

World War I

"The War to End All Wars" Part 3: America's Road to War



American Neutrality

America had followed a policy of neutrality before and at the beginning of WWI. Many in the U.S believed the war did not concern them. Americans though soon began to take sides because the large immigrant population had roots in many of the European countries at war. Many Germany and Austrian immigrants and the 4.5 million Irish Americans—who hated the British because they ruled Ireland—favored the Central Powers. More Americans though favored the Allies whose language and customs were linked to Americans through their colonial British past.

Propaganda

- To gain support in America both sides used propaganda (information designed to influence people's opinion).
- Allied propoganda emphasized Germany's invasion of neutral Belgium and depicted horror stories of German atrocities calling the German's "Huns" who were pictured as savage barbarians.



Early American Involvement

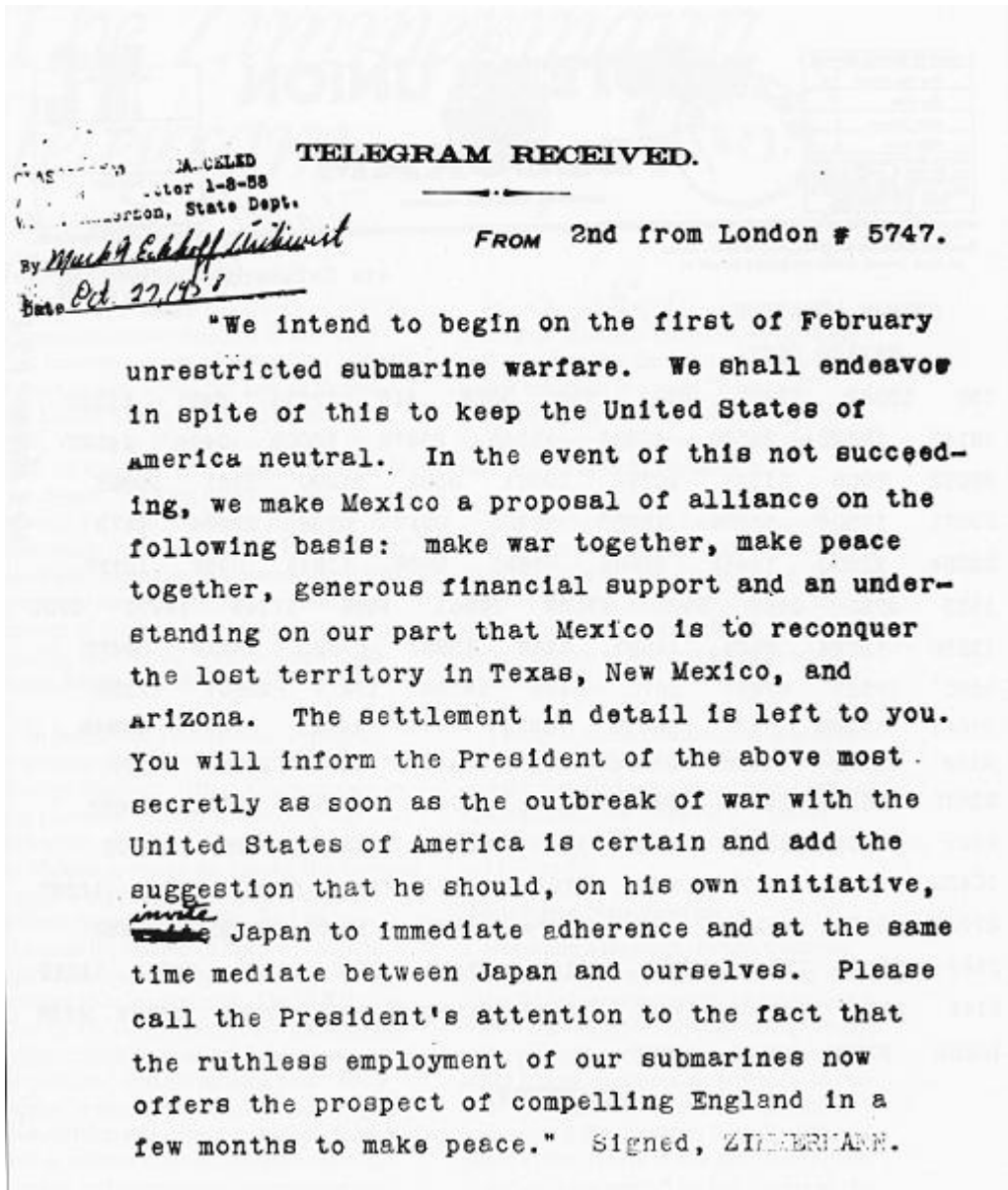
- The U.S. trades during the War with the Allies, which helped build support for the Allies.

- America tried to be neutral and trade with both sides but Britain blockaded German ports and stopped and searched U.S. ships heading to Germany often seizing the cargo.
- The U.S. protested to the British but they replied that they were fighting for their survival. Unable to break the blockade the US continued to trade with the British.
- American trade with the Allies soared with France and England borrowing billions of dollars from the US to pay for the war.
- All this business caused an economic boom in the US. The Germans became upset that the U.S. which was supposed to be neutral was helping the Allies.
- The Germans responded by attacking US and Allied ships with their U-boats (submarines and torpedoes both new WWI technologies)
- President Wilson warned Germany the US would hold them responsible for any American lives lost in U-boat attacks.
- On May 7, 1915, a U-boat sank the British passenger ship the *Lusitania* on which more than 1000 died 128 of which were Americans.
- Several months later, the *Sussex*, a French passenger ship, was torpedoed injuring several Americans.
- Fearing the US would enter the war Germany offered the **Sussex Pledge** in which they would compensate injured Americans and promised to warn neutral ships before attacking.

Neutrality Ends

- In January 1917, the Germans, believing that the US if it did now enter the war would arrive to late to help the Allies, reversed its policy on submarine warfare and said it would sink all ships without warning.
- President Wilson angered by the proclamation broke off diplomatic relations with Germany.
- The British intercepted and gave the US the Zimmerman telegram.
- US newspapers published the telegram and Americans angrily cried for war.

CLASS OF SERVICE CHANGED		WESTERN UNION		TELEGRAM		M.C.			
Post Day Message	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NEWBORN CARLTON, MISSOURI		71600		43777			
Day Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Night Message	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Night Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to									
GERMAN LEGATION				via Galveston					
MEXICO CITY				JAN 19 1917					
130	13042	13401	8501	115	3528	416	17214	8491	11310
18147	18222	21560	10247	11518	23677	13605	3494	14936	
98092	5905	11311	10392	10371	0302	21290	5161	59695	
23571	17504	11269	18276	18101	0317	0228	17694	4473	
23284	22200	19452	21589	87893	5569	13918	8958	12137	
1333	4725	4458	5905	17165	13851	4458	17149	14471	6706
13850	12224	8929	14991	7382	15857	67895	14218	36477	
5870	17553	87893	5870	5454	16102	15217	22801	17138	
21001	17388	7440	23638	18222	6719	14331	15021	23845	
3156	23552	22096	21604	4797	9497	22461	20855	4377	
23610	18140	22260	5905	13347	20420	39689	13732	20687	
6929	5275	18507	52262	1340	22049	13339	11265	22295	
10439	14814	4178	6992	8784	7632	7357	6926	52262	11267
21100	21272	9346	9559	22464	15874	18502	18500	15857	
2188	5376	7381	98092	10127	13486	9350	9220	76036	14219
5144	2831	17920	11347	17142	11264	7667	7762	15099	9110
10482	97556	3569	3670						
BEPNSTOPFF.									
Charge German Embassy.									



Russian Revolution

- Following the publication of the Zimmerman note, the US moved toward war then a Revolution took place in Russia.
- Following a period of rioting and strikes the poor peasants over-threw the Russian Czar and a new government promised free elections.

America Prepares for War

- The US had to raise an army. Congress passed the Selective Service Act that established a military draft.
- Men aged 21 to 30 (later extended from 18 to 45) registered by the millions. By the end of the war, 24 million had registered. Three million were called to war and 2 million joined voluntarily.
- Women also joined as radio operators, clerks and nurses.
- More than 300,000 African Americans joined the army and navy even though they were segregated and faced racial discrimination.

America Enters the War

- In March 1917, Germany sank four American ships and thirty-six American lives were lost.
- President Wilson decided that a German victory would destroy the balance of power in Europe and if the British Fleet were destroyed their support for the Monroe Doctrine would end and a new threat to the US close to home would exist.
- President Wilson decided the US could no longer remain neutral and Congress voted to declare war.

The Main Reasons the U.S. Entered the War

- Unrestricted submarine warfare against U.S. ships by the German U-boats.
- The Zimmerman Telegram