

Chapter 16 Section 4 Notes

I. The Last Year of the War (pages 521–523)

- A.** During 1917, the Allies had been defeated in their offensives on the Western Front, and the Russians had withdrawn from the war. The Central Powers appeared to have the advantage.
- B.** The German military official **Erich von Ludendorff** decided to take a military gamble. In March 1918, the Germans launched a large offensive on the Western Front and came to within 50 miles of Paris. The Germans were stopped at the Second Battle of the Marne by French, Moroccan, and American troops and hundreds of tanks.
- C.** In 1918, the addition of more than 2 million American troops helped the Allies begin to advance toward Germany. By the end of September, General Ludendorff told German leaders that the war was lost.
- D.** The Allies were not willing to negotiate with the German government under Emperor William II. The German people were angry and exhausted by the war. In spite of attempted government reforms, German workers and soldiers in towns such as **Kiel** revolted and set up their own councils. On November 9, William II left the country.
- E.** The German Social Democratic party, led by **Friedrich Ebert**, declared that Germany would become a democratic republic. On November 11, the new German government signed an **armistice** with the Allies that ended the war.
- F.** In December 1918, a group of radical socialists formed the German Communist Party and then tried to seize power. They were defeated by the new government, which was backed by the army. The revolutionary leaders were killed.
- G.** The attempt by the Communists to take over the government left many middle-class Germans deeply afraid of communism.
- H.** At the end of the war, ethnic groups in Austria-Hungary sought independence. The Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated into the independent republics of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia and the monarchial state of Yugoslavia. National rivalries in the region would weaken Eastern Europe for years to come.

II. The Peace Settlements (pages 523–526)

- A.** In January 1919, representatives of the Allied nations met in Paris to make a final settlement of the war.
- B.** President Woodrow Wilson outlined his “Fourteen Points,” with which he intended to create a lasting peace. The points included proposals for open treaty negotiations, reducing military strength, and ensuring self-determination, or the right of each people to have its own nation. Wilson proposed a new world order based on democracy and cooperation among nations. He suggested creating an association of nations to guarantee political independence for all countries.
- C.** The Paris Peace Conference was complicated by many factors. Secret treaties had been made before the war that promised territories to certain nations. National interests created problems as well. For example, the British under Prime Minister **David Lloyd George** wanted to make the Germans pay for the war.
- D.** Led by **Georges Clemenceau**, the French wanted to insure national security. They sought to do this by stripping Germany of all weapons, having them make huge payments, called **reparations**, and creating a buffer state between Germany and France in the German Rhineland.
- E.** The United States, Britain, and France, known as the Big Three, made most of the important decisions at the Paris Peace Conference. Germany was not included. Russia was in a civil war and could not attend, and Italy was not given a large role.
- F.** The Big Three argued about many points. Wilson wanted to create a League of Nations to be an international peacekeeping organization. The conference accepted his proposal. In return he agreed to territorial settlements that were not consistent with his idea of self-determination. The

French gave up their wish for a Rhineland buffer state and accepted a defensive alliance with Britain and the United States to guarantee future security against Germany.

G. The Treaty of Versailles was the final peace settlement of World War I. It was actually five separate treaties with the defeated nations: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The treaty declared that the Germans were guilty of starting the war. It ordered Germany to pay reparations for all damages suffered by the Allies.

H. The treaty required Germany to greatly reduce its military forces and return the territories of **Alsace** and **Lorraine** to France. Sections of eastern Germany became part of a new Polish state. German land on both sides of the Rhine was turned into a demilitarized zone to prevent future aggression toward France.

I. The German government accepted the peace terms because it had no choice. To refuse would mean to go back to war. However the treaty outraged and angered the German people, who felt the Treaty of Versailles was a harsh and unfair peace.

J. Eastern Europe was greatly changed as a result of the war and the peace treaties. The Russians and Germans lost much territory. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was gone. New nation-states emerged, including Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary. Lands in the Balkans changed hands as Romania received territory from Russia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Yugoslavia was formed, which included Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

K. Though the Paris Peace Conference was supposedly guided by the principle of self-determination, the mix of peoples in eastern Europe made this very difficult and many compromises were made. As a result, almost every eastern European state included ethnic minorities. For example, there were Germans in Poland and Hungarians in Romania. These ethnic mixes would lead to conflicts in later years.

L. The peace treaty also broke up the Ottoman Empire. In return for Arab support, the Allies had promised Arab states within the Ottoman Empire that they would be independent after the war. France and Britain changed their minds and took over control of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. Because Wilson opposed new colonial acquisitions, these acquisitions were called **mandates**. Under the mandate system, a country controlled another as a mandate on behalf of the League of Nations, but did not officially own the territory.

M. World War I undermined the previously held idea of human progress. Entire populations had slaughtered each other in unprecedented ways. The devastation of the war also opened the door to revolutions and further instability.