**THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE**

In 1915, leaders of the Turkish government set in motion a plan to expel and massacre Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. Though reports vary, most sources agree that there were about 2 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the massacre. By the early 1920s, when the massacres and deportations finally ended, some 1.5 million of Turkey’s Armenians were dead, with many more forcibly removed from the country. Today, most historians call this event a genocide–a premeditated and systematic campaign to exterminate an entire people. However, the Turkish government does not acknowledge the enormity or scope of these events. Despite pressure from Armenians and social justice advocates throughout the world, it is still illegal in Turkey to talk about what happened to Armenians during this era.

**THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTON**

In 1917, two revolutions swept through Russia, ending centuries of imperial rule and setting in motion political and social changes that would lead to the formation of the Soviet Union. In March, growing civil unrest, coupled with chronic food shortages, erupted into open revolt, forcing the abdication of Nicholas II (1868-1918), the last Russian czar. Just months later, the newly installed provisional government was itself overthrown by the more radical Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924).

**THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA**

Perhaps the most recognizable symbol of China and its long and vivid history, the Great Wall of China actually consists of numerous walls and fortifications, many running parallel to each other. Originally conceived by Emperor Qin Shi Huang (c. 259-210 B.C.) in the third century B.C. as a means of preventing incursions from barbarian nomads into the Chinese Empire, the wall is one of the most extensive construction projects ever completed. The best-known and best-preserved section of the Great Wall was built in the 14th through 17th centuries A.D., during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Though the Great Wall never effectively prevented invaders from entering China, it came to function more as a psychological barrier between Chinese civilization and the world, and remains a powerful symbol of the country’s enduring strength.

**KOREAN WAR**

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War began when some 75,000 soldiers from the North Korean People’s Army poured across the 38th parallel, the boundary between the Soviet-backed Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the north and the pro-Western Republic of Korea to the south. This invasion was the first military action of the Cold War. By July, American troops had entered the war on South Korea’s behalf. As far as American officials were concerned, it was a war against the forces of international communism itself. After some early back-and-forth across the 38th parallel, the fighting stalled and casualties mounted with nothing to show for them. Meanwhile, American officials worked anxiously to fashion some sort of armistice with the North Koreans. The alternative, they feared, would be a wider war with Russia and China–or even, as some warned, World War III. Finally, in July 1953, the Korean War came to an end. In all, some 5 million soldiers and civilians lost their lives during the war. The Korean peninsula is still divided today.

**THE BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI**

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**IRAN – IRAQ WAR**

The protracted war between these neighboring Middle Eastern countries resulted in at least half a million casualties and several billion dollars’ worth of damages, but no real gains by other side. Started by Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein in September 1980, the war was marked by indiscriminate ballistic-missile attacks, extensive use of chemical weapons and attacks on third-country oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. Although Iraq was forced on the strategic defensive, Iran was unable to reconstitute effective armored formations for its air force and could not penetrate Iraq’s borders deeply enough to achieve decisive results. The end came in July 1988 with the acceptance UN Resolution 598.

**GANDHI’S NON-VIOLENT CAMPAIGN**

Revered the world over for his nonviolent philosophy of passive resistance, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was known to his many followers as Mahatma, or “the great-souled one.” He began his activism as an Indian immigrant in South Africa in the early 1900s, and in the years following World War I became the leading figure in India’s struggle to gain independence from Great Britain. Known for his ascetic lifestyle–he often dressed only in a loincloth and shawl–and devout Hindu faith, Gandhi was imprisoned several times during his pursuit of non-cooperation, and undertook a number of hunger strikes to protest the oppression of India’s poorest classes, among other injustices. After Partition in 1947, he continued to work toward peace between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi was shot to death in Delhi in January 1948 by a Hindu fundamentalist.

**UKRAINE DECLARES INDEPENDENCE**

The defeat of the Central Powers and the signing of the armistice in November 1918 forced Germany and Austria to withdraw from Ukraine. At the same time, with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire, an independent West Ukrainian republic was proclaimed in the Galician city of Lviv. The two Ukrainian states proclaimed their union in early 1919, but independence was short-lived, as they immediately found themselves in a three-way struggle against troops from both Poland and Russia. The Ukrainian government briefly allied themselves with Poland, but could not withstand the Soviet assault. In 1922, Ukraine became one of the original constituent republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.); it would not regain its independence until the U.S.S.R.’s collapse in 1991.

**PHILIPPINE AMERICAN WAR**

During the Spanish-American War, Filipino rebels led by Emilio Aguinaldo proclaim the independence of the Philippines after 300 years of Spanish rule. By mid-August, Filipino rebels and U.S. troops had ousted the Spanish, but Aguinaldo’s hopes for independence were dashed when the United States formally annexed the Philippines as part of its peace treaty with Spain.

More than 4,000 Americans perished suppressing the Philippines–more than 10 times the number killed in the Spanish-American War. More than 20,000 Filipino insurgents were killed, and an unknown number of civilians perished. In 1935, the Commonwealth of the Philippines was established with U.S. approval, and Manuel Quezon was elected the country’s first president. On July 4, 1946, full independence was granted to the Republic of the Philippines by the United States.

**THE FIRST COLONY IN AUSTRALIA**

The first 736 convicts banished from England to Australia land in Botany Bay. Over the next 60 years, approximately 50,000 criminals were transported from Great Britain to the “land down under,” in one of the strangest episodes in criminal-justice history.

The accepted wisdom of the upper and ruling classes in 18th century England was that criminals were inherently defective. Thus, they could not be rehabilitated and simply required separation from the genetically pure and law-abiding citizens. Accordingly, lawbreakers had to be either killed or exiled, since prisons were too expensive. With the American victory in the Revolutionary War, transgressors could no longer be shipped off across the Atlantic, and the English looked for a colony in the other direction.

Captain Arthur Phillip, a tough but fair career naval officer, was charged with setting up the first penal colony in Australia. The convicts were chained beneath the deck during the entire hellish six-month voyage. The first voyage claimed the lives of nearly 10 percent of the prisoners, which remarkably proved to be a rather good rate. On later trips, up to a third of the unwilling passengers died on the way. These were not hardened criminals by any measure; only a small minority were transported for violent offenses. Among the first group was a 70-year-old woman who had stolen cheese to eat.

**KHMER ROUGE**

The Khmer Rouge troops capture Phnom Penh and government forces surrender. The war between government troops and the communist insurgents had been raging since March 1970, when Lt. Gen. Lon Nol had ousted Prince Norodom Sihanouk in a bloodless coup and proclaimed the establishment of the Khmer Republic.

Between 1970 and 1975, Lon Nol and his army, the Forces Armees Nationale Khmer (FANK), with U.S. support and military aid, battled the communist Khmer Rouge for control of Cambodia. During the five years of bitter fighting, approximately 10 percent of Cambodia’s 7 million people died. When the U.S. forces departed South Vietnam in 1973, both the Cambodians and South Vietnamese found themselves fighting the communists alone. Without U.S. support, Lon Nol’s forces fought on, but eventually succumbed to the Khmer Rouge. With the surrender, the victorious Khmer Rouge evacuated Phnom Penh and set about reordering Cambodian society. This resulted in a killing spree and the notorious “killing fields.” Eventually, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians were murdered or died from exhaustion, hunger, and disease.

**VIETNAM WAR**

The Vietnam War was a long, costly armed conflict that pitted the communist regime of North Vietnam and its southern allies, known as the Viet Cong, against South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States. The war began in 1954 (though conflict in the region stretched back to the mid-1940s), after the rise to power of Ho Chi Minh and his communist Viet Minh party in North Vietnam, and continued against the backdrop of an intense Cold War between two global superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. More than 3 million people (including 58,000 Americans) were killed in the Vietnam War; more than half were Vietnamese civilians. By 1969, at the peak of U.S. involvement in the war, more than 500,000 U.S. military personnel were involved in the Vietnam conflict. Growing opposition to the war in the United States led to bitter divisions among Americans, both before and after President Richard Nixon ordered the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973. In 1975, communist forces seized control of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War, and the country was unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam the following year.