The Ending of World War I: The Road to 11 November

Gresham College Lecture
7 November 2018
Wagon 2419D
Why The War Did Not End Earlier

• Military Stalemate
• Domestic Political Stalemate
• Diplomatic Stalemate
Lenin and Trotsky
Brest-Litovsk
The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk took away 25% of Russia’s population, 25% of the railway system, 35% of the grain-producing area and 70% of the industry, including 26% of the iron and steel production and 89% of the coal mines. And, as the loser, Russia was fined 6 billion marks.
Timeline, 1918

- 8 January: Fourteen Points
- 3 March: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
- 21 March-17 July: German and Austrian offensives
- 18 July-11 November: Allied counter-offensives
- 4/5 October: German ceasefire request
- 9 November: Wilhelm II abdicates
- 11 November: Armistice
Fourteen Points
Hindenburg and Ludendorff
Wilhelm and his Generals
Why Germany Requested an Armistice

- Bulgaria
- Western Front General Offensive
- Condition of the Army
- Condition of Home Front
Salonika Field Hospital, 1918
Balkan Breakthrough
Allied Offensives

• 15 July    Final German Attack
• 18 July    Allied Counterstroke
• 8 August   Battle of Amiens
• 26 September Start of general offensive
• 29 September Breach of Hindenburg Line
• 11 November Armistice
Australian War Memorial
After the Hindenburg Line
Heavy Artillery
Aerial Photography
Ferdinand Foch
Poilus
Amiens – Germans
German Prisoners, 1918
Figure 17  German prisoners taken by the British army in France, July 1917–December 1918
Hertling and Hintze
Why America and the Allies Granted an Armistice

- US – limited regime change; fear of the Allies; cost of the war; domestic politics
- Italy – followed France and Britain
- France – manpower and morale crisis; transport crisis
- Britain – fear of US and France; manpower shortage
Woodrow Wilson
William G. McAdoo
USA

• Limited regime change
• Fear of Allies as much as Germany
• Domestic Politics
• Finance
The European Allies

• Italy – territory from Austria; dependence on allies
• France – Alsace, Rhineland; crisis of troop numbers, morale, and transport
• Britain – Belgium, German navy; running out of men; fear of France and US

• TERMS HAD TO SATISFY ALL PARTIES
Vittorio Veneto
Georges Clemenceau
David Lloyd George
Jan Christian Smuts
Why Germany Accepted

• Removal of Ludendorff

• Collapse of Germany’s Allies

• German Revolution
Wilhelm Groener
Revolution in Prague
German Revolution
ARMISTICE IS SIGNED
GERMANY SURRENDERS

Washington, Nov. 11, 2:30 a.m.---Government at Washington officially announced the signing of the armistice by Germany, which occurred at 5:00 a.m. Paris time. Hostilities ceased at 11 a.m.

President Reads Armistice Terms

Washington, Nov. 11—Robert J. Bender At six o'clock this morning, United States Eastern time, the greatest war in history came to an end, the State Department officially announced today. The German plenipotentiaries signed United States and Allied armistice terms at Marshal Foch's headquarters at 11 o'clock this morning, French time, and the hostilities ceased at 11 o'clock this morning, French time. While the armistice merely halts war and does not end it, the terms laid down by Foch are such as to prevent Germany from renewing hostilities and the war therefore may be regarded as definitely ended. There remains now the great problems of a peace conference and the genial work of returning the fighters to the home fires.

Geneva and Brussels are considered as most likely places for the peace negotiations, and as for the General Staff has already completed its plans for a general demobilization. The nation celebrated widely to-day. Factories and stores everywhere were closed and thousands formed interwoven parades.

Kaiser Bill Flees to Holland

London, Nov. 11, 2:30 a.m.---Kaiser is leaving. All means are being used to show that in addition to the Emperor all the Kings, Princes, Grand Dukes and other Royalty of the Empire, had renounced their rights to rule over a people which already has achieved the right by Revolution. Former Kaiser Bill has fled to Sweden followed by his family.

All Draft Calls are Cancelled

Washington—President Wilson will read Armistice Terms to Congress today he has also cancelled all outstanding Draft calls.
On to Berlin?

Beat back the HUN with LIBERTY BONDS
John J. Pershing
Ferdinand Foch
Douglas Haig
Dolchstoßlegende, 1924
London, Armistice Day, 1919