

3. What were Edith O'Shaughnessy's feelings toward President Huerta?
4. How did President Huerta feel toward President Wilson and the United States? Cite evidence from the reading which supports your answer.

CHAPTER **Involvement** **30** **in World War I** (1914–1920)

189 **The President's** **"War Message"**

After World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, the United States managed to keep out of the war for nearly three years. During this period both sides—the Allies and the Central Powers—violated American neutrality. American ships bound for Europe were stopped by both Great Britain and Germany. However, in 1917 Germany sharply increased submarine warfare against the United States.

After months of growing tension over German submarine warfare and its violation of the rights of neutral shipping, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. On April 2, 1917, Wilson went before Congress and delivered his "War Message." It was passed by the Senate two days later, by a vote of 82 to 6, and by the House on April 6, by a vote of 375 to 50.

READING FOCUS

1. Why should the United States declare war?
2. According to Wilson, what were America's war aims?

I have called the Congress into special session because there are serious, very serious, choices of policy to be made, and made immediately.

Adapted from A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. XVII. New York: Bureau of National Literature, Inc.

It was neither right nor constitutional that I should take the responsibility of making them.

On February 3rd, 1917, I officially informed you of the announcement of the Imperial German Government that on and after February 1st, it would put aside all restraints of law or humanity and use its submarines to sink every ship that tried to approach the ports of Great Britain and Ireland, the western coast of Europe, or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean.

The new policy has swept every restriction aside. Ships of every kind, whatever their flag, type, cargo, destination, or errand, have been ruthlessly fired on and sent to the bottom of the sea without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the stricken people of Belgium have been sunk with the same reckless lack of sympathy or of principle.

I was for a little while unable to believe that such things would, in fact, be done by any government that considered itself civilized. International law had its origin in the attempt to set up some laws which would be respected and observed upon the seas, where no nation had the right of control. That law has been built up by painful stage after stage, always with a clear view of what the heart and conscience of humanity demanded.

I am not now thinking of the loss of property involved, great and serious as that is, but only of the reckless and wholesale destruction of the lives of noncombatants, men, women, and children, engaged in activities which have always, even in the darkest period of modern history, been regarded as innocent and legitimate. Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful, innocent people cannot be.

The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind. It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken in ways that have stirred us very deeply. But the ships and people of other neutral, friendly nations have been sunk in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all people. Each nation must decide for itself how to meet it.

When I addressed Congress on February 26th, I thought that it would be enough to assert our neutral right with arms; our right to use the sea against unlawful interference;

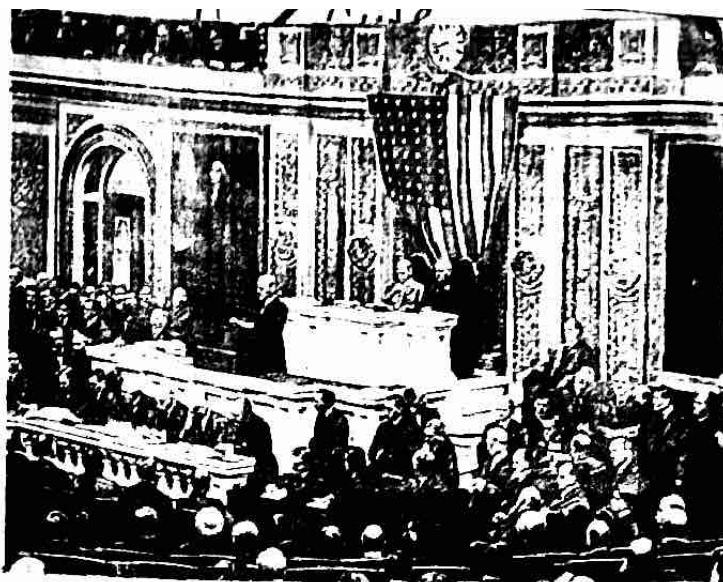
our right to keep our people safe against unlawful violence. But armed neutrality, it now appears, will not work. Because submarines are, in effect, outlaws when used as the German submarines have been used against merchant shipping, it is impossible to defend ships against their attacks. (The law of nations has assumed that merchant ships would defend themselves against cruisers or visible ships chasing them upon the open sea.) Under the present circumstances, we have to destroy the ships on sight.

The German government denies the right of neutrals to use arms at all within certain areas of the sea. The Germans say that the armed guards which we have placed on our merchant ships will be treated as outside the protection of law and dealt with as pirates would be. Armed neutrality is weak enough at best. In such circumstances it is likely only to produce what it was meant to prevent—it is practically certain to draw us into the war without either the rights or the effectiveness of belligerents.

There is one choice we cannot make, that we are incapable of making. We will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people to be ignored or violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are no common wrongs; they cut to the very roots of human life.

With a strong sense of the solemn and even tragic character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I see as my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be, in fact, nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States. I advise that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it. I advise that it take immediate steps not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defense, but also to use all its power and resources to defeat the German empire and end the war.

We are now about to accept battle with this natural foe of liberty and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the nation to end its power. We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the Ger-



President Wilson addresses Congress.

man peoples included; for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of human beings everywhere to choose their way of life and obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty.

We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no payment for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of humans. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

Just because we fight without hatred and without selfish objectives, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct ourselves without passion and observe the principles of right and fair play we are fighting for.

It is a distressing and oppressive duty which I have performed in thus speaking to you. There may be many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, with civilization itself in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace. We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for such a universal domination of right as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have. We can do this with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend its blood and its might for the principles that gave it birth, happiness, and peace. God helping us, we cannot do otherwise.

READING REVIEW

1. (a) List two reasons why Wilson felt the United States should declare war in 1917. (b) Do you agree with Wilson? Why or why not?
2. What did Wilson advise the country to do?
3. What were America's objectives upon entering World War II?

190 Women Unite to Support the War

American women made a great contribution to the war effort. Many of them took over jobs in factories and industry. Many others did volunteer work for organizations such as the Red Cross. They spent many hours preparing bandages to be used in hospitals and first-aid stations. Mary Carolyn Davies, an American writer, described this experience in a poem she called "Fifth Avenue and Grand Street." In the poem, Fifth Avenue stands for wealth and fashion, while Grand Street,

Factory workers, 1920



on New York's Lower East Side, was a low-income area where many immigrants lived.

READING FOCUS

1. What was the purpose of this poem?
2. What common element brought the women together?

I sat beside her, rolling bandages.
I peeped. "Fifth Avenue," her clothes were saying.
It's "Grand Street," I know well, my shirt-waist [a kind of dress] says,
And shoes, and hat, but then, she didn't hear,
Or she pretended not, for we were laying
Our coats aside, and as we were so near,
She saw my pin like hers. [Many women during the war wore a star-shaped pin to show that someone close to them was serving in the armed forces.]
And when girls are
Wearing a pin these days that has a star,
They smile out at each other. We did that,
And then she didn't seem to see my hat.

I sat beside her, handling gauze and lint,
And thought of Jim. She thought of someone too;
Under the smile there was a little glint
In her eyelashes, that was how I knew.
I wasn't crying—but I haven't any
Pride in it; we've a better chance than they
To take blows standing, for we've had so many.
We two sat, fingers busy, all that day.

I'd spoken first, if I'd known what to say.
But she did soon, and after, told of him.
The man she wore the star for, and the way
He'd gone at once. I bragged a bit of Jim;
Who wouldn't who had ever come to know
Him? When the girls all rose to go,
She stood there, shyly, with her gloves half on,
Said, "Come to see me, won't you?" and was gone.

I meant to call, too, I'd have liked it then
For we'd a lot in common, with our men
Across. But now that peace is here again
And our boys safe, I can't help wondering—
Well,

"Fifth Avenue and Grand Street" by Mary Carolyn Davies.

Will she forget, and crawl back in her shell
And if I call, say "Show this person out"?
Or still be friendly as she was? I doubt
If Grand [Street] will sit beside Fifth Avenue
Again, and be politely spoken to.

We're sisters while the danger lasts, it's true;
But rich and poor's equality must cease
(For women especially), of course, in peace.

READING REVIEW

1. What do you think the writer was trying to say in this poem?
2. (a) Why did it apply especially to women? (b) Do you think the writer was right? Why or why not?
3. (a) Do you think the two women described in the poem will meet and be friends after the war is over? (b) Which stanzas in the poem support your conclusion?

191 Action at the Front

During World War I, about 8 million soldiers were killed and about 20 million were wounded in the fighting. It was the first war in which tanks, dirigibles, and airplanes were used. And it was the first war in which submarines and machine guns were used on a large scale. The use of these weapons, and of poison gas, for mass killing greatly increased the horrors of the fighting. On the western front, soldiers spent weeks in muddy, rat-filled trenches facing steady artillery bombardments and the threat of poison gas.

Eldon Canright, a private from Wisconsin, spent 180 days in the trenches along the western front. In this letter home, he told his family what the fighting there was like.

READING FOCUS

1. How did Canright feel about fighting?
2. What aspects of war did he find exciting?

Somewhere in France
July 8, 1918

My Dear Folks:

I believe I have told you in another letter that because of the fine record we have made since we have been at the front, we have been chosen as "shock troops." Well, we sure are being shocked!

Try and picture the very worst thunderstorm you have ever heard. Then multiply it by about 10,000 and you will get some idea of the battle that has been and still is raging along this front and in which we are taking a very active part!

The battle started shortly after midnight a few days ago and has been raging ever since! It started with a very heavy bombardment all along the front, and as the country here is very flat, you can see for a long way. I can tell you that it is some sight at night to see the blinding flashes of the guns all along the line. Even far off on the horizon you can see the pink glow flare up and die down and flare up and die down again—very much like a city burning in the distance. The roar and crash of the guns just seems to tear the air into pieces, and explosions shake the ground. To add to the confusion you have the whine and shrieks of the shells, some coming and some going! And signal rockets of all colors are constantly shooting up into the air, and that is the way the army "talks" at night. It's a wonderful sight! The first night, a shell struck an ammunition supply and rockets went shooting in every direction. It lasted for several minutes and was very thrilling!

Of course every so often the Germans send over poison gas. We have to be constantly on the alert for it and wear our gas clothes most of the time, and carry our gas masks all the time!

We all have cotton in our ears. Still, the noise of the guns has made some of us temporarily deaf. We have not taken off any of our clothes or gone to bed since the battle started. When it slows up a little we just lie down on the ground, right by the guns, and get what little rest and sleep we can. Our meals are brought to us, as we may not leave the position long enough to go and get them!

The first day they shot down an observation balloon right near us. A pilot attacked it and hit it with his machine gun. The balloon came down in flames, but the observer jumped out and landed with a parachute! However, about a minute later, even before the observer had

Adapted from "Some War-Time Letters" by Eldon J. Canright in the Wisconsin Magazine of History, V: 192-195 (1921-1922).

hit the ground, another airplane had rushed up after the plane that "got" the balloon. The second plane shot him down and he came tumbling out of the clouds with his plane in flames. That happened three days ago, and the burned and broken airplane is still lying there, and so are the two pilots. They are an awful sight. And when the wind is in the right direction (or rather wrong direction) we get a very disagreeable odor, and there are several dead horses, etc., lying out there, too. No one has had time to bury them yet!

During the daytime there are a great many airplanes flying overhead, constantly trying to "see" what the other side is doing. We have seen some very exciting air battles. It is nothing unusual to see anywhere from two to two dozen airplanes fighting and chasing each other in and out of the clouds as they try to get into position to fire—we can hear the "spitting" of their machine guns as they fire. Sometimes you can hear them fighting when they are above the clouds, too! And twice a very daring German pilot flew down over our position and turned his machine gun on us! We could hear the "whang and spit" of the bullets as they struck the ground within a few feet of us! He flew so low that we could see the black cross on the plane and see the pilot shooting at us! But they didn't stay long. They would just shoot down and fire and then away they'd go before we had a chance to shoot back at them.

You see, we are right out in the open with no trenches to protect us, and so we are an

easy mark for anything like that! And the Germans have been sending over many shells, too! So the field around our position is all torn up with shell holes—some big ones, too. One of those big shells makes a noise like the rumble and roar of a freight train going about 1,000 miles [1609 kilometers] an hour! When we hear them coming we say, "Here comes another of the devil's fast freights!" And when they burst, a mountain of rocks and dirt shoots up in the air higher than the trees! They make a hole about eight feet [2.5 meters] deep and about fifteen feet [4.5 meters] in diameter. And shell fragments scatter for about 300 feet [91 meters]. A shell fragment makes an awful wound, too, as it just tears a great hole in you, while a bullet just drills a clean round hole! So you can imagine what would happen if one of those shells should make a "direct hit" on our position!

There is, or rather was, a little town over in a clump of trees near here—now there isn't even a wall or a piece of a house standing. There are just broken bricks and pieces of plaster scattered around.

Another thrilling sight is to see the ammunition caissons [wagons] bringing up ammunition. Each caisson is drawn by six horses hitched in teams of two, and a man rides the left horse of each team. They generally come up just before dark and you can see the long line of caissons stretching away down the road and coming at a gallop. The horses are covered with sweat and lather when they get here! We unload the caissons in a hurry and then they

Action on the front lines during World War I



start back again, at a gallop, as the Germans are apt to shell the road at any time—so they are running for their lives! In fact the other night the road was shelled when they were bringing up ammunition! The driver swung off the road and came through the fields, spurring the horses to even greater speed!

This kind of warfare means a great many killed and wounded. But I prefer it, as it is the only way to end the war—just kill off all the Germans!

I have given you details and described disagreeable things, but I just want you to know what war is and what it means for us and for everyone!

But I think it's great sport and certainly am glad I'm here and taking part in this—one of the greatest battles the world has ever known.

Love,
E. J. Canright,
Medical Department
149th Field Artillery
A.E.F.,
A.P.O. No. 715

READING REVIEW

1. How would you describe Canright's attitude toward the fighting?
2. What hardships did the soldiers on the front line face?
3. (a) Did Canright seem to share the war aims that Wilson outlined for the nation? (b) Give two pieces of evidence in the reading which supports your conclusion.
4. Do you think other soldiers shared Canright's feeling about the "sport" of war? Why or why not?

192 Celebrating the Armistice In France

For Americans the end of the war came less than two years after they entered the conflict. For Europeans the agony of the war had lasted longer—for four long years. During this time, millions of people had died and millions of others had suffered great hardships.

Mildred Aldrich, an American news reporter and writer, spent the war years living in France. She had worked for several years as a reporter and editor in Boston, then had moved to France in 1898 and bought a small house in the country near the Marne River. The Battle of the Marne in 1914 was fought in the area near her house. In this selection, she told of the end of the war and how she and her French neighbors reacted to the news of peace.

READING FOCUS

1. What were the terms of the armistice?
2. How did the French react to the news of peace?

Saturday morning [November 9] we read about the armistice in the newspapers. Stiff as the terms were, we knew that Germany could not hesitate, just as we knew that the French would not discuss. I had only to look at the two maps I had studied two days before to know that Germany was forced to accept even if the terms had been harder. Yet I could have cried to think it had come so soon. I knew that once Germany had, with Wilson's aid, been allowed to talk, the armistice was inevitable. Beaten to the point where its case was hopeless, and where the final surrender of its army was in sight, it could save itself from invasion only by accepting any terms proposed. As for the Allies, no matter how they felt, they could hardly go on with the fighting once Germany gave in. Much as one grieved that the surrender was made with Germany still the invader, the order to "cease firing" meant the saving of thousands of lives.

The expected news came early Monday morning. As we expected, the Germans had accepted the hard terms of the "unconditional surrender," and the order had been given to "cease firing" at eleven. We had known it would come, but the fact that the order had been given rather surprised us. To realize that it was over! How could one in a minute?

I was up early to wait for the papers. It was a perfectly white day. The whole world was covered with the first frost and wrapped in a deep white fog, as if the huge flag of truce were wound around it. I went out on the lawn and looked toward the north. The fog was so thick,

Adapted from Mildred Aldrich, When Johnny Comes Marching Home. Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1919.



The French and Americans celebrate Armistice Day in the streets of Paris.

I could not see as far as the hedge. Yet out there I knew the guns were still firing. Between them and me lay such devastation as even the imagination cannot exaggerate, and such suffering and pain as human understanding can but partly understand. Four years and four months—and how much is still before us? The future has its job laid out for it. Are ordinary humans capable of handling it?

Later, as I stood near the road, I heard footsteps running toward me on the frozen ground. Out of the fog came Marin, the town crier, with his drum on his back. He waved his drumsticks at me as he ran, and cried, "I am coming as fast as I can, Madame. We are ringing our bells at four—at the same time Clemenceau reads the terms in the Chamber of Deputies and Lloyd George reads them in London." As he reached the corner just above my gate he swung his drum round and beat it like mad.

It did not take two minutes for all our little village to gather about him. In a loud, clear

voice he read the order of the day, which officially announced that the war had ended at eleven o'clock. The inhabitants of the town were authorized to hang out their flags, light up their windows, and join in a dignified celebration of the liberation of France. Then he slowly lifted his cap in his hand as he read the last phrase, which begged them not to forget to pray for the brave soldiers who had given their lives that this day might be, and not to forget that to many among us this day of rejoicing was also a day of mourning.

There was not a cheer.

Amelie told the whole story when she dropped on a bench at the kitchen door, and with dry eyes and tightened lips exclaimed, "Finally! It's over. We beat them!"

After all, that was the important thing. It was not what we hoped for, or what we wanted, but the killing was over. I don't see how the French, on whose bodies and souls the burden had fallen, can, even in their disappointment, have any other thought just now.

Less than an hour after Marin passed over the hill, the mayor and his associates arrived to present me formally with the thanks of the town for the part I had taken in sharing the hard days with them. I did so wish again for some magic means by which every one of the American women who had stretched out generous helping hands across the sea to this little place could have seen the scene, and heard me try to make a French speech. I stumbled a bit, but the French are good at understanding. As far as their faces went I might have been rivaling the best French speaker. I put the honors where they were due. But in spite of all I said for the moment I was to them—America.

They all went out on the lawn before leaving to look off toward the battlefield. It was still covered with fog, although the mist had thinned. "There," said the mayor, making a sweeping gesture toward the north, "there after all it was decided, perhaps, right under our eyes. Without that victory, all the aid the States sent us later would have been in vain." Perhaps. At any rate that is still the opinion of everyone.

Then we all shook hands at the gate, and they hurried back to ring the church bells to salute the victory. I did not go with them, as they suggested. I was content to sit here on the spot where I had watched in those hot days of September 1914.

The mist was lifting slightly. All along the valley the bells rang for hours, cut at regular intervals by the booming of the guns at the forts.

I sat on the lawn alone, thinking that all over France—wherever the bells had not been destroyed—this same scene was being carried out. I was sure that in Paris, where Clemenceau was standing before the deputies, his reading of the terms of the armistice was being emphasized by guns saluting the victory and by cheers in the streets.

READING REVIEW

1. (a) Summarize the terms of the armistice. (b) What did Mildred Aldrich think about the armistice terms?
2. Describe the French reaction to the news of peace.
3. (a) Would you say that Mildred Aldrich's outlook is more French than American? (b) more American than French? (c) a mixture of both?

193 In Defense of the League

At the end of World War I, President Wilson attended the Versailles Conference, where he helped to write the peace treaty. When he returned home in 1919, he asked Congress to ratify the treaty. However, there was a bitter debate in the United States over whether the Senate should ratify the Treaty of Versailles, and thus approve America's joining the League of Nations. Many Senators were opposed to the United States' joining the League. They feared that membership in the League would involve America too deeply in European politics—perhaps even lead the nation into another war.

President Wilson, however, believed strongly in the League. As a result he decided to appeal directly to the American people for support. On a cross-country speaking tour in the fall of 1919, he made thirty-seven speeches in twenty-nine cities. But the tour ended suddenly when Wilson suffered a stroke. The following selection is from a speech Wilson gave on September 4, at the beginning of his speaking tour.

READING FOCUS

1. Why did President Wilson support the League of Nations?
2. What were some of the unique characteristics of the League of Nations?

After all the discussion of the Treaty of Versailles, perhaps you would like to know what is in it. I find it very difficult in reading some of the speeches that I have read to form any idea about that great document. It is a document unique in the history of the world for many reasons. I think I cannot do you or the peace of the world a better service than by pointing out to you what this treaty contains and what it seeks to do.

In the first place, my fellow Americans, it seeks to punish one of the greatest wrongs in history, the wrong which Germany sought to do to the world and to civilization. Germany attempted an intolerable thing, and it must be punished for the attempt. The terms of the treaty are severe, but they are not unjust.

Adapted from War and Peace: The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 1. Published by Harper & Row, Publishers, 1927.



Wilson (front left) with Taft (front right)

I can state that the people associated with me at the Peace Conference in Paris had it in their hearts to do justice and not wrong. But they knew, perhaps with a greater sense of what had happened than we could possibly know, the many solemn agreements which Germany had disregarded, the long preparation it had made to defeat its neighbors, and the complete disregard it had shown for human rights. They had seen their lands destroyed by an enemy that devoted itself not only to the effort at victory, but to the effort at terror. There is a method of adjustment in that treaty by which the reparation shall not be pressed beyond the point which Germany can pay. But it will be pressed to the greatest point that Germany can pay—which is just, which is righteous. For, my fellow citizens, this treaty is not meant only to end this single war. It is meant as a notice to any government which in the future may attempt such a thing that humanity will unite to inflict the same punishment on it.

There is no national triumph sought in this treaty. There is no glory sought for any particular nation. The thought of the leaders collected around that peace table was of their people, of the sufferings that they had gone through, of the losses they had suffered. Let

us never forget the purpose—the high purpose, the disinterested purpose—with which America lent its strength not for its own glory but for the defense of humanity.

As I said, this treaty was not intended only to end this war. It was intended to prevent any similar war. I wonder if some of the opponents of the League of Nations have forgotten the promises we made our people before we went to that peace table. We had taken men from every household, and we told mothers and fathers and sisters and wives and sweethearts that we were taking those men to fight a war which would end all wars. If we do not end wars, we are unfaithful to the loving hearts who suffered in this war.

That is what the League of Nations is for—to end this war justly, and then to serve notice on other governments which might consider trying to do the same things that Germany attempted. The League of Nations is the only thing that can prevent another dreadful catastrophe and fulfill our promises.

When people tell you, therefore, that the League of Nations is intended for some other purpose than this, answer: If we do not do this thing, we have neglected the central promise we made to our people. The rivalries of this world have not cooled. They have been made hotter than ever. The harness that is to unite nations is more necessary now that it ever was before. Unless there is this assurance of combined action before wrong is attempted, wrong will be attempted just as soon as the most ambitious nations can recover from the financial stress of this war.

Now, look at what else is in the treaty. It is unique in the history of humankind, because the heart of it is the protection of weak nations. There never was a congress of nations before that considered the rights of those who could not enforce their rights. There never was a congress of nations before that did not seek to bring about some balance of power by means of serving the strength and interest of the strongest powers concerned. This treaty says people have a right to live their own lives under the governments which they themselves choose to set up. That is the American principle, and I was glad to fight for it. If there is no League of Nations, the military point of view will win out in every instance, and peace will not last.

Some people have feared with regard to the

League of Nations that we will be forced to do things we do not want to do. If the treaty were wrong, that might be so. But if the treaty is right, we will wish to preserve right. I think I know the feelings of our great people better than do some others I hear talk.

The heart of this treaty then, my fellow citizens, is not even that it punishes Germany. That is a temporary thing. It is that it corrects the age-old wrongs which characterized the history of Europe. There were some of us who wished that the treaty also would reach some other age-old wrongs. It was a big job. I do not say that we wished that it were bigger. There were other wrongs elsewhere than in Europe which, no doubt, ought to be righted, and some day will be righted, but which we could not include in the treaty because we could deal only with the countries that the war had affected.

Have you ever thought, my fellow citizens, about the real source of revolution? Revolutions do not spring up overnight. Revolutions come from the long suppression of the human spirit. Revolutions come because people know that they have rights and that they are disregarded. When we think of the future of the world in connection with this treaty, we must remember that one of the chief efforts of those who made it was to remove that anger from the heart of great peoples who had always been suppressed, who had always been the tools in the hands of governments not their own. The makers of the treaty knew that if these wrongs were not removed, there could be no peace in the world. This treaty is an attempt to right the history of Europe.

If I were to state what seems to me the central idea of this treaty, it would be this: Nations do not consist of their governments but of their people. That is a simple idea. It seems to us in America to go without saying. But, my fellow citizens, it was never the leading idea in any other international congress made up of the representatives of governments. They were always thinking of national policy, of national advantage, of the rivalries of trade, of the advantages of territorial conquest. There is nothing of those things in this treaty.

I have not come to debate the treaty. It speaks for itself, if you will let it. The arguments against it are directed against it with a great misunderstanding of it. Therefore, I am

not going anywhere to debate the treaty. I am going to explain it. And I am going, as I do here today, to encourage you to assert the spirit of the American people in support of it. Do not let people pull it down. Do not let them misrepresent it. Do not let them lead this nation away from the high purposes with which this war was fought. When this treaty is accepted, soldiers will not have to cross the seas again. That is the reason I believe in it.

I say "when it is accepted," for it will be accepted. I have never had a moment's doubt of that. The only thing I have been impatient of has been the delay. Do you realize, my fellow citizens, that the whole world is waiting on America? The only country in the world that is trusted at this moment is the United States. The peoples of the world are waiting to see whether their trust is justified or not. That has been the reason for my impatience. I knew their trust was justified, but I resented the time that certain people wish to take in telling them so. We shall tell them so in a voice as true as any voice in history. In the years to come, people will be glad to remember that they had some part in the great struggle which brought about the fulfillment of the hopes of humankind.

READING REVIEW

1. What arguments did Wilson offer to urge the United States Congress to ratify the treaty?
2. Why, according to Wilson, was the League "unique in the history of humankind"?

194 An Attack on the League

The bitter debate over ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and joining the League of Nations lasted for many months. By the time the Senate voted in November 1919, forty-five amendments and three "reservations," or special clauses to protect American interests, had been added to the treaty. When the final vote was taken on November 19, the Senate rejected the treaty, and thus refused to have the United States join the League of Nations.

One of the leading foes of the treaty, Republican Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, delivered the following speech during the Senate debate



Senator William E. Borah

over the treaty's approval. His speech clearly reflected the views of those Americans who opposed the treaty.

READING FOCUS

1. Why did Borah oppose the League of Nations?
2. What did Borah say about "entangling alliances with Europe"?

What is the result of this Treaty of Versailles? We are in the middle of all of the affairs of Europe. We have entangled ourselves with all European concerns. We have joined in alliance with all the European nations which have thus far joined the League, and all nations which may be admitted to the League. We are sitting there dabbling in their affairs and meddling in their concerns. In other words—and this comes to the question which is fundamental with me—we have surrendered, once and for all, the great policy of "no entangling alliances" upon which the strength of this Republic has been based for 150 years.

Adapted from American Problems: A Selection of Speeches and Prophecies by William E. Borah, edited by Horace Green.

Will my friends who talk of reservations tell me where is the reservation in these articles which protects us against entangling alliances with Europe?

Will those who are differing over reservations tell me which one protects the doctrine laid down by our first President? That fundamental proposition is surrendered, and we are a part of European turmoils and conflicts from the time we enter this League.

You have put in here a reservation concerning the Monroe Doctrine. I think that, as far as language could protect the Monroe Doctrine, it has been protected. But as a practical matter, tell me honestly, as people familiar with the history of your country and of other countries, do you think that you can meddle in European affairs and keep Europe from meddling in your affairs?

There is another and even more pressing reason why I shall vote against this treaty. It endangers what I believe to be the underlying, the very first principles of this Republic. It is in conflict with the right of our people to govern themselves free from all restraint, legal or moral, by foreign powers. It challenges every principle of my political faith. If this faith were mine alone, you could accuse me of arrogance. But I am only being faithful to American ideals as they were created by those who built the Republic and as they have been extended throughout the years.

I will not, I cannot, give up my belief that America must, not alone for the happiness of its own people, but for the moral guidance and greater happiness of the world, be permitted to live its own life. Next to the tie which binds a person to his or her God is the tie which binds a person to his or her country. All schemes, all plans, however ambitious and fascinating they seem, which would compromise our country's freedom of action, I reject absolutely.

Senators, we should not close our eyes to the fact that democracy is something more than just a form of government by which society is restrained into free and orderly life. It is a moral and spiritual force as well. And these are things which live only in the air of liberty. The foundation upon which democracy rests is faith in the moral instincts of the people. Its ballot boxes, the vote, its law and constitutions are but the outward sign of the deeper and more essential thing—a continuing

trust in the moral purposes of the average man and woman.

When this is lost, your outward forms, however democratic in terms, are a mockery. You cannot mix the distinguishing virtues of a real republic with the destructive forces of the Old World and still preserve them. You cannot tie a government whose fundamental principle is that of liberty to a government whose first law is that of force and hope to preserve the former. These things are in constant conflict. One must in time destroy the other.

We may become one of the four dictators of the world, but we shall no longer be master of our own spirit. And what shall it profit us as a nation if we share with others the glory of world control but lose that fine sense of confidence in the people, the soul of democracy.

Look upon the scene as it is now presented. Behold the task we are to take on. Then think of the method by which we are to deal with this task. When this League is formed, four great powers representing the dominant people will rule half of the inhabitants of the globe as subject peoples—rule them by force, and we shall be a party to the rule of force. There is no other way by which you can keep people in subjection. You must either give them independence, recognize their rights as nations to live their own life and set up their own form of government. Or you must deny them these things by force. That is the scheme, the method proposed by the League.

We are told that this treaty means peace. Even so, I would not pay the price. Would you buy peace at the cost of any part of our independence? We could have had peace in 1776. The price was high, but we could have had it. James Otis, Sam Adams, John Hancock, and Joseph Warren were surrounded by those who encouraged peace and British rule. All through that long and trying struggle, there was a cry of peace—let us have peace.

We could have had peace in 1860. Lincoln was advised by people of great influence and wisdom to let our brothers—and, thank heaven, they are brothers—leave in peace. But the tender, loving Lincoln, bending under the fearful weight of almost certain civil war, an apostle of peace, refused to pay the price. A united country will praise his name forevermore—bless it because he refused peace at the price of national honor and national integrity. Peace upon any other basis than national in-

dependence, peace bought at the cost of any part of our national integrity, is fit only for slaves.

But your treaty does not mean peace—far, very far, from it. If we are to judge the future by the past, it means a war. Is there any guarantee of peace other than the guarantee which comes from the control of the war-making power by the people? Yet the people at no time and in no place have any voice in this scheme for world peace.

Can you hope for peace when love of country is disregarded in your scheme, when the spirit of nationality is rejected, even scoffed at? Your treaty in a dozen instances breaks the divine law of nationality. Peoples who speak the same language, kneel at the same ancestral tombs—moved by the same traditions and common hopes—are torn apart, broken in pieces, divided, and given to hostile nations. And this you call justice. No, your treaty means injustice. It means slavery. It means war. And to all this you ask this Republic to become a party. You ask it to abandon the principles under which it has grown to power and accept the principles of repression and force.

I turn from this scheme based upon force to another scheme, planned 143 years ago in old Independence Hall, in the city of Philadelphia, based upon liberty. I like it better. I have become so used to believing in it that it is difficult for me to reject it.

America will live its own life. The independence of this Republic will have its defenders. Thousands have suffered and died for it, and their sons and daughters will not be betrayed into the hands of foreigners. The noble face of our first President, so familiar to every boy and girl, looking out from the walls of the Capitol in stern reproach, will call those who come here for public service to a reckoning. The people of our beloved country will finally speak, and we will return to the policy which we now abandon. America, free in spite of all these things, will continue its mission in the cause of peace, of freedom, and of civilization.

READING REVIEW

1. Why did Borah believe that the treaty represented a danger to the United States?
2. To what American tradition did Borah appeal?
3. How did Borah use American history to strengthen his case against the treaty?