After World War I, Many Countries Were Changed

By ThoughtCo.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.19.17
Word Count 570
Level 610L

German Johannes Bell signs the Treaty of Versailles in France. He is shown sitting in the front chair. The treaty had been drafted by the Allied powers and was unfavorable and harsh for Germany. Image from the public domain

World War I was larger than any war that came before it. It happened 100 years ago. Millions of people died. Europe was never the same again.

Two sides fought each other. The winners were Britain, France, Russia, Italy and the United States. The countries that lost were Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was based in today’s Turkey. The Austro-Hungarian Empire occupied the center of Europe.
The United States becomes a new great power

World War I changed the United States in two important ways. First, it turned the U.S. army into one of the strongest fighting forces. For the first time, the U.S. army became as strong as any army in Europe.

Second, the war helped the United States become much richer. Many of the countries in Europe were weak from the war. This allowed the United States to take over much more of the world’s trade.

The rise of communism and socialism

World War I greatly weakened Russia. Toward the end of the war, communist revolutionaries took over the country. This was called the Russian Revolution. The communists in Russia were led by Vladimir Lenin. They did not want any one person to own factories and land as property. They thought the owners of businesses had too much power. The communists wanted workers to have more power instead.
Germany also set up a new government. It became the Weimar Republic. The new government was democratic because the people of Germany could choose their leaders. It also followed socialism. Socialism is a bit like communism but does not go as far. It does not get rid of personal property, for example.

In the end, the new government was taken down by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party. This set the stage for World War II.

**The collapse of old empires and the birth of new nations**

![Map of Europe after World War I](image)

After the war, many countries fell apart. This happened to Germany, Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. New countries were formed.

A force called nationalism was behind this. Nationalism is the idea that people with the same culture should have their own country. But nationalism caused many problems. Many countries had people with different cultures and races. Nationalism led to fighting between these groups.

**The path to World War II**

When Germany surrendered, the leader of Germany's army was very angry. This general, Erich Ludendorff, called on Germans to keep fighting.
But the new German government did not listen to Ludendorff. It wanted the war to be over. Ludendorff and many other Germans blamed this government for losing the war. They said the German army could have won if the government had not given up. This was not true, though, since Germany had been beaten already.

A "lost generation"

Eight million people died during World War I. Many others had terrible scars from the war. Many people took their own lives. Almost everyone in Europe had lost a loved one in the war.