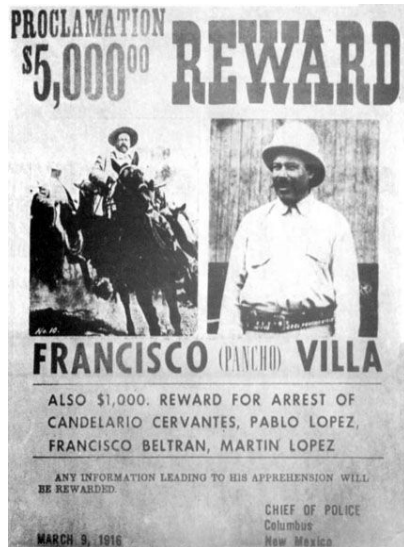


War or Peace: Wilson's Foreign Policy



When Woodrow Wilson became President, he inherited a country on the verge of major change as political upheavals broke out both near and far. In 1913, a bloody civil war in neighboring México resulted in Victoriano Huerta coming to power. Using **Moral Diplomacy**, in which Wilson ---and his Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan--- tried to use moral values in justifying American actions overseas, Wilson condemned Huerta's regime as being "a government of butchers." After the **Tampico incident**, where the U.S. Navy occupied Veracruz, Mexico after Huerta's forces posed a threat to American oil rigs in the area, the U.S. formally backed Venustiano Carranza successfully replaced Huerta. When Carranza's policies violated his moral diplomacy, Wilson supported Mexican peasant rebel Pancho Villa in his cause against Carranza. However, after some reforms in 1915, Wilson decided that Carranza had corrected himself and stopped supporting Villa. Villa retaliated by attacking Columbus, New México for supplies. With Carranza's permission, Wilson sent General "Black Jack" Pershing to Mexico to capture Villa. Villa was never captured.

While turmoil raged in México, Wilson faced another problem in Europe: the outbreak of World War I. With the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Europe was carved between two major forces: the **Allied Powers** (Britain, France and Russia) and the **Central Powers** (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey). Wilson tried his best to stay out of the conflict but his efforts were frustrated by two major factors: the **Zimmerman Note** (an intercepted German telegram instructing México to attack the U.S. in exchange for the land it lost) and **Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare** which resulted in the loss of American lives including 128 passengers on the *RMS Lusitania*. Despite running for re-election on the platform that "Wilson kept us out of the war," Wilson and Congress cited unrestricted submarine warfare as an issue that must be resolved. General Pershing was sent from México to Europe as leader of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) with the goal of "making the world safe for democracy."

The War Changes American Life



World War I forever changed American culture during wartime because it was the first event to introduce the concept of **total war: a theory which says every piece of a country's resources (from food and money to manpower) should go to the war effort.**

The United States accomplished total war mobilization for World War I in the following ways.

- The **Selective Services Act:** A law which decrees that **requires** every American male citizen to register for the draft at **18 years old**. Their information is collected by the federal government and held on file. **This system allows for every American male from the ages of 18 to 45 to be drafted in the event of a full scale war. This law is still in effect to this day.** Failure to comply with this law can result in criminal consequences.
- **Rationing/Victory Gardens/Meatless Mondays:** With nearly 4 million men serving in the war, **private American citizens were encouraged by the federal government to give up their food for the war effort.** This is called rationing. Private citizens were also encouraged to grow their own fruits and vegetables in victory gardens and designate certain days where they would not eat meat so soldiers on the warfront could have it.
- **"100 Percent Americanism:"** This ultra-nationalistic concept empowered nearly every American citizen to contribute to the war effort. This concept enabled African Americans like the **Harlem Hellfighters** to enlist in the war to prove their loyalty to the U.S. in exchange for civil rights. **Major League Baseball** teams did military drills as warm ups and held **"relief games"** where a fraction of their proceeds went to the U.S. Navy and the Red Cross. At those games, as well as movie theaters and restaurants, **vigilante groups such as the American Protective League (APL)** swept the stands to ensure that every American male registered for the Selective Services Act. **If citizens could not provide their draft card, the APL arrested them.**

Going “Over There:” The War Front



In 1917, the United States sent its American Expeditionary Force (AEF) to Europe under the command of General John “Black Jack” Pershing. While war songs cheered about American soldiers going “over there,” American soldiers faced new technological dangers such as poison gas (which triggered blindness and bleeding in the lungs) and trench warfare which resulted in limbs requiring amputation from gangrene which was commonly called trench foot.

Despite being involved in a war, Progressive Era tactics of scientifically correcting immoral behavior remained a strong facet of AEF life during the war. Organizations such as the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) attempted to keep the moral integrity of American doughboys (nickname for U.S. soldiers) intact. Instead of drinking or soliciting prostitutes as their allies had, U.S. soldiers could participate in movie nights and even intramural baseball leagues. Some even suggested that the 1918 MLB World Series could be played in France with the war as a backdrop. However, this idea never came to pass as Wilson ordered the Major Leagues to be shut down in September of that year as part of his “work or fight” (total war) order.

On November 11, 1918, the fighting stopped as both the Allied and the Central Powers reached an armistice. For the next several years, the world deliberated in Versailles, France as to how the world could prevent another costly war. Of all the world leaders, President Wilson led the negotiations.