



The celebration in Paris on the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

THE PARIS PEACE SETTLEMENT

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It was not Lenin who drew the charter of postwar Europe: it was the remaining Allied powers. It was the Council of Four at the Paris Peace Conference, January to June 1919: President Woodrow Wilson of the United States; Premier Georges Clemenceau of France; Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain; Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando of Italy; along with Prince Kimmochi Saionji of Japan, an Asian state now being recognized formally for the first time as a Great Power.

The delegates and their staffs who assembled in Paris in January 1919 gathered, as peace conferences had gathered before, for the victors to impose their will on the vanquished. In wide sectors of an attentive public, however, and among some of the most powerful delegations, there prevailed strong feelings that this peace should not be one-sided, like the vain, ephemeral treaties of the past. Europeans wanted to change the very basis of politics among states and within states so that there would never be another war. A total peace, many felt, was the only appropriate end to a total war.

Harold Nicolson, a young member of the British delegation, recalled later how optimistically he had gone to Paris. He had been sure that

"he knew exactly what mistakes" the "misguided, the reactionary, the pathetic aristocrats" who had represented Britain in earlier conferences had made.

We were journeying to Paris not merely to liquidate the war, but to found a New Order in Europe. We were preparing not peace only, but Eternal Peace. There was about us the halo of some divine mission.¹

THE SETTING: IDEALS, INTERESTS, AND IDEOLOGY

War Aims

Expectations about the peace had been strongly colored by wartime emotions. A long war was impossible without massive propaganda campaigns to rally the home fronts. The war willingness of Entente populations was first nurtured by stories of German aggression and atrocities in Belgium. In time, propagandists on both sides began to extoll the social reforms that victory would make possible. The German parliamentary opposition was mollified by promises to abolish the old three-class voting system² in Prussia. In Britain, H. G. Wells justified the war for liberals by calling it "the War that will end war."³ War governments thus made an implicit bargain to win their populations' hearts: give all for victory, and a better world will follow.

By a series of steps, the war had shifted from a fight over national interests to a crusade for principles. At the beginning, it had been difficult to argue that the Entente, including Tsarist Russia, stood for democracy and progress against the Central Powers. But the first Russian Revolution of February 1917 allowed the Allied populations to believe that their side now represented democracy.

In October 1917, Lenin announced that Russia was leaving the war and called for all peoples to force their rulers to end a war whose aims were solely "to decide which of the strong and healthy nations should dominate the weak ones."⁴ To reinforce these accusations of imperialist war aims, the new Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Leon Trotsky, got the keys and combinations to safes in the deserted foreign ministry and published copies of the wartime secret treaties. In this way, European populations first learned what deals had been reached by secret diplomacy: that the Russians were fighting in order to annex Galicia from the Austrians and the Straits from the Turks; that the French had received Russian promises of support for its reconquest of Alsace-

¹Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919* (London, 1935), p. 25.

²See Chapter 1, p. 26.

³Quoted in the *Daily News*, August 14, 1914. See also A. D. Lindsay, *The War to End War* (London, 1915).

⁴Vladimir I. Lenin, "Decree on Peace, October 26, 1917," in *Selected Works*, vol. 6 (New York, 1936), p. 401.

Lorraine; that Italy expected to expand around the head of the Adriatic Sea and into the Alps. Lacking other weapons, the Bolsheviks sought to get out of the war by exposing all nations' expansionist goals to their war-weary populations.

The "Fourteen Points"

President Wilson's Fourteen Points speech of January 8, 1918, was an attempt to recapture the propaganda initiative from Lenin. Wilson shifted the war aims debate away from Lenin's appeal for immediate peace to the good peace that could follow Allied victory. Speaking to the United States Congress in the traditional State of the Union address, Wilson outlined in "Fourteen Points" a lasting, just peace that would warrant persevering on to victory. Several declarations of principle later in 1918 completed the Wilsonian vision of eventual peace. Its basic principles were "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" to replace secret diplomacy; freedom of commerce and trade; reduction of armaments; "readjustment" of colonial empires so that the interests of indigent populations should have "equal weight" with those of the imperial powers; self-determination of peoples so that nations could have rulers of their choosing and frontiers corresponding as fully as possible to national lines; and, finally, the formation of a "general association of nations" to keep the peace and guarantee the safety of "great and small states alike."

While some Europeans on both sides were ready to achieve Lenin's vision of immediate peace through revolution, a majority on the Allied side placed almost religious hopes in Wilson's vision of the just peace that could follow victory. In Britain, Wilson's ascendancy lent further influence to such liberal war critics as the Union of Democratic Control. Wilson's assumptions coincided with theirs: that democracies based on the nationality principle were more peaceable than autocracies; that diplomats would keep the peace if subjected to public scrutiny; and that if national aspirations were granted, there would be no future grounds for war. Wilson's views also made him a prophet elsewhere in Europe; he seemed to crystallize unformed but fervent hopes for a release from the old order that had produced the First World War. As Wilson toured parts of Europe on his way to Paris, he was thronged by adulatory crowds, especially in Italy. Most importantly, it was to Wilson that the Germans had turned for an armistice, which they asked to be based on the Fourteen Points. The liberal critique of the war emerged, then, as the dominant intellectual influence on the making of the peace.

It was impossible, of course, to draft peace terms purely on the basis of abstract ideas. The deliberations were powerfully shaped by three sets of pragmatic considerations: prior treaties and agreements that the Allies had made with one another and with other peoples during the war; the various national strategic and economic interests of the participating

nations; and the containment of revolutionary regimes in central and Eastern Europe in the spring of 1919. In the end, the idealistic language of the peace treaties jarred badly with the interests and deals reflected in their actual terms.

Wartime Treaties and Promises

First came the wartime "secret treaties" to complicate the work of the peacemakers. As the war had settled into stalemate in the fall of 1914, the Allied governments had tried to solidify and enlarge their alliance by making secret promises. Partly to help prevent a Russian separate peace, Britain and France agreed in March and April 1915 that after an Allied victory Russia should control Constantinople and the Straits in return for Russian acceptance of British aims in Egypt and French aims in Alsace-Lorraine. The Treaty of London, signed on April 26, 1915, held out rich promises to Italy in exchange for Italian entry into the war on the Allied side. In the event of Allied victory, Italy was to receive the Alpine areas up the Brenner Pass, large sections of the islands and coastline at the head of the Adriatic Sea, the south coast of Turkey if the Ottoman Empire were divided up after the war, and expansion of Libya and other Italian African colonies. Shortly thereafter, Italy ended its neutrality and, denouncing its German-Austrian alliances that went back to 1882, declared war on Austria-Hungary. Romania had been brought into the war on the Allied side after the promise on August 18, 1916, of major expansion in the partly Romanian areas of Hungary, especially the rich plain of Transylvania. But since Romania had made a separate peace with Germany on May 7, 1918, these promises could be assumed to have lapsed.

During most of the war the Allies had threatened to amputate territory from the Central Powers but not to destroy them. At the end of the war, however, they also made promises to minority peoples within the great multinational empires on the other side, and contributed to the revolutionary pressures of nationalism within them.

The Poles were the first stateless people to receive public Allied support for postwar national independence. As long as Russia remained in the war on the Allied side, many Poles, such as the socialist-nationalist leader Josef Pilsudski, had seen more promise for statehood in a German victory. The Germans had announced in November 1916 their intention of making former Russian Poland an independent kingdom. When Russia left the war in the spring of 1918, however, the Allies made a unified Polish national state—comprised of German Poland, Austrian Poland, and Russian Poland—a public war aim. An "independent Poland" with access to the sea was Point 13 of Wilson's Fourteen Points of January 1918.

The Allies recognized the independence of other Habsburg subjects in the summer of 1918. The Czecho-Slovak National Council in Paris,

benefiting from the anti-Bolshevik activities of the Czech Legion in Siberia, was recognized as a *de facto* government. Although the Allies declined to choose an official spokesman for all South Slavs from among the Serbian government in Belgrade, the Yugoslav Committee in London, and the Yugoslav National Council in Zagreb, they accepted the goal of a single South Slav state. By the end of October 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had simply ceased to count outside the German and Hungarian areas, as the subject peoples took local administration into their own hands. Thus the Peace Conference was confronted in 1919 not only with Allied promises but with a series of *faits accomplis* by which the new nationalities had asserted their existence.

The peoples of another great multinational empire—Ottoman Turkey, which had been drawn into the war by German influence in November 1914—were the object of particularly vague and contradictory promises that returned to haunt the Peace Conference. One set of promises was the result of British efforts to encourage Arab separatism as a weapon against the Turks and a buffer around the Suez Canal. First, they supported guerrilla operations among the Bedouin along the Hijaz Railway in what is today Saudi Arabia.⁵ British officials led one of the main Arab families, the Hashemites, to expect British support for an independent Arab kingdom in the Near East if the Arabs helped destroy the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916, British and French officials were dividing between themselves future colonial spheres of influence in the Near East that were in irreconcilable conflict with the very notion of an independent Arab state. By this understanding, the French were to have predominant influence in the northern coastal areas and their hinterland (Syria, the Lebanon) while the British were to exercise control in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley (present-day Iraq) and in the Jordan Valley (present-day Israel and Jordan). Finally, the British government agreed in the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 to “look with favor” on the creation of a Jewish “national home” in Palestine, thus encouraging Zionist hopes at potential variance with both other sets of understandings.

The bearers of all these wartime promises and aspirations attempted to cash them in at the Peace Conference that convened in Paris in January 1919. The national committees of Czechoslovakia and Poland, already recognized as governments, were there. So was Prince Faisal of the Hashemite family, with Colonel T. E. Lawrence, in order to argue for an Arab kingdom in the Middle East. Chaim Weizmann, a chemist from Manchester, lobbied for the Zionist ideal of a Jewish national homeland. W. E. B. DuBois organized the first Pan-African Congress on the fringes of the conference. But it was obvious that the secret treaties

⁵A highly romanticized account of this action by its British leader T. E. Lawrence was the source of a great postwar legend. See T. E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London, 1935).

and the national hopes of the war years were going to meet with very unequal recognition at the Peace Conference. The Czechs, for example, had used their segment of the old Habsburg armed force and local bureaucracy to establish their own *de facto* state even before the armistice; the Arabs, by contrast, had only their dreams.

Even if victorious Great Powers had chosen to honor all their promises, it was not within their power to do so. Some of them were simply unfulfillable. There was no way, for example, to draw a Poland that was both ethnically predominantly Polish and still had access to the sea, as President Wilson had recommended. Some agreements, as in the case of the Middle East, were contradictory. Moreover, the earlier "secret treaties" with previously existing states dated from a time when the war was still being waged for dynastic and national interests. Those agreements shifted frontiers with cavalier disregard for ethnic lines and popular self-determination. The emergence of the war aims issue as a major ingredient of propaganda for restless and war-weary peoples, and the intense popular longing for a change in world politics along the lines advocated in the liberal critique of the war, made this kind of territorial deal unacceptable. It was far more difficult in 1919 to bargain away tracts of land without regard to their inhabitants' feelings than it had been in 1915.

National Interests of the Great Powers

A second set of considerations that shaped the Peace Conference's work was the national and strategic self-interest of the principal victors. Georges Clemenceau, in particular, represented France with keen awareness that his people had borne the brunt of the Allied war effort and must bear the brunt of enforcing the peace terms on the continent of Europe. He was determined that the peace terms should favor French security.

The French understood only too well that their influence in 1918 as the main Continental Great Power was an artificial and transitory situation. They could not afford to revel in victory in 1918 as if it had been total and unambiguous. The French had nearly collapsed at home in May 1917 and on the front in July 1918. And in the longer run, they were haunted by the growing industrial and demographic imbalance between 60 million Germans and 40 million Frenchmen. The French predominance of 1918 rested on the simultaneous eclipse of Germany and Russia, a state of affairs virtually unprecedented in the history of Great Power rivalries in modern Europe. French troops provided the vast bulk of armed force not only on Germany's western frontier but in Eastern Europe as well. Theirs was the main force between Germany and Russia, and French military advisors assisted in the capitals of many Eastern European successor states. It was tempting to try to transform their temporary military superiority into a permanent system of dykes



French Premier Georges Clemenceau, United States President Woodrow Wilson, and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George (left to right) leave the Versailles Palace after signing the treaty with Germany, June 1919.

and barriers behind which the decline of Germany and Russia might become permanent.

A major thread running through the Peace Conference was Clemenceau's stubborn campaign for firm guarantees of French security. An even more intransigent French nationalist group on his right battled for detachment of the Rhineland from Germany so that the Rhine River could serve as a military frontier. But Clemenceau was able to assert his authority over this group, and in fact profited by its public opposition. By renouncing claims to a separate Rhineland, Clemenceau could refuse to make other concessions. French security interests remained a major criterion for deciding which of the various nationalities would be favored in the postwar system.

Clemenceau was not the only Great Power spokesman to press national interests forward at the conference. The French charged the British with wishing to revive Germany as a "balance" against the victorious French and as a trading partner. Indeed, there is some evidence to support the charge. British national interest seemed to lie in a self-enforcing nonpunitive peace and rapid economic revival. The British economist John Maynard Keynes stressed the economic importance of a healthy Germany to the European economy in his best-seller *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, which was published the following year. David Lloyd George supported President Wilson in opposing the French

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plans for a separate Rhineland. The British also tried to obtain an active role in former German colonies in Africa and in the Middle Eastern territories "liberated" from the Ottoman Turks.

President Wilson did not hesitate to fight for United States interests. The Polish constituency in America provided him with good domestic political reasons for supporting Polish claims beyond their ethnic limits. And such Wilsonian principles as the "absolute freedom of navigations upon the seas . . . alike in peace and in war" of the Fourteen Points (Point 2) and removal of barriers to international trade (Point 3) were helpful to a rising commercial power. President Wilson also was forced by mounting Senate opposition to have a phrase inserted in the League of Nations Covenant (Article 21) explicitly asserting that the League did not supersede "regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine."

Fear of Bolshevism

The third set of pragmatic considerations that influenced the Peace Conference was alarm about spreading revolution. This theme has received little attention in histories of the Peace Conference until relatively recently, when scholars like Arno Mayer began probing back to the 1917 to 1919 period for evidences of the beginnings of the Cold War.⁶ The conference did, in fact, devote a lot of time and energy to the wave of revolutions apparently sweeping Europe in the spring of 1919, and to the question of how to deal with the new Soviet regime in Russia.

The German armies were not required at first to withdraw from former Russian territories in the east, even though the armistice terms demanded it. German troops remained in the Ukraine and in former Russian Poland until February 1919. They held some vital railroad lines in the Baltic region until the new governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could assure their own stability in the summer of 1919. Thus, eight months after the armistice, a *Freikorps* of some 30,000 German volunteers under General Rüdiger von der Goltz was still on a war footing in the fluid borderlands of Eastern Europe, acting as *de facto* allies of the Western powers against the Bolsheviks.

This help did not win the Germans a role in the Paris settlement as counterbalance to Russia. Instead, the Allies set up a *cordon sanitaire* of Eastern states whose function was to apply counterweight to both Germany and Soviet Russia. The new Poland spread beyond its ethnic frontiers to the east as well as to the west, especially after the French helped Poland in the Russo-Polish War of 1920 and 1921. The new Czechoslovakia extended eastward to include Ruthenian people, closely related to Ukrainians; Romania acquired two ethnically related but

⁶Arno J. Mayer, *The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-19* (New York, 1968).

mixed areas: Bessarabia from former Russian territory and Transylvania from Hungary. These new states were meant to keep both Bolsheviks and Germans bottled up within smaller frontiers.

The Peace Conference leaders' anti-Bolshevism was strong enough to make them forget their commitment to democracy in an emergency. In Hungary they acquiesced in the formation of a reactionary government as the most effective successor to Béla Kun's soviet experiment. Although it was Béla Kun himself who caused his own downfall by attacking the Romanian Army in Transylvania, the Allies imposed no effective restraint when the Romanians advanced into Budapest in August 1919 and expelled not only Kun but the moderate socialists who tried to govern after him. The Allies were willing to negotiate the Hungarian peace settlement with the Hungarian officers who took charge when the Romanians withdrew, men of the right without sympathy for any Wilsonian principle except anti-Bolshevism.

It will not do, of course, to make anti-Bolshevism the predominant motive in Paris. Four years of anti-German propaganda could not be forgotten in a moment, especially by the French. Many conservatives thought at first that the Bolsheviks were simply German agents. In January 1919, the French *Action française* journalist Jacques Bainville rejoiced in the Spartacist uprising in Berlin, predicting that a soviet Germany would be weak and fragmented. Premier Clemenceau always waved away German warnings that a harsh peace would spread Bolshevism. Fear of Bolshevism did not win an easier peace for Germany nor produce a rapid thaw with the Germans as in 1947 to 1949.

THE SETTLEMENT

The terms finally produced by the Peace Conference are known collectively as the peace settlement of Paris. Actually, there were five separate treaties, one with each of the defeated states. Each bears the name of the palace near Paris where the formal signing ceremony took place. The first and most important was the Treaty of Versailles, with Germany, signed on June 28, 1919, in the Hall of Mirrors in that vast palace. Terms were reached with Austria in the Treaty of Saint Germain of September 10, 1919, and with Hungary in the Treaty of the Trianon on June 4, 1920, after the destruction of Béla Kun's soviet regime. The Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria was signed on November 27, 1919. Last of all, delayed by the rise of a Turkish nationalist movement under Mustafa Kemal, was the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey on August 10, 1920.

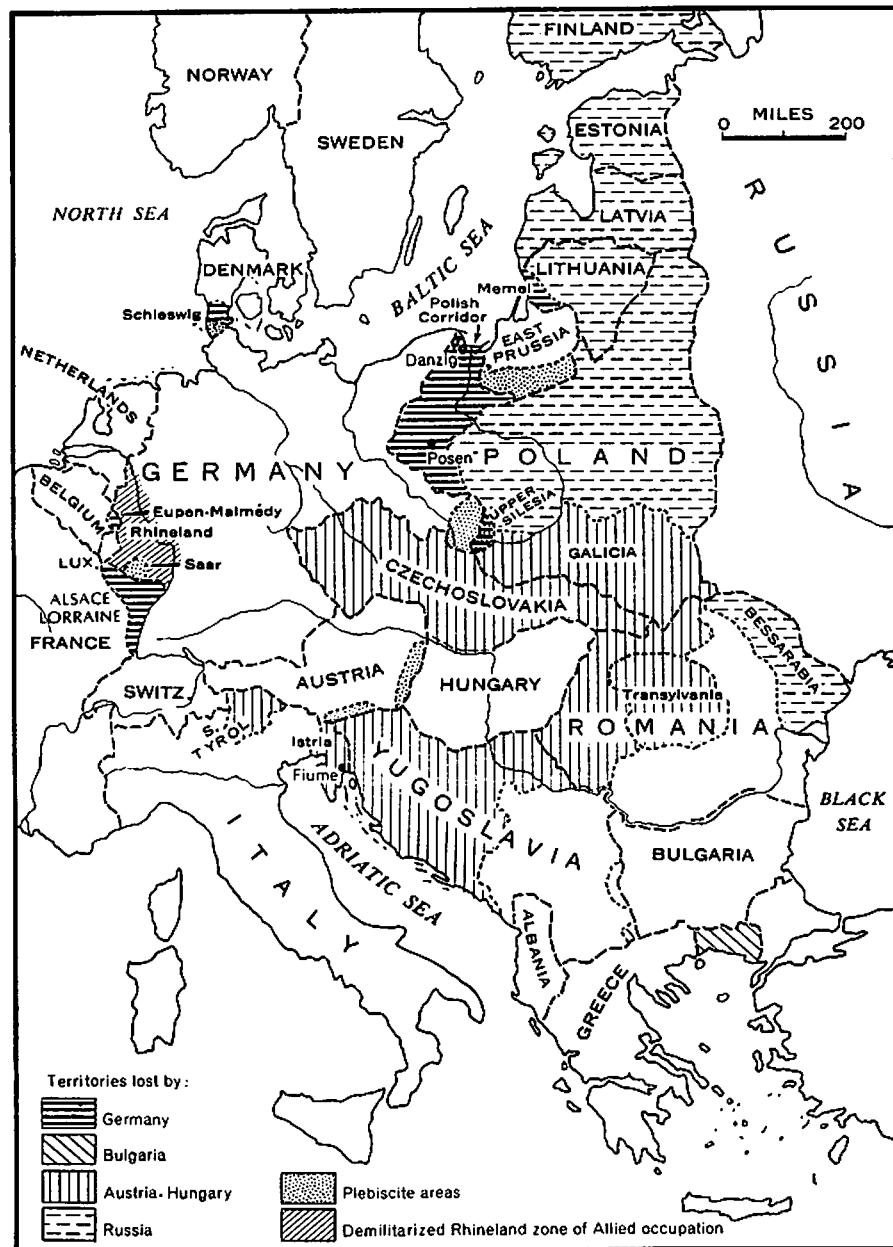
Instead of studying each treaty in detail, we shall look briefly at the terms as a whole, as they applied to Western and Eastern Europe. But first we should consider the first major act of the conference, the adoption of the League of Nations Covenant.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COVENANT

It was President Wilson who insisted that the first business of the conference be the establishment of a permanent peacekeeping organization, a League of Nations. Considerable popular sentiment for basic changes in the conduct of international relations stood behind this proposal, and Wilson, the first president of the United States to visit Europe while in office, invested all his personal prestige in it.

The principle of a League of Nations was unanimously adopted on January 25, 1919. Drafting the exact terms of the League Covenant took

THE PEACE SETTLEMENTS IN EUROPE, 1919-1920



up much of the early months of that year. As finally adopted on April 28, the League of Nations Covenant created a General Assembly of all member states⁷ and a Council consisting of the five Great Powers plus four other nations elected by the General Assembly. The League members agreed to "respect and preserve" the territorial integrity of all members—that is, to maintain the national boundaries as they existed after the First World War. In case of disputes, the members of the League bound themselves to submit to arbitration, judicial award, or enquiry by the League Council, and they agreed not to go to war until three months after such steps had been completed. If any League member went to war in spite of these rules, the others were bound to take "sanctions" against that member in the form of blockade or even military action (Article 16). The League, however, was not sovereign. It had no military force of its own, and it could not take action without unanimous consent of the Council.

The League Covenant contained a number of other important general provisions. The colonies and overseas territories of the defeated nations were not awarded directly to the victors, as in the past, but placed under the "tutelage" of the League, if they were "not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" (Article 22). The "tutelage" was to be exercised by one of the "advanced" nations under mandate from the League of Nations, to which the mandatory power was supposed to report each year.

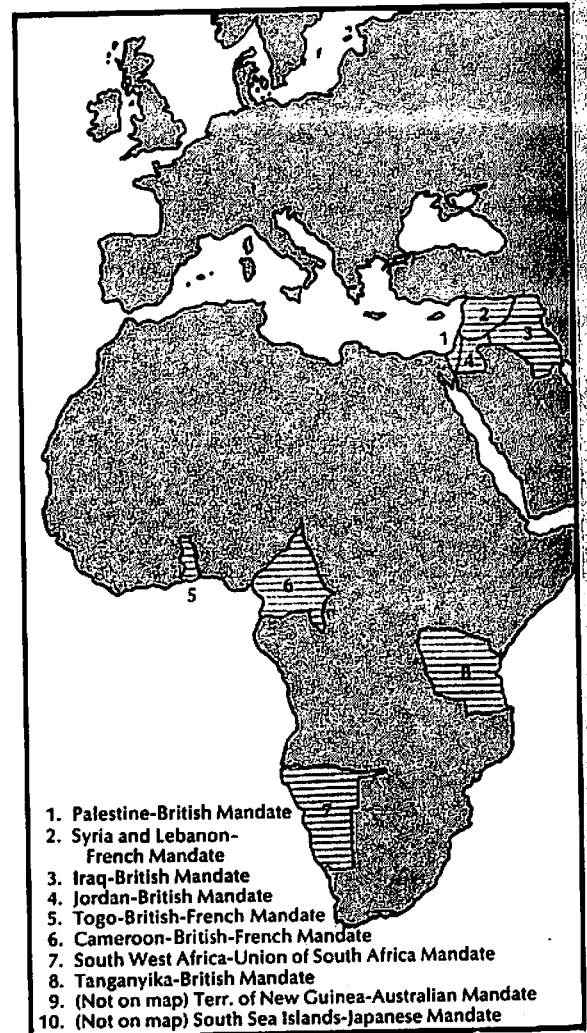
The Covenant set up three classes of mandates, graded according to European conceptions of how "advanced" toward possible independence each territory was. Class A mandates were newly liberated peoples expected to reach eventual independence, such as the non-Turkish parts of the former Ottoman Empire. In a settlement closer to the Sykes-Picot Agreement than to the British promises to the Arabs, Syria and the Lebanon were mandated to France, the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and Palestine to Britain. Class B mandates consisted of former German colonies in Africa whose peoples were not expected to accede to independence within the foreseeable future, but which the treaty-makers preferred not to have simply absorbed into the existing African empires. Most of Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania) was mandated to Britain, except for parts adjacent to the Congo, which Belgium was to administer. The West African areas of Togo and the Cameroons were divided between Britain and France as mandatory powers. Class C mandates consisted of former German possessions that were to pass directly under the laws of the mandatory power. South Africa obtained former German Southwest Africa under this provision, whose application is still hotly debated today. The German Pacific holdings north of the equator went to Japan; those south of the equator went to Australia and New Zealand.

⁷Forty-two wartime allies and neutrals were invited to join at first. Germany was admitted in 1926, and the Soviet Union joined in 1934.

Despite their obligation to administer these territories under League of Nations scrutiny, the mandatory powers tended to assimilate class B and class C mandates into the existing colonial system. Not one class A mandate had acceded to full independence twenty years later when the Second World War broke out, although Britain had extended a large measure of sovereignty to Iraq in 1932.

The League Covenant also called for general disarmament (Article 10). Further, the Minorities Commission of the conference promoted a series of treaties between the League and some member states with large national or religious minorities, guaranteeing those minorities protection against discrimination. An International Labor Office was established to report on conditions of work and wages. And a number of specialized agencies were created to deal with medical, humanitarian,

MANDATES UNDER THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS



and legal matters. In their modest way, these specialized agencies were the most lasting part of the League machinery.

As for its central function of peacekeeping machinery, the League of Nations was ambiguous from the beginning. It was torn between two irreconcilable conceptions. At one pole was the ideal of world government, empowered to keep its members from fighting among themselves, just as the federal government of the United States prevents fighting among the states. At the other extreme was Clemenceau's conception of an armed coalition of the victors designed to keep Germany permanently in check. The League as created fell somewhere in between. Its membership was too inclusive to act as a pro-French international policeman. Yet it was no world government. It remained a coalition of sovereign states. It was illusory to suppose that the nations of the world—some of which had just achieved statehood—would willingly delegate their sovereignty to a world body. Wilson himself, mindful of the eventual need for a Republican Senate to ratify the League Covenant along with the peace treaties, had no intention of giving up sovereignty. Before the League could act against an aggressor, the Council must first vote unanimously that aggression had been committed. Then member states must pledge forces to action in the League's name. In practice, the League could do only what all of its powerful members agreed to do.

Because the conference spent much of its early months drafting the covenant, more time was left for territorial settlements to be prejudiced by *fais accomplis*. Wilson was willing to make compromises in the territorial settlements to ensure the League's acceptance, however, for he believed that any faults in the treaties could be remedied later if the League were functioning properly.

THE WESTERN EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Wilson's Fourteen Points entered directly into the Franco-German settlement, for it was on their basis that Prince Max of Baden appealed for an armistice in October 1918. Only two points dealt with Western Europe specifically. Point 7 required that Belgium, the first victim, be "evacuated and restored." France, according to Point 8, should not only have its invaded territory freed and "restored," but the "wrong done to France in 1871" should be undone by the restoration to France of Alsace-Lorraine. The Western European settlement was more complicated than this, however, because of more pragmatic considerations.

The Attempt to Separate the Rhineland

The fact that Germany was militarily defeated, however late and unexpectedly, put the French Army in a position to shape the settlement by direct action. The armistice terms of November 11, 1918, drafted by the

French inter-Allied commander in chief Marshal Ferdinand Foch with an eye for later, more permanent arrangements, authorized the Allied armies (largely French) to advance to the Rhine, to occupy three bridge-heads across it—at Mainz, Koblenz, and Cologne—and to establish a neutral zone on the other side of the Rhine.

Established on the Rhine, French officials worked directly to detach that area from Germany, although it is not clear with what authority they did so. They found some German Rhinelanders willing to cooperate. Hans Adam Dorten, former district attorney of Düsseldorf and spokesman for the Düsseldorf Industrialists' Club, prepared a Rhineland Constituent Assembly in February 1919. He had the support of some who thought they would be spared harsh peace terms, a few industrialists who wanted ties with France rather than with the socialist regime in Berlin or the soviet regime briefly in power in Bavaria, and Catholics who resented the domination of Protestant Prussia (including the young Catholic mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, who was to become West Germany's first chancellor thirty years later).

Marshal Foch went over Clemenceau's head to lobby in the conference for a separate Rhineland. But separatism was only a minority current in the German Rhineland, and Lloyd George and Wilson strenuously opposed a territorial settlement that threatened to create another cause for future revenge. The French delegate himself, Georges Clemenceau, overrode his determined military associate on this matter.

Territorial Changes

Actual territorial changes in Western Europe, therefore, were relatively limited. It was obvious that Alsace-Lorraine, which Louis XIV had conquered in the seventeenth century and which had remained French until the Germans took it in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, would be returned wholly to France, despite some areas of Germanic dialect. The border communities of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet were transferred to Belgium, the first victim in the west. Plebiscites were arranged for border areas taken from Denmark in 1864. The coal mines of the Saar, just across the border north of Lorraine, were placed in the possession of France for fifteen years as "compensation for the destruction of the coal mines in the north of France," after which the Saar population could vote on its national status. (It voted overwhelmingly to remain German when the plebiscite was held in 1935.) The territorial changes in the west left the map of Western Europe still recognizable to a European of 1914.

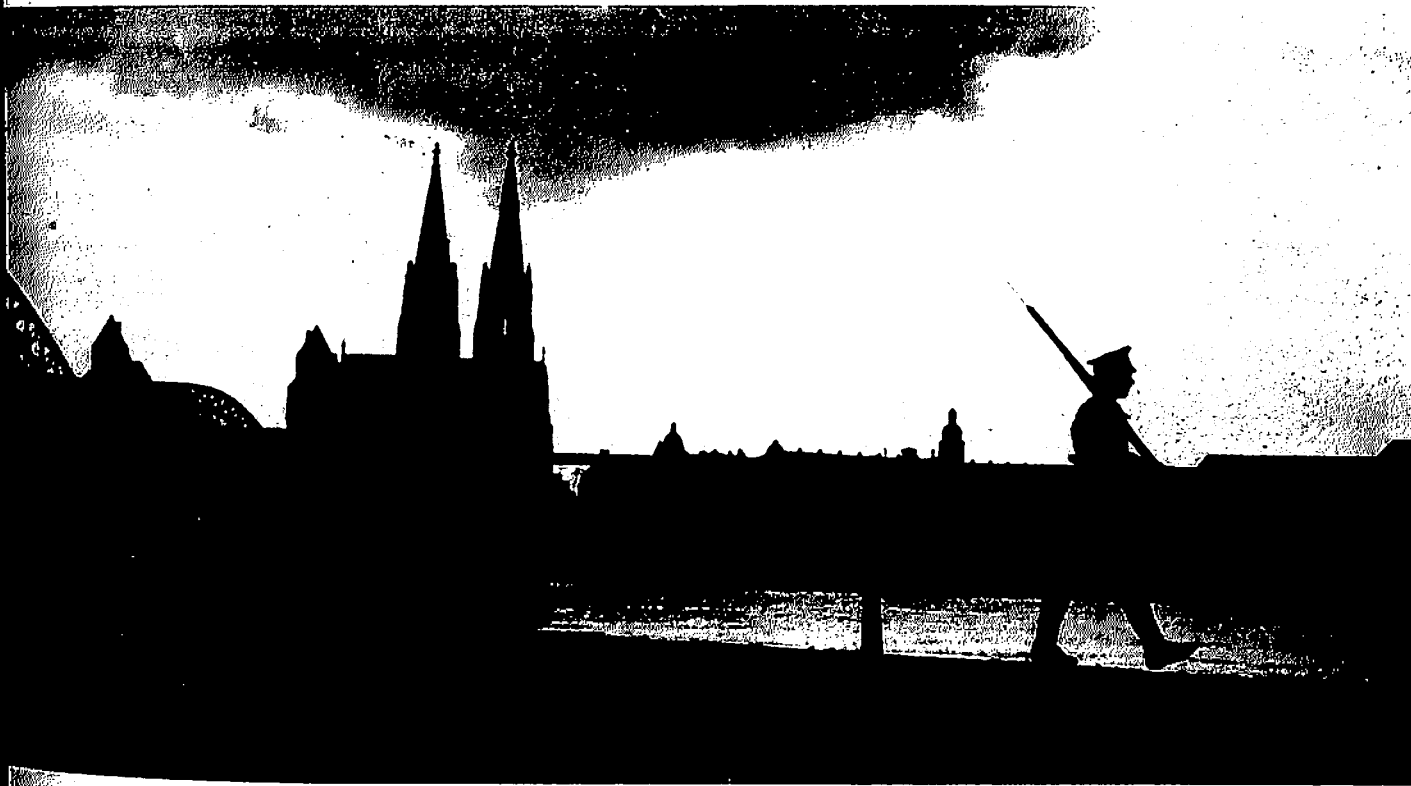
"Demilitarization" of Germany

Since France had failed to obtain the separation of the Rhineland, the conference tried to set up a physical barrier against future German military movement westward. The German territory west of the Rhine

and a strip fifty kilometers wide (about thirty miles) on the east of the Rhine were demilitarized in perpetuity. German military forces would never be permitted to enter those parts of German soil. The "demilitarized zone" was intended to make a surprise German attack westward very difficult, while facilitating French movement east in case France wanted to rescue an Eastern ally. The Allied troops occupying the west bank of the Rhine would remain there for fifteen years. Furthermore, it was agreed that the United States and Great Britain would extend treaties of guarantee to France by which they would aid France in the event of a German attack.

Beyond that, the settlement attempted to end Germany's military power. The German General Staff was dissolved. The German Navy was limited to no more than six battleships of 10,000 tons each, six light cruisers, and twelve destroyers. Germany was forbidden to manufacture or possess submarines, military aircraft, heavy artillery, tanks, and poison gas. The German Army was limited to 100,000 volunteers, required to serve for twelve years each so that Germany could not rebuild a large reserve of short-term recruits.

A British soldier patrols the Rhine, with the spires of Cologne Cathedral in the background. Allied forces were supposed to remain in occupation of the left bank of the Rhine for fifteen years after the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. The British evacuated the Cologne sector in December 1929. The Americans handed their sector (Koblenz) over to the French in January 1923. The French remained there and in their original sector (Mainz) until June 1930.





The reparations problem, as seen by a British cartoonist in 1923.

Reparations

A major extension beyond the Fourteen Points was the whole question of reparations. The devastation of northeastern France and other occupied areas, and the enormous debt run up by all the belligerents, made it tempting to try to get Germany to pay for reconstruction. Wilson's Fourteen Points had spoken in unclear terms of "restoring" the invaded parts of France and Belgium. When the Germans tried to make the Fourteen Points the basis of armistice negotiations in October 1918, the British and French, not overly enthusiastic about all of Wilson's aspirations, were willing to accept them only with the added demand that Germany make compensation "for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany."⁸

In the "khaki election" of December 1918, Lloyd George demagogically promised the British public that the Germans would pay for the war effort. Contrary to legend, French officials were no harsher, but newspaper promises that "Germany will pay" fanned hopes that postwar reconstruction would not require higher taxes. An exact sum could not be agreed upon among the Allies until 1921.⁹ Although the other defeated nations were also required to pay reparations, Germany was expected to bear the lion's share. Reparations were to become a major focus of German antagonism against the way in which the Versailles Treaty was applied.

⁸Memorandum of Observation by the Allied Governments, November 5, 1918.

⁹See Chapter 8, pp. 227–28.

THE EASTERN EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Territorial Changes

While minor adjustments were being made in the ancient Franco-German frontier in the west, the map of Eastern Europe was being entirely redrawn. The Paris Peace Conference presided over the most extensive revision of frontiers in modern European history except for the Vienna Conference of 1815, and, unlike the Vienna settlement, it enlarged the number of states in Europe instead of diminishing them. The proud empires that had controlled Eastern Europe had been destroyed. The German borders were pulled back hundreds of miles westward, giving up much of Silesia and East Prussia. The Russian border remained far to the east of the 1914 frontier, where Imperial Germany had imposed it in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk,¹⁰ for the Western Allies were happy to accept the anti-Bolshevik consequences of German victory in the east. The Austro-Hungarian Empire disappeared from the map altogether. New nation-states took the place of parts of these three empires in the north and center: Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary. In the Balkans, Romania gained territory from Hungary, Russia, and Bulgaria, while Serbia—where the war had begun—became the root stock of a large new South Slav state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later known as Yugoslavia.

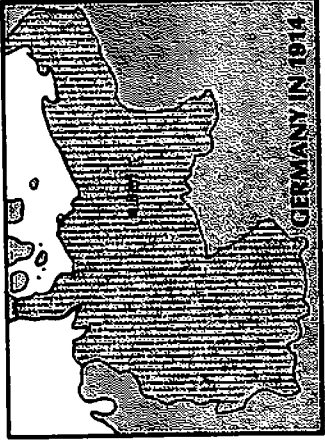
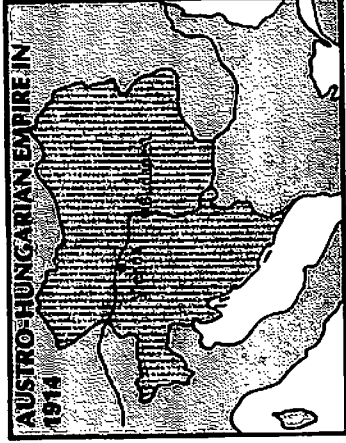
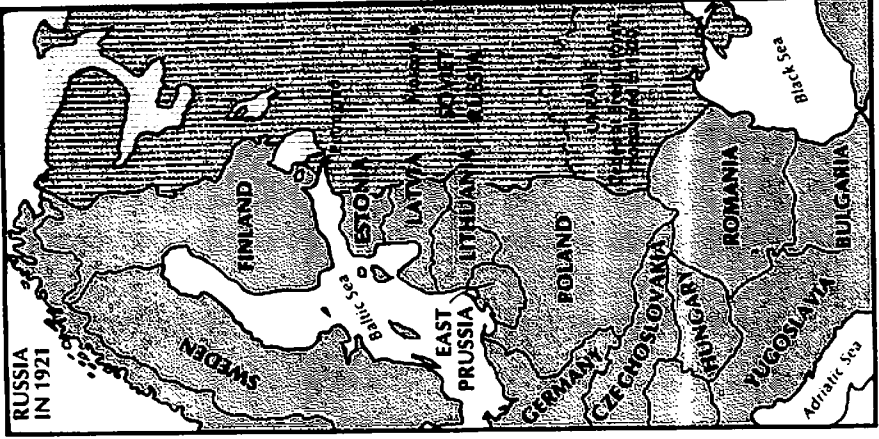
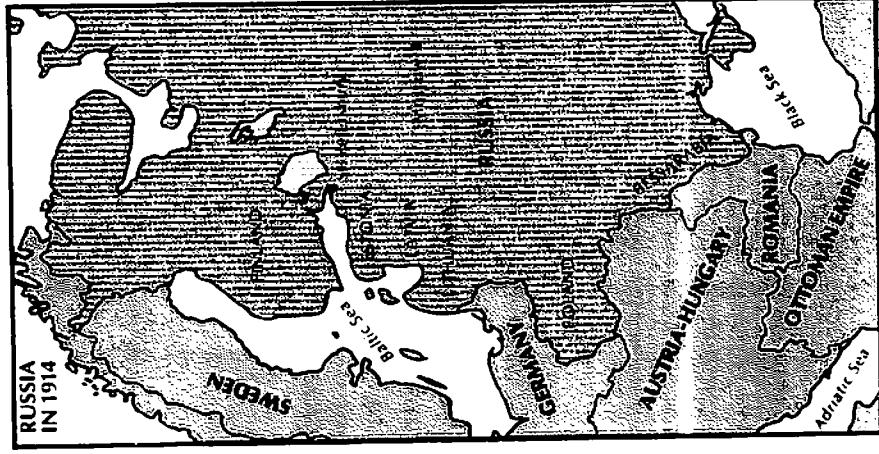
The principle on which the makers of postwar Eastern Europe claimed to base their work was the self-determination of nations, as promised in President Wilson's Fourteen Points and subsequent statements. The practice did not always fit the principle. Even more than the Western European settlement, the postwar settlement in Eastern Europe was influenced by the national interests of the victors, prior commitments, *faits accomplis* by Eastern European national movements, and the noncommunist states' desire to keep Bolshevik Russia at bay.

Frontier Problems

The application of the principle of self-determination was complicated in Eastern Europe by the absence of neat ethnic frontiers. In the west, states had been consolidated prior to the appearance of mass nationalism. Their central governments had subsequently been able to impose a single language and national loyalty on the varied peoples within their borders through education and common experience. In Eastern Europe, national consciousness grew up in the nineteenth century around folk languages and dialects, at cross purposes with existing state

¹⁰The Soviet regime managed to recover some of the territory lost at Brest-Litovsk during 1919–21, and recovered most of the rest of tsarist territories, roughly speaking, during the Second World War.

DESTRUCTION OF THE EMPIRES



frontiers or economic relations. Forming new states along national lines in Eastern Europe would have been easy if an ethnic or linguistic map had revealed sharp, unshaded borders. That state of affairs was rare enough along the relatively stable borders of Western Europe; it was rarer still in Eastern Europe. The "clearly recognizable lines of nationality" of President Wilson's Point 9 often clashed with the "historically established lines of allegiance and nationality" of Point 11.

The case of Teschen, a small mining area claimed by both the new Poland and the new Czechoslovakia, shows how intractable some border issues were. Although not part of Bohemia proper, Teschen had been ruled for 500 years by the kings of Bohemia. "Historically established lines of allegiance" suggested that it pass with Bohemia to the new Czechoslovakia. The 1910 census, however, reported that 56 percent of the inhabitants of Teschen were Polish-speaking; 26 percent, Czech-speaking; and 18 percent, German-speaking. The principle of national self-determination thus seemed to favor the Poles, even though ethnic and linguistic censuses were notoriously uncertain and somewhat arbitrarily assigned the speakers of intermediate Czech-Polish dialects to one side or the other. To introduce a third criterion, the Teschen area was economically linked to the banks and markets of Vienna. Vienna, however, was being reduced from an imperial capital and regional center to the overgrown capital city of the small nation of Austria.

Since history, language, and economic links gave conflicting answers to the question of Teschen's proper national identity, the solution was left to the traditional means of international politics: force or bargaining. The Versailles settlement split Teschen approximately in two, in a judgment of Solomon that satisfied no one. The Poles and Czechs fought over Teschen in 1919 and 1920. Later, in 1938, when the Czechs were preoccupied with German claims to German-speaking areas in Bohemia, the Poles simply stepped in and took the rest of Teschen by force.

The list of frontier problems in Eastern Europe complicated by national self-determination was endless. In much of Eastern Europe, cities and commercial and industrial life had developed under strong German influence. Local ethnic groups prevailed in the countryside. For example, industrial development in Silesia took place in the nineteenth century, after Prussia had seized that Polish-speaking region from Austria in 1742. The entrepreneurs and merchants were German, and many Silesian Polish families were assimilated into German culture as they became miners or factory workers in new industry. The peasantry, however, remained Polish. How could Silesia's national identity be established in 1919? How could a homogeneous nation-state be built on this urban-rural cultural and national division? A similar problem arose with the promise to Poland of access to the sea. The largely German port city of Danzig was imbedded in a region of Polish peasantry.

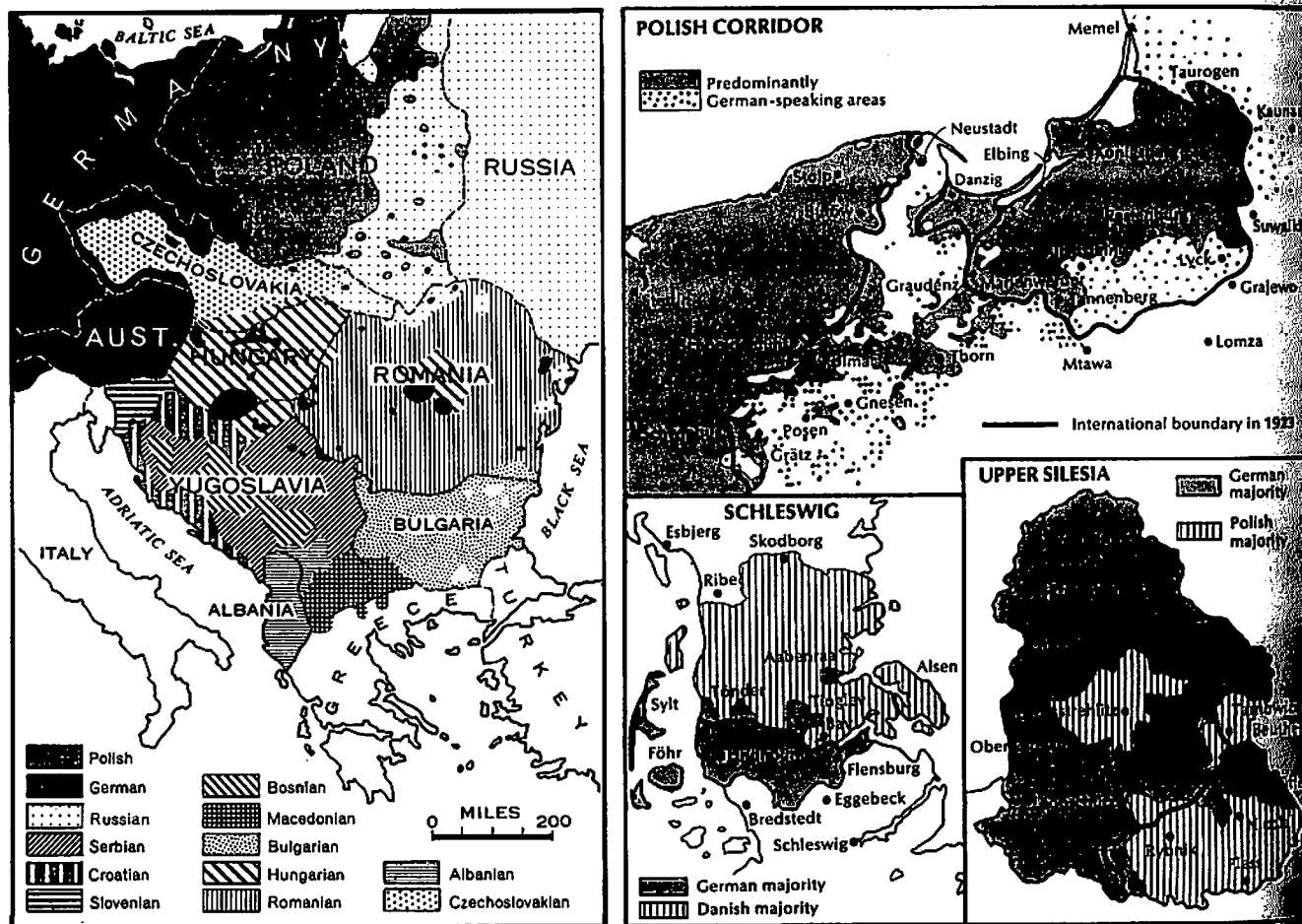
The task of recomposing Eastern Europe on the basis of a separate

state for each nationality—so appealing from afar—revealed all sorts of ugly complications as the delegates to the Paris Peace Conference consulted their maps and listened to the experts and the spokesmen for the nationalities. An Eastern Europe of independent nations, drawn to the satisfaction of every claimant, was probably beyond human wisdom in 1919, even if the Versailles peacemakers had been totally free from any other kinds of considerations. Other considerations had a major influence on the settlement, however.

Discrimination among Nationalities

To begin, not all nationalities in Eastern Europe received equal recognition. Those whose national consciousness was reborn in the nineteenth century—Poles and Czechs—had already won strong emotional acceptance in Western Europe from the days of Frédéric Chopin and the poet Adam Mickiewicz in the 1840s. Others, such as the Croats or Slovaks, were only beginning to arrive at national or linguistic self-consciousness. Still others, such as the Slovenes, had hardly begun to claim to be a

EUROPEAN NATIONALITY PROBLEMS, 1919–1939



separate people. In any event, where would the process of atomization end if the speakers of every local dialect developed a fierce separatist consciousness?

The Eastern European nationalities also differed in the services they had performed for the Allies during the war. Although Poles had fought on both sides at the beginning, the fall of Tsarist Russia brought the strongest force, Marshal Josef Pilsudski's Polish Legion, into action against Germany at the end. Czechs taken prisoner on the Russian front formed a pro-Allied army in Russia in 1918. "Gallant Serbia" had been the Central Powers' first victim. Although independent Romania had joined the war on the Allied side in 1916, it was defeated and signed a separate peace in May 1918. Did Romania still deserve the advantages promised in 1916 by the Allies? On the other side of the ledger stood Austria and Hungary, which had made war against Serbia in the first place, and Bulgaria, whose king had dragged it reluctantly into the war on the Central Powers' side. Hungary was doubly damned by having formed a soviet in May 1919, at the very moment its borders were on the drafting boards in Paris.

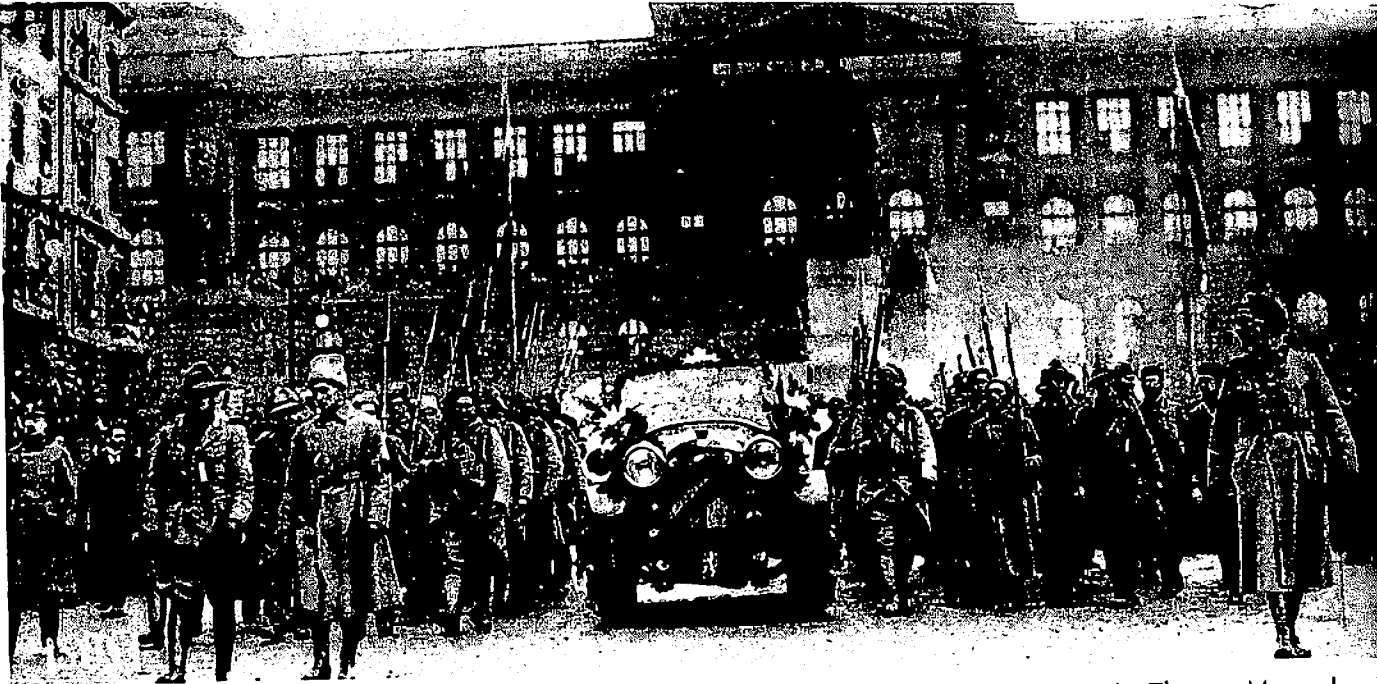
France had the largest stake in discriminating among favored and disfavored nationalities in Eastern Europe. French diplomacy and armed forces were more active in Eastern Europe than those of any other Great Power. As the chief land power of the Continent, principal victim and principal rival of Germany, France desired strong allies on Germany's eastern frontiers. Such allies would permit the French to continue their strategy of threatening a resurgent Germany with a two-front war. Since France's major Eastern ally since 1892, Russia, was now materially weak and politically hostile, French security planners built on maximum satisfaction for Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. If these states were made as strong as possible, even at the expense of some valid nationality claims, French security needs would be doubly served, against Germany and against Bolshevik Russia.

With tacit Allied acceptance and even support, the favored Eastern European nationalities embarked in the closing days of the war on a round of "claim-jumping" in which they established a *de facto* military presence in disputed areas. On October 6, 1918, the South Slavs set up the National Committee of Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs to establish sovereignty in the former South Slavic areas of the Habsburg Empire. The Czech national committee set itself up in Prague as a government in October 1918; in January 1919 it was fighting with Polish forces over Teschen. The Poles, remembering the vast medieval Kingdom of Poland, attempted from 1919 to 1921 to conquer parts of Lithuania and the Ukraine to form a Great Confederation. The Romanians, who had taken Bessarabia from the Soviet Russians in 1918, went on in July 1919 to seize Transylvania from Hungary. Thus before the Peace Conference opened and while it sat, future boundaries were set by direct action in Eastern Europe, with Allied, and especially French, complicity.



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Escorted by veterans of the Czech Legion that had fought in Russia, Thomas Masaryk enters Prague in 1919 to assume the presidency of the Czechoslovak republic.

At the conference, France took the lead in favoring a strong Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Clemenceau pressed for Polish expansion in Silesia and right up to the Baltic in a corridor of clearly Germanic population. Lloyd George, worried about creating future ethnic trouble spots, forced the conference to provide for plebiscites in Silesia and for the separate status of German-speaking Danzig as a free city. As for Czechoslovakia, the French supported the integral inclusion of historic Bohemia despite large numbers of Germans along the western border, and prevented any consideration of separate Czech and Slovak nations. The spokesman for Slovak separatism, the Catholic priest Father Andrej Hlinka, was hustled out of Paris by French police. The same treatment was accorded Stepan Radič, the spokesman for a separate Croatia instead of a great Yugoslavia. The largest possible Romanian claims were also supported at the conference.

The resulting map of Eastern Europe, therefore, was not an even-handed application of the principle of self-determination, even if such a thing had been possible. On the one hand were a large Poland, created at the expense not only of Germany and Russia but also of Lithuania; a large Czechoslovakia, including an extensive German minority; an enlarged Rumania, which had grown at the expense of Russia and especially Hungary; and a large Yugoslavia of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, united mainly in opposition to Vienna. On the other hand were a truncated remnant of Hungary; the German remnant of Austria, forbidden to exercise its own national self-determination by joining Germany; and a diminished Bulgaria.

The Settlement Assessed

The peacemakers at Paris worked under the multiple disadvantages of high emotions, time pressure, and a fluid situation of daunting complex-

ity. Their work has had its defenders. Its main outlines survived a second war and Russian domination of Eastern Europe, and it is difficult to deny the legitimacy of the new and revived Eastern European states without denying the very principle of national self-determination. As the American historian Paul Birdsall wrote in 1941, the settlement in Eastern Europe was "the closest approximation to an ethnographic map of Europe that had ever been achieved."¹¹ Nor can all the problems of interwar Eastern Europe be attributed to the peacemakers' work. Like all new nations, the successor states had to contend with inexperienced leaders and economic backwardness. But the settlement did replace the old problems of subject peoples within the Habsburg Empire with a whole Pandora's box of new problems. And it failed in its most immediate, practical test: a second global war grew out of Eastern European border disputes twenty years later.

One problem was that the whole settlement rested on the unprecedented and temporary eclipse of Germany and Russia. Neither of these acutely self-conscious peoples with traditions of power was about to accept the eastern frontiers. Marshal Hindenburg and others in Germany wanted to return to war when the annexations of German territory for Poland were announced; even those Germans in favor of accepting the Treaty of Versailles had reservations about the frontiers. Russia never accepted the loss of Bessarabia to Romania, which cut Russia off from the mouth of the Danube. These highly artificial geographic arrangements could subsist only if propped up from outside. Since Britain and the United States were unwilling to participate in direct action in Eastern Europe, France was left with a potential burden far beyond its capacities to handle, even in 1919.

Furthermore, the settlement left numerous local grievances on which a renascent Germany and Russia would be able to play. The nations of Eastern Europe were divided between the wars into *status quo* states and revisionist states. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia looked to France to help maintain the *status quo*. Hungary, and to some degree Bulgaria, sought every avenue for change. Even after Béla Kun's collapse, no Hungarian regime could exist that failed to preach revision of the treaties. Admiral Miklós Horthy, Hungary's strong man between the wars, emerged from isolation first in 1927 with ties to Mussolini's Italy; eventually he looked to Hitler's Germany for help.

Another problem was that every one of the new states contained national minorities. Poland had its German minorities in the part of Silesia it eventually won in plebiscites. The minorities in Czechoslovakia were especially ominous. Nearly one-quarter of the population, 3 out of 13 million, was German,¹² mostly concentrated in the western borderland of Bohemia (the Sudetenland). The subordinate role of the Slovaks

¹¹Paul Birdsall, *Versailles Twenty Years After* (New York, 1941), p. 9.

¹²Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1967), p. 124.

in the new state was another potential irritant. The new Czech president, Eduard Beneš, liked to claim that Czechoslovakia was an "Eastern European Switzerland," in which different language groups could live together in a progressive, democratic federal state. Potentially, the new Czechoslovakia was another Austria-Hungary in miniature. For a time, Czechoslovakia was the most democratic and prosperous of the new states. The depression and Hitler's agitation pulled the nationalities apart, however. After Hitler had annexed the German-speaking areas in 1938, the Slovaks went their own way to form a separate state in 1940. The Yugoslav peoples also separated during the Second World War. The Croats formed a separate state in 1941 under Hitler's protection.

One more problem was the effect of new national boundaries on the Eastern European economy. Old economic ties were broken by the profusion of new states, and new channels of trade and finance had to be opened. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, formerly a trading unity, was now seven units, each with its own frontiers, customs officers, and commercial regulations. For example, the Slovak iron miners, who had shipped their ore to Budapest under the old regime, now redirected their trade to Prague. These dislocations might have been temporary and the whole area might have once more functioned as an economic unit in prosperity, but the strains of new statehood were soon compounded by the first harbinger of depression in the late 1920s, the decline of agricultural prices. The new states subsequently erected ever higher protectionist barriers against one another. Economists began to talk nostalgically about the economic benefits of the old empire as it became apparent that the prospect of a Danube basin free-trade area was receding from possibility.

There remained one final issue. The Wilsonian ideal of self-determination of peoples assumed that new nations would automatically be democratic, with freely elected governments resting on the will of the newly independent people. This proved a misplaced hope in Eastern Europe. Societies were poorly amalgamated. Most of the areas were still predominantly agricultural, with extensive estates and land-hungry peasants. Cities often contained large ethnic minorities, Germans and Jews. Only Czechoslovakia had a sizable industrial base and a fairly smoothly functioning middle-class democracy, at least among the dominant Czechs; elsewhere, the new republics fell into the hands of strong men or resurgent authoritarian monarchs, with the acquiescence of Western Allies more fearful of Bolshevism than eager for social reform.

At first sight, the Eastern European settlement seemed the fulfillment of nineteenth-century progressive hopes: national independence and internal democracy. But with respect both to frontiers and to internal regimes, the question was not whether they would change but when, and whether the pressures for change would plunge the rest of Europe into war again.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Paul Birdsall's readable *Versailles Twenty Years After* (1941), colored by Wilsonian hopes and disappointments, may be supplemented by Howard Elcock, *Portrait of a Decision: The Council of Four and the Treaty of Versailles* (1972). The massive H. W. V. Temperley, ed., *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, 6 vols. (1920-24), is still basic. It needs to be counterbalanced by the French perspective in André Tardieu, *The Truth About the Treaty* (1921), and by David Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* (1938).

The debates may be followed in Paul Mantoux, ed., *Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Proceedings of the Council of Four* (1964), and, more completely, in the notes of the secretary to the British delegation, Sir Maurice Hankey, published in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, "The Paris Peace Conference, 1919," vols. 3-6 (1943-46).

Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919*, new ed. (1945), remains the most evocative of participants' memoirs. John Maynard Keynes' criticism in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), is criticized in turn by Etienne Mantoux, *The Carthaginian Peace, or the Economic Consequences of Mr. Keynes* (1946, reprint ed., 1978).

Arno J. Mayer has directed attention to the role played in the peace settlement by defense of the social order and fear of Bolshevik expan-

sion in *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918* (1959, reprint ed., 1964), and *The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* (1967).

The way war aims and wartime promises shaped the peace settlement is explored in V. H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914-1918* (1971); D. R. Stevenson, *French War Aims Against Germany, 1914-1919* (1982); and Walter McDougall, *France's Rhineland Diplomacy, 1914-1924* (1978). Klaus Epstein casts light on the struggle within Germany over accepting the peace terms in *Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy* (1959, reprint ed., 1971).

Among good accounts of individual governments in the peace negotiation are René Albrecht-Carrié, *Italy at the Paris Peace Conference* (1938; reprint ed., 1966); Ivo J. Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference* (1963); and Sally Marks, *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (1981). The peace settlement in Eastern Europe is best followed in studies of the break-up of the Habsburg Monarchy cited at the end of Chapter 5, along with John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk, The Forgotten Peace, March 1918*,* rev. ed. (1971).