical and economical assistance from the United States of America, provided that such assistance does not exceed 20 years.

5. In the event of America not finding herself in a position to accept our desire for assistance, we will seek this assistance from Great Britain, also provided that such assistance does not infringe the complete independence and unity of our country and that the duration of such assistance does not exceed that mentioned in the previous article.

6. We do not acknowledge any right claimed by the French Government in any part whatever of our Syrian country and refuse that she should assist us or have a hand in our country under any circumstances and in any place.

7. We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish commonwealth in the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, and oppose Zionist migration to any part of our country; for we do not acknowledge their title but consider them a grave peril to our people from the national, economical, and political points of view. Our Jewish compatriots shall enjoy our common rights and assume the common responsibilities.

8. We ask that there should be no separation of the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, nor of the littoral western zone, which includes Lebanon, from the Syrian country. We desire that the unity of the country should be guaranteed against partition under whatever circumstances.

9. We ask complete independence for emancipated Mesopotamia and that there should be no economic barriers between the two countries.

10. The fundamental principles laid down by President Wilson in condemnation of secret treaties impel us to protest most emphatically against any treaty that stipulates the partition of our Syrian country and against any private engagement aiming at the establishment of Zionism in the southern part of Syria; therefore we ask the complete annulment of these conventions and agreements.

The noble principles enunciated by President Wilson strengthen our confidence that our desires emanating from the depths of our hearts, shall be the decisive factor in determining our future; and that President Wilson and the free American people will be our supporters for the realization of our hopes, thereby proving their sincerity and noble sympathy with the aspiration of the weaker nations in general and our Arab people in particular.

We also have the fullest confidence that the Peace Conference will realize that we would not have risen against the Turks, with whom we had participated in all civil, political, and representative privileges, but for their violation of our national rights, and so will grant us our desires in full in order that our political rights may not be less after the war than they were before, since we have shed so much blood in the cause of our liberty and independence.

We request to be allowed to send a delegation to represent us at the Peace Conference to defend our rights and secure the realization of our aspirations.

9

Algemeen Handelsblad Editorial on the Treaty of Versailles, June 1919

The Netherlands remained neutral throughout the war. The Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad*, edited by Charles Boissevain, was an influential liberal voice, neither pro-German nor pro-Entente. This is its editorial on the Treaty of Versailles. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What did it think of the Treaty of Versailles? What provisions of the treaty did it question?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

On January 18, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson gave a speech in which he proclaimed "Fourteen Points" to be covered in the eventual peace treaty. These points included free trade, self-determination of nations, reductions in armed forces, and withdrawal from conquered

Source Records of the Great War, Vol. VII, ed. Charles F. Horne (New York: National Alumni, 1923).

territories. There was no punishment of Germany included: no assignment of war guilt, no claim of reparations, no imposition on the German economy (other than the proposal that all belligerents relinquish their colonies). All of these punishments, however, were included in the peace treaty the Germans were forced to sign at Versailles on June 28, 1919. Keep in mind the following question as you read the selection: What did the editor of the *Algameen Handelsblad* see as the likely consequences of the Treaty of Versailles?

The peace conditions imposed upon Germany are so hard, so humiliating, that even those who have the smallest expectation of a "peace of justice" are bound to be deeply disappointed.

Has Germany actually deserved such a "peace"? Everybody knows how we condemned the crimes committed against humanity by Germany. Everybody knows what we thought of the invasion of Belgium, the submarine war, the Zeppelin raids.

Our opinion on the lust of power and conquest of Germany is well known. But a condemnation of wartime actions must not amount to a lasting condemnation of a people. In spite of all they have done, the German people is a great and noble nation.

The question is not whether the Germans have been led by an intellectual group to their destruction, or whether they are accomplices in the misdeeds of their leaders—the question is, whether it is to the interest of mankind, whether there is any sense in punishing a people in such a way as the Entente governments wish to chastise Germany.

The Entente evidently desires the complete annihilation of Germany. Not only will the whole commercial fleet be confiscated, but the shipbuilding yards will be obliged to work for the foreigner for some time to come.

Whole tracts of Germany will be entirely deprived of their liberty; they will be under a committee of foreign domination, without adequate representation.

The financial burden is so heavy that it is no exaggeration to say that Germany is reduced to economic bondage. The Germans will have to work hard and incessantly for foreign masters, without any chance of personal gain, or any prospect of regaining liberty or economic independence.

This "peace" offered to Germany may differ in form from the one imposed upon conquered nations by the old Romans, but certainly not in essence. This peace is a mockery of President Wilson's principles. Trusting to these, Germany accepted peace. That confidence has been betrayed in such a manner that we regard the present happenings as a deep humiliation, not only to all governments and nations concerned in this peace offer, but to all humanity.

These conditions will never give peace. All Germans must feel that they wish to shake off the heavy yoke imposed by the cajoling Entente, and we fear very much that that opportunity will soon present itself. For has not the Entente recognized in the proposed so-called "League of Nations" the evident right to conquer and possess countries for economic and imperialistic purposes? Fettered and enslaved, Germany will always remain a menace to Europe.

The voice and opinion of neutrals have carried very little weight in this war. But, however small their influence and however dangerous the rancorous caprice of the Entente powers may be to neutrals, it is our conviction and our duty to protest as forcibly as possible against these peace conditions.

We understand the bitter feelings of the Entente countries. But that does not make these peace conditions less wrong, less dangerous to world civilization, or any less an outrage against Germany and against mankind.

■ REFLECTIONS

By studying causes and consequences of world events, we learn how things change; more important, we learn how to avoid repeating past mistakes. History is full of lessons that breed humility as well as confidence. In *The Origins of the First World War*,[1] historian James Joll points out how unprepared people were for the war as late as the summer of 1914. Even after the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was issued on July 23 (almost a month after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28), diplomats across Europe left for their summer holidays. By August, all of Europe was at war, though the expectation was that it would be over in a month.

We could make a good case for diplomatic blundering as an important cause of the First World War. It is safe to say that few statesmen had any inkling of the consequences of their actions in 1914. And yet, if we concentrate on the daily decisions of diplomats that summer, we may pay attention only to the tossing of lit matches by people sitting on powder kegs rather than on the origins of the powder kegs themselves.

President Wilson blamed secret diplomacy, the international system of alliances, and imperialism as the chief causes of the war. On the importance of imperialism, Wilson's conclusion was the same as that of Lenin, though he certainly did not share Lenin's conviction

[1] James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Longman, 1992), 200.

that capitalism was the root cause of imperialism, and in 1919 neither alliances nor imperialism was regarded as un-American or likely to end anytime soon. Still, Wilson's anti-imperialism might have prevented the League of Nations from creating new empires under the guise of protective mandates. One of the consequences of a Wilsonian peace might have been the creation of independent states in the Middle East and Africa a generation earlier.

The principle of the "self-determination of nations" that Wilson espoused, however, was a double-edged sword. The fact that the war had been "caused" by a Bosnian Serb nationalist assassin in 1914 might have been a warning that national self-determination could become an infinite regress in which smaller and smaller units sought to separate themselves from "foreign" domination.

The rise of nationalist movements and the rise of international organizations were only two consequences of the First World War. Historians have attributed many other aspects of the twentieth century to the war. Stephen O'Shea offers a striking list of cultural changes:

> It is generally accepted that the Great War and its fifty-two months of senseless slaughter encouraged, or amplified, among other things: the loss of a belief in progress, a mistrust of technology, the loss of religious faith, the loss of a belief in Western cultural superiority, the rejection of class distinctions, the rejection of traditional sexual roles, the birth of the Modern [in art], the rejection of the past, the elevation of irony to a standard mode of apprehending the world, the unbuttoning of moral codes, and the conscious embrace of the irrational.[2]

Evidence of any of these consequences is only barely visible in the accounts of a chapter that ends in 1920, but many of the developments described in the next few chapters were consequences of World War I as well.

[2] Stephen O'Shea, *Back to the Front: An Accidental Historian Walks the Trenches of World War I* (New York: Avon Books, 1996), 9.

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World War II and Mass Killing

The World, 1926–1945

■ HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In some ways World War II resembled World War I. At the European core, England and France again fought Germany and Austria. As in World War I, the United States eventually came to the aid of England and France, playing a decisive role. In both conflicts Russia also fought against Germany, not only until the Soviet revolution in 1917, but fiercely and at a great cost to the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1945. By contrast, Japan, an enemy of Germany in World War I, became an important German ally in World War II, and the pro-German Ottoman Empire of World War I was an independent, neutral Turkey in World War II.

While the main combatants were aligned on the same sides, and both wars ended in the defeat of Germany and its allies, the causes and consequences of the two wars were significantly different. The causes of World War II are clearer than those of World War I. German aggression was a factor in both wars, but in the buildup to World War I, there was much blame to go around. World War II, on the other hand, followed the aggressive conquests of Japan and Germany. Both countries had been militarized by extreme nationalist regimes. Similar "fascist" movements took power in Italy and Eastern Europe, partly in response to the economic hardship of the Great Depression of the 1930s. These movements, like the German Nazi Party, were led by demagogues—Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy—who called for dictatorial power, the expulsion or conquest of foreigners, colonial expansion, and aggressive, violent solutions to social and economic problems. Similarly, the military party that took power in Japan sought an empire in China and Southeast Asia to ensure its economic prosperity.