# World War I: Remembering the War to End All Wars

The year is 1918 and as an American soldier fighting in the World War for almost two years, I am much relieved to return home following the end of the war. The kind of destruction and agony I have witnessed on the battle ground will remain engraved in my mind forever. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have lost their lives over the course of the war and the property destroyed must be worth millions of dollars, maybe billions. However, one thing is for sure – the effect on us Americans is not as critical as it is for the Europeans who have participated for a much longer period of time. This is because Americans entered the war towards its end, unlike the Europeans who have been fighting since its onset in 1914. As I return home to Chicago, however, it is evident that the effects of the war stretched beyond the battleground and that life will never be the same again not only for those of who participated directly, but more so for the future of America as a whole.

The first effect I have already witnessed after coming back to Chicago is that to my dismay, I am already jobless. Before myself and other primarily white youths from my hometown and elsewhere were recruited to represent the United States’ at the war, we had well-paying jobs in the industrial and commercial sectors. The salaries and wages we made were adequate enough to feed our families and earn us a decent life. However, after coming back we have found that the Great Migration has already occurred, whereby the African Americans have been migrating in their hundreds of thousands from their former rural settlements in the South to the cities in the West, North, and Mideast, Chicago included (Grossman, 1991). Not only have they taken up most of our former residential areas, but they have also taken up our former jobs since they are willing to work for far much less that we did. Given that there were so many of us who are returning to Chicago only to find our jobs and residential areas taken over, I foresee a situation where there will be riots against the African Americans in the very near future.

Apart from that, I feel a lot of pride having been part of the United States army that participated in the war. This is because I foresee a situation where the United States will emerge as the new military and industrial leader in the world. Our late entry into the war means that we lost much fewer men than our European counterparts whose cities have been war-torn since the onset of the war. However, our cities and army have been relatively unscathed as a result of the Great War. This has had the positive effect of seeing minimal destruction of our military equipment. In addition, we entered into the war at a time when the previous military superpowers in Europe, Russia, and Asia had exhausted much of their arsenal and other war equipment that were not only very expensive but also took a very long time to build. The United States’ entry into the war was very critical to the destruction of the previous superpowers. As a result, the nation will certainly be viewed by the whole world as the new global superpower.

While industrial production in Europe and elsewhere will suffer immensely as a result of the war, the industries and factories in America will have increased production and efficiency in the future. The industrial technology has not really suffered and the increasing production and efficiency is likely to propel our nation into the age of electricity and steel. This will provide great prospects for the nation because as it stands, the other first-world nations in the world such as those in Europe and Asia will require massive amounts of electricity and steel in order to rebuild and recover (web). Trade with such nations will increase and the United States will earn a lot of foreign exchange. This will make our nation to proper greatly not only in the near future but also in the decades to come.

I also foresee a situation where the roles of women will change greatly in our society. As the war progressed, many women took up the jobs and roles that were previously a reserve of men. For instance, as many men went into war, some of their jobs were taken over by the women. In addition, as the men who had been husbands went to take part in the war, their wives took up the full responsibility of taking care of their households. Even after the war, the women seem to have become comfortable in their new roles in such a way that they have developed new identities. This is not likely to change and it appears as though their influence and role in the American society will keep increasing.

Even with the future financial prospects of the nation looking good, the end of the World War I still brings with it various future uncertainties. The industries and the economy of the US may experience a boom that will certainly result into profits. However, this is also likely to bring with it a number of undesirable effects. For instance, the inflation is likely to go high to extreme levels. In addition, industries will attempt to reduce their operating costs and as a result, businesses might end up reducing their workers’ wages and even lay off some or most of their workers (Osborne, 2002). This is not a good thing for the future of the nation because so many families will suffer as a result. With so many families depending on a sole bread winner, when their wages are reduced or are laid off altogether they will face difficult times ahead.

The inflation seems to be an inevitable effect. It will in effect, increase the cost of living which will in turn translate to higher costs of housing, clothing, food, and other essentials which the people in the low income bracket will find difficult to meet. This is not a good prospect for a nation that has so many marginalized communities fighting for equitable social treatment. For instance, the Great Migration that is currently ongoing is an effort by the African Americans to avoid segregation and find equitable social treatment. It is likely that there may be race riots arising as a result. Moreover, the high cost of living may lead to emergence of organized crime, gangsters, and speakeasies which will lead to increase violence and crime at the bottom class, as well as massive political corruption at the top.

## References

American Historama. Effects of WW1 on America.

Grossman, J. (1991). *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Osborne, L. B. (2002). Come On In, America: The US in World War I. New York. Willy & Sons Press.