

PEACEMAKING IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD, 1918–23

The history of the period from the armistice in November 1918 until the conclusion of the majority of the peace treaties a year later has a dual aspect. On the one hand the victors, assembled in Paris, argued about peace terms to be imposed on Germany and its allies; they knew that after four years of war and all the changes it had brought about, the people of the West longed for an immediate and a stable peace. At Paris too, decisions would be taken to reconstruct the map not only of Europe, but also of the Middle East, Africa and China. A new framework of conducting international relations would be created by establishing the League of Nations. All this represents just one side of the historical development of this critical period.

The other side of the picture was that eastern, central and southern Europe was daily becoming more disorganised; in Turkey a nationalist revolution would reject the peace terms altogether; China continued to disintegrate, rent by internal dissension and the pressure of the Japanese and the West. The future of Russia and the ultimate size of the territories that would fall under Soviet control was one of the biggest uncertainties of all. With the end of the war and the collapse of the defeated rulers there was a threat of anarchy. National and social conflicts erupted in revolution. In Russia the war had not ended in time to save the country from internal violence. For how much of the rest of Europe was it now too late as well? No previous war had ended in such chaos.

The peacemakers thus did not preside over an empty map of the world waiting for settlement in the light of their decision reached around the conference table.

The great powers no longer disposed of huge victorious armies. These were being rapidly demobilised and war-weary peoples were not ready to allow their leaders to gather fresh mass armies. The leaders who mattered, the 'big three' – Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau – as the representatives of democracies, were dependent on assemblies and electorates and became increasingly conscious of the limits of their ability simply to follow the dictates of their own reasoning. Another 'Europe' and 'Asia' were taking shape beyond the control of the victors at Paris. They were shaped by their own local antagonisms.

When the peace conference opened on 18 January 1919, just two months after the signing of the armistices with Turkey, Austria, Hungary and Germany, obviously the problem that most weighed on Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George was the future of Germany. The armistice terms had been harsh, but fell short of demanding unconditional surrender. The German government had applied to Wilson for an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points, after Ludendorff and Hindenburg had suddenly declared that the army was in no condition to hold out a moment longer. In accordance with Wilson's clearly expressed reply that the terms to be imposed on Germany would

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be harsher still if the kaiser remained in power, the generals themselves had cooperated in persuading the kaiser to abdicate and depart for exile in the Netherlands. And they were also ready to cooperate with the new government of Social Democrats in Berlin headed by Friedrich Ebert. Hindenburg and his generals brought the German armies home from France and Belgium in good order. They were received more as victors than as defeated troops by the German population. But, once on German soil, these once great armies simply dissolved; they did not wait to be demobilised according to plans which did not exist. They just went home. Only in the east, in Poland and the Baltic, were there still army units left sufficiently powerful, in the chaotic conditions of this region of Europe caught up in civil wars and national conflicts, to constitute a decisive military factor. To combat Bolshevism, the Allied armistice conditions actually required the Germans to remain in occupation of the eastern and Baltic territories until Allied troops could be spared to take over their responsibilities as guardians against the 'reds'.

Despite the changes in Germany and the proclamation of a republic, the Allied attitude in Paris did not noticeably alter. Whether 'Junkers' or 'Social Democrats', the Allies continued to regard them as arrogant and dangerous Germans, and treated them accordingly. But they also dealt with the Germans at a distance, rejecting the responsibility of occupying the country and confining themselves to the strategic occupation of part of the Rhineland alone. Considering the condition of threatening anarchy, the Allies continued to be haunted by the fear that the Germans only wanted to use the armistice as a breathing space to reorganise and resume the war. But there were no German armies any longer in existence in 1919 that could hope to put up a defence even against the reduced strength of the Allied armies. Yet the Allies kept up the fiercest pressure during the weeks of the armistice. The blockade was maintained from November 1918 through that winter until March 1919; later this proved a good propaganda point for the Nazis, who exaggerated Allied callousness.

During that first winter and spring of 1918-19, Germany was left to survive as best as it could. The

new democratic republic, soon known as the Weimar Republic after the town in which its constitution-making parliament met, could not have had a worse start. Within Germany itself, a vacuum of power, similar to that in Russia in 1917, which rival groups sought to fill, threatened stability. Everyone was aware of the parallel, not least the new chancellor, Ebert. But Ebert, once a humble saddle-maker, was a politician of considerable experience and strength. He was determined not to be cast in the role of the Russian Kerensky. For Ebert, the most important tasks ahead were to establish law and order, revive industry and agriculture so that the German people could live, preserve German unity and ensure that the 'revolution' that had begun with the kaiser's departure should itself lead to the orderly transfer of power to a democratically elected parliamentary assembly. Ebert was tough, and determined that Germany should become a parliamentary democracy and not a communist state. This was a programme that won the support of the army generals, who recognised that the Social Democratic republic would be both the best immediate defence against anarchy and Bolshevism and a screen acceptable to the Allies behind which Germany's traditional forces could regroup.

Why did the Social Democrats leave the revolution half-finished, retain the army and the imperial administration, and leave society and wealth undisturbed? Did they not thereby seal their own doom and pave the way for the Nazis a decade later? With hindsight one may legitimately ask would Germany's future have been better with a 'completed' communist revolution? The question is deceptively simple. It is unlikely that the Allies would have allowed the communists to retain power in Germany; an extensive Allied occupation might then have resulted after all. The breakdown of order within Germany left the sincerely democratic socialists isolated and so forced them to seek cooperation with the forces that had upheld the kaiser's Germany hitherto. They had no other practical alternative.

A communist seizure of power would have represented the will of only a small minority of Germans; the great majority, including the workers, did not desire to emulate Bolshevik Russia. All

over Germany in November 1918 'workers' and soldiers' councils' formed themselves spontaneously. The movement began in Kiel where sailors of the imperial navy mutinied, unwilling at the end of the war to risk their lives senselessly to satisfy their officers' sense of honour. The officers had planned to take the High Seas Fleet out to sea to engage the British in one last glorious suicidal battle. From Kiel the setting up of German soviets spread to Hamburg and other parts, then to Berlin and the rest of Germany. But not all these self-proclaimed soldiers' and workers' councils, which claimed to speak for the people, were in favour of a Bolshevik state. In many more, moderate socialists predominated and those who before the armistice had been opposed to war (Independent Socialists) now joined with the majority who had supported war. In others the Independent Socialists allied with the Spartacists, the name the communist faction led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg had assumed.

In Berlin, the capital, the crucial struggle between the socialist factions was decided. Ebert had assumed the chancellorship, constitutionally accepting this office from Prince Max von Baden, the last imperial chancellor. His fellow socialist Phillip Scheidemann, in the confusion that followed, proclaimed a republic to anticipate Liebknecht. Liebknecht simultaneously proclaimed the 'socialist republic' to his followers. Ebert would have preferred a constitutional monarchy, but now the die was cast. Ebert and Scheidemann won over the Independent Socialists with concessions that would allow the Berlin Soldiers' and Workers' Council 'all power' until the constituent parliament met. The constituent parliament was elected early in January 1919 and assembled in Weimar in February to begin its labours of drawing up a constitution for the whole of Germany.

All this gives a false impression of orderliness. During the winter and spring following the armistice it was uncertain whether Ebert would survive. Germany was torn by political strife of unprecedented ferocity, and separatist movements in several regions even suggested that Germany might disintegrate. In the second-largest state, Bavaria, political strife was unfolding. The

Independent Socialist leader Kurt Eisner had led a revolution of workers and soldiers in Munich, proclaimed the republic of Bavaria, and deposed the royal house of Wittelsbach. All over Germany the princes disappeared. They had counted for so little, their disappearance made little impact now. Eisner's republic was not communist. Though he had been opposed to the war, he was at one with Ebert in desiring a democratic Bavaria, in a Germany of loosely 'federated' states. Elections duly held in January and February 1919 in Bavaria resulted in the defeat of Eisner's Independent Socialist Party. On his way to the Bavarian parliament to lay down office, Eisner was brutally murdered in the street. This was the signal for civil war in Bavaria, which slid into anarchy and extremism.

December 1918 and January 1919 were the decisive months in Berlin, too. There the Spartacists decided to carry the revolution further than the Social Democrats were prepared to go. The Spartacists attempted an insurrection in December, seizing Berlin's public buildings, and the Social Democrats, still having no efficient military force of their own, appealed to the army. Irregular volunteer army units were formed, the so-called Free Corps; all sorts of freebooters, ex-officers and men who enjoyed violence joined; there were few genuine Social Democrats among these paramilitary units. The scene was set for fighting among the factions, for bloodshed and brutality. The Spartacist rising was put down and Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered as they emerged from their hiding place. The rising, followed by strikes and fresh disorders, seriously threatened Ebert's government in the new year of 1919.

In Bavaria there were three rival governments – two Bolshevik and one majority Socialist. The showdown came in April 1919. The moderate Socialists called on the Free Corps units for military assistance. The Bolsheviks were bloodily suppressed and in Munich many innocent people lost their lives. It was a tragedy for Germany and the world that the Weimar Republic was founded in bloodshed, that the Social Democrats had to call on the worst anti-democratic elements in the state for support. This left a legacy of suspicion and

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bitterness among the working people, split the Socialists and so, in the end, helped the right-wing extremists to power. The communists blamed the Social Democrats, the Social Democrats the communists. Representative constitutional government survived but at what proved to be a heavy price.

In Paris there was a keen awareness that to delay the making of peace would endanger stability even further. Germany should be presented with the terms and given a short period for a written submission embodying their reply. There should be no meaningful negotiations with the Germans. Better a 'dictated' peace quickly than a long-drawn-out wrangle that allowed the Germans to exploit Allied differences. It was a remarkable achievement that despite these serious differences – the French, in particular, looked for more extensive territorial guarantees and reparations – in the short space of four months an agreed treaty

was presented to the Germans on 7 May 1919. This represented the compromises reached by Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau. The Italians took little part, deeply offended and dissatisfied with their territorial gains in general and the rejection of their claim for Fiume in particular. There was no set agenda for the negotiations in Paris. The crucial decisions were taken by Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau and then the details were left to the experts who accompanied the statesmen in large numbers.

Clemenceau was aware of France's basic weakness, inferior in population and industrial production to a Germany that was bound to recover. How to provide then for French security? The break-up and partition of Germany were not seriously considered, though a separate Rhineland would have served French interests. Germany, albeit deprived of Alsace-Lorraine and of territory in the east, remained intact as potentially the most powerful European continental state.



The Versailles conference. The Peacemakers. Wilson on the left, Clemenceau, Orlando and Lloyd George.
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One of the few undertakings of the Allies, and incorporated in the Fourteen Points, was to reconstitute an independent Polish nation and so to undo the eighteenth-century partition of Poland by Russia, Austria and Prussia. The carrying out of this pledge created great difficulties in redrawing Germany's eastern frontier. The German city of Danzig was separated from Germany and turned into an autonomous free city for which the League of Nations accepted certain responsibilities and over which Poland enjoyed specific rights. The wedge of Polish territory to the sea created the 'Polish corridor' which henceforth separated Germany from East Prussia. In parts of Silesia a plebiscite in March 1921 and the League decision in 1922 decided where the precise frontier with Poland ran. But the peace treaty placed several million German-speaking peoples under foreign rule. In the west, apart from Alsace-Lorraine and two small territories which became Belgian, Germany lost no territory; the Saarland, with its valuable coal, was placed under the League, and the French were granted the rights to the mines with the provision that after fifteen years a plebiscite would allow the population to choose their own future.

An important guarantee of French security was the requirement that the Germans were not permitted to fortify or station troops in the Rhineland; all the German territory west of the Rhine and bridgeheads across the Rhine, moreover, were occupied by the Allies for fifteen years and evacuation would only occur in three stages every five years if Germany fulfilled the treaty conditions of Versailles. But Clemenceau never lost sight of the fact that France remained, even after these German losses, inferior to its neighbour in population and industrial potential, and therefore militarily as well in the longer term. Clemenceau realised that France would need the alliance of Britain and the US even more after 1918. France had been gravely weakened by the war. With Bolshevik Russia no longer contributing to the balance of Europe as tsarist Russia had done before 1914, German preponderance on the continent of Europe had potentially increased.

Clemenceau struggled in vain with Wilson and Lloyd George in Paris to secure more permanent

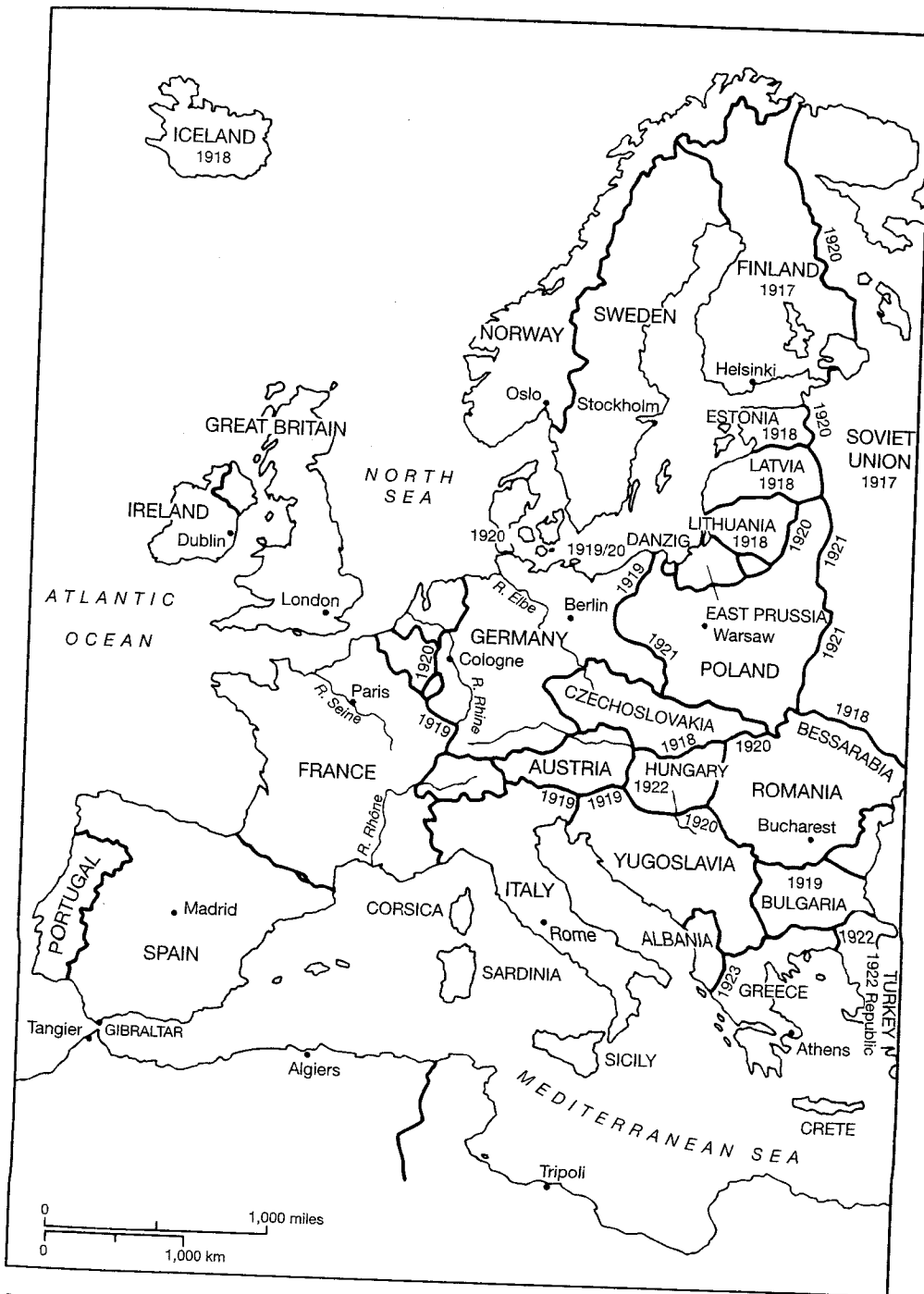
guarantees than were provided by the occupation of the Rhineland, which remained sovereign German territory. He accepted in the end that Germany could not be diminished further in the west; that France could not attain the Rhine frontier. He feared that, if he refused, Britain and the US would cease all post-war support of France. In place of 'territorial' guarantees, France was offered a substitute: the promise of a post-war alliance with Britain and the US. This treaty, concluded in June 1919, was conditional upon the consent of the Senate of the US. As it turned out, Clemenceau had received payment with a cheque that bounced, though Wilson at the time was confident that the Senate would approve.

It became, from the French point of view, all the more vital to write into the treaty provisions for restricting the German army and armaments and to have the means of supervising these provisions to see that they were carried out. But for how long could this be maintained? The German army was reduced to a professional force of 100,000 men. Such a force was not even adequate to ensure internal security. Add to this the loss of the High Seas Fleet interned in British waters, a prohibition to build an air force, an Allied control commission to supervise the production of light armaments that the Germans were permitted to manufacture, and the total picture is one of military impotence. Finally, Germany lost all its colonies.

In Germany there was a tremendous outcry. But already in 1919, among the military and the more thoughtful politicians, it was realised that the sources of Germany's strength would recover

Population (millions)

	1920	1930	1940
France	38.8	41.2	41.3
Germany	59.2	64.3	67.6 (1937)
Britain	44.3	46.9	48.2
Russia	155.3	179.0	195.0
Poland	26.0	29.5	31.5
Czechoslovakia	12.9	13.9	14.7
Yugoslavia	12.4	14.4	16.4
Austria	6.5	6.6	6.7
Hungary	7.9	8.6	9.3



Peace settlements, 1919-23

Coal including lignite, and steel production, 1920–39 (million metric tons)

	<i>Coal and lignite</i>				<i>Steel</i>			
	1920	1929	1933	1939	1920	1929	1933	1939
Britain	233.0	262.0	210.4	235.0	9.2	9.8	7.1	13.4
France	25.3	55.0	48.0	50.2	2.7	9.7	6.5	8.0
Germany	220.0	337.0	237.0	400.0	7.8	16.2	7.6	23.7

and its industries revive. Opportunities would arise to modify or circumvent the restrictions imposed by the 'dictated' Versailles Treaty. The German public focused their anger on the 'war guilt' article of the treaty. It was misunderstood and considered out of context. It stated that Germany had imposed war on the Allies by its aggression and that of its allies. Today, looking at the July crisis of 1914, there can be no real doubt that Germany and Austria-Hungary were the 'aggressors'. What the Germans could not be expected to know was that this article (231) and the one that followed represented a compromise between the Allies on the question of reparations.

The French and British wished the Germans to pay the 'whole cost' of the war. France's north-eastern industrial region had been devastated while Germany was untouched. Britain and France had incurred heavy war debts which the US insisted had to be repaid. France and Britain had to be satisfied with Article 231 whereby Germany and its allies accepted responsibility for causing all the loss and damage. But in Article 232 the Germans were not required actually to pay for 'the whole cost of the war'. The Germans would have to pay only for losses caused to civilians and their property. This represented a victory for Wilson; Allied public opinion would be appeased by the 'war guilt' clause.

Little thought was extended to German public opinion. No agreement on a total sum was reached. This was left for a Reparations Commission to determine by May 1921. The Germans were presented with the treaty draft on 7 May 1919. Their voluminous protests and counter-proposals delivered on 29 May were considered, a small number of concessions made. They were then presented with the unalterable final draft in the

form of a virtual ultimatum on 16 June. Unable to resume the war, the Germans formally accepted and signed the treaty on 28 June 1919. A week earlier, the German fleet, interned in Scapa Flow, was scuttled by the crews.

Had the Allies acted wisely in their treatment of Germany? The financial thinking of the Allies, led by the US, lacked realism. Reparations and war debts, the growth of trade and employment were international and not purely German problems. John Maynard Keynes, the distinguished economist, who had been sent to Paris to serve as one of Britain's financial experts, later in his famous book on the peace treaty, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, condemned the financial provisions. The total amount of reparations payable by Germany fixed in May 1921 – 132,000 million gold marks – was actually not so excessive. But only a prosperous, stable Germany in a relatively free international market could contribute to general European prosperity. Lloyd George understood that to 'punish' Germany financially would create a powerful competitor in export markets as Germany sought the means to pay. If there was to be security from Germany in the longer term, then one way was to reduce German power by dividing the country; but this offended prevailing views of nationality. The other way was to ensure that Germany's political development would lead to a fundamental change of attitudes: genuine democracy coupled with a renunciation of nationalist aspirations. Instead, the peace weakened the democratic movement and heightened nationalist feelings.

Besides Germany and Austria-Hungary, the other great power defeated in war was Russia. The West was perplexed by the Russian problem. Lenin's

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Russia was openly hostile both to the victors and the vanquished of 1918. They were all, in Lenin's eyes, imperialist bourgeois powers ripe for revolution. There were voices in the West which called for an all-out effort to kill the poisonous influence of 'Red' Russia from the outset. But there was also sympathy for its plight. Confused attempts were made by France, Britain and the US to provide support for the anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia and so the West became embroiled, though only feebly, in the chaos of the Russian Civil War.

The communist seizure of power in November 1917 had initially gained control only of Petrograd and Moscow. That seizure was not given the stamp of approval by the rest of Russia. Lenin had allowed elections for a constitutional parliament, arranged by Kerensky's provisional government. This 'constituent assembly' which met in January 1918 was the most representative ever elected, and the mass of the peasantry turned to the Socialist Revolutionaries who constituted the majority of the elected representatives. Only a quarter of them were Bolsheviks. Lenin had no intention of allowing the assembly to undo the Bolshevik revolution. The assembly was forcibly dispersed on his orders. It was the end of any genuine democratic process. During 1918 Lenin was determined that the Bolsheviks should seize power throughout Russia, and dealt ruthlessly with opposition and insurrection against Bolshevik rule. Lenin was not held back by any moral scruple. Every other consideration had to be subordinated then to the secure achievement of Bolshevik power, which would act as a torch to set alight revolution in the more advanced West. Lenin's eyes were fixed on the world. Without a world revolution, he believed, the purely Russian Revolution would not survive.

Lenin met the force of opponents with force and terror. The terrorist police, which Lenin set up in December 1917, was called the Cheka. This organisation was given the right to kill opponents and even those suspected of opposition, without benefit of trial, by summary execution. The authority of the state now stood behind the exercise of brute lawless power. No questions would be asked and the killing of some innocents was accepted as inevitable in the interests of the con-

solidation of communist power in Russia - 'the great goal'. Lenin's successors were to accept such exercise of terror, which reached its climax under Stalin in the 1930s, not as a temporary necessity in conflict but as a permanent part of Soviet control over the population.

Soviet terror included the killing of the tsar and his family in July 1918. Soviet ferocity was partly responsible for resolute centres of opposition to the Bolsheviks. Already before the peace of Brest-Litovsk some of the non-Russian peoples around the whole periphery of the old Russian Empire had wanted independence. With German help in 1918, states were being formed in the Baltic (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia); Finland became completely independent and the local Bolshevik forces were defeated; the Ukraine became an independent state; in central Asia independence was claimed by the peoples living in these regions; only Poland had been promised its independence and sought to make good its claims and, much more, to create a large Polish nation by carving out territories from Russia proper. In opposition to 'Red' Petrograd, to Moscow and the central region controlled by the Bolsheviks, other Russian forces, led by tsarist generals, formed in many parts of Russia, sometimes in cooperation but also sometimes in conflict with local nationalist forces. These disparate military groups and armies became known collectively as White Russians, which suggested they possessed more coherence than was actually the case. In many regions there was a complete breakdown of law and order and independent brigand armies looted and lived off the countryside.

Among these independent and lawless armies one of the strangest was the Czech Legion (of some 50,000 officers and men) which had been formed in Russia from prisoners of war to fight for the Allied cause. After the Russian peace with Germany the Czech Legion attempted to leave Russia by way of the Trans-Siberian railway and the port of Vladivostok in Siberia. Fearing Bolshevik intentions, they came into open conflict with the Bolsheviks sent to disarm them. In Siberia they then formed a nucleus around which White Russian forces gathered. The self-proclaimed Supreme Ruler of Russia at the head of these partly

disciplined and frequently insubordinate troops was Admiral Kolchak. The Allies had first intervened in Russia in the hope of reopening a war front in the east in order to relieve pressure on the western front. After the conclusion of the war with Germany, Britain and France were unsure whether the Bolsheviks or the White Russians would ultimately gain power. Lloyd George's instincts at Paris were sound in that he did not wish to make an enemy of the Bolsheviks. He proposed Allied 'mediation' between the Russians fighting each other quite irreconcilably. British intervention was small and limited. The French made a more determined but useless attempt, cooperating with White Russian forces in the Ukraine from a base in Odessa. The Japanese landed a large force in Siberia, pursuing imperialist ambitions of their own; and the Americans a smaller force at Vladivostok, ostensibly to rescue the Czech Legion but really to watch the Japanese. Allied intervention was too small to make a significant impact on the outcome of the civil war in Russia.

Lenin left it to Trotsky as commissar for war to create a Red Army to complete the conquest of the former Russian Empire and defeat all the opposing forces. Their disunity made it easier for Trotsky to defeat first one opponent and then the next. Nevertheless, his achievement in recreating an army for the revolution was remarkable. Army discipline was reintroduced, as was the death penalty. Trotsky was no less ruthless than Lenin in the draconian measures he was ready to take to achieve discipline. Former tsarist officers were recruited to provide the necessary expertise and 'political commissars' were attached to the units to ensure that the armies would continue to fight for the right cause.

Lenin ended the period of civil war in 1920 partly by compromise and partly by conquest. He recognised the independence of the Baltic states of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Poland was, for communist Russia, the most critical region. Poland was the gateway to Germany, and so, Lenin believed, the gateway to world revolutions. But the Poles proved too strong for the Red Army, though not strong enough to defeat it decisively. The war between Poland and Russia lasted from the spring of 1920 until the follow-

ing October. Given only limited Allied help, the Poles were really left to win or lose by themselves. At first they succeeded spectacularly and reached Kiev in the Ukraine. The Red Army then drove them back and for a time Lenin hoped to overrun Poland altogether and to instal a puppet communist government. But at the gates of Warsaw the Red Army was defeated in turn and Lenin in 1921 accepted Polish independence. The remainder of the Russian Empire was successfully brought under communist control and the short-lived independent states of the Ukraine, Georgia and Transcaucasia were forcibly incorporated in the Soviet Union.

Communist Russia had failed to spread the revolution. The sparks that led to short-lived communist takeovers in Hungary and Bavaria were quickly extinguished. Russia had also failed to thrust through Poland to the West. Equally the West had failed either to overthrow the Bolsheviks or to befriend them. For two decades from 1921 to 1941 the Soviet Union remained essentially cut off, a large self-contained empire following its own road to modernisation and living in a spirit of hostile coexistence with the West.

Up to the last year of the war the Allies did not desire to destroy the Habsburg Empire, which was seen as a stabilising influence in south-eastern Europe. Wilson's Fourteen Points had promised 'autonomous' development to the peoples of the empire, not independence. Reform, not destruction, was the aim of the West. Within the Monarchy itself the spirit of national independence among the Slavs had grown immensely, stimulated by the Bolshevik revolution and the Russian call for the national independence of all peoples. Now the Czechs and Slovaks wished to form a national unit within a Habsburg federal state where each nation would enjoy equal rights. The Slovenes, Croats and Serbs of the Monarchy wished to form an independent Yugoslav nation and the Ruthenes demanded freedom from Polish dependence. The Habsburg dynasty and ruling classes could not respond adequately to these aspirations even in the Austrian half of the Monarchy; it was unthinkable that the Magyars would accept a sufficiently liberal policy to win

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over the Slavs, or even that they could have done so as late as 1917. The Monarchy was tied to dualism. Outside the Monarchy, émigrés were winning the support of the Allies for the setting up of independent nations. As the Monarchy weakened under the impact of war, so these émigré activities grew more important.

In 1918 Wilson became gradually converted to the view that the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs were oppressed nationalities whose efforts for freedom deserved sympathy and support. Before the conclusion of the armistice, the Czechoslovaks had won Allied recognition as an 'Allied nation', Poland had been promised independence, and the Yugoslav cause, though not accorded the same recognition, had at any rate become well publicised. When Austria-Hungary appealed to Wilson for an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points in October 1918, Wilson replied that the situation had changed and that autonomy for the other nationalities was no longer sufficient. This was strictly true. With defeat, the Hungarians and the Slavs all hastened to dissociate themselves from the Germans. Poland and Yugoslavia declared their independence as did the Hungarians. The German Austrians only had one option left, to dissociate Austria from the dynasty, and declare German Austria a republic. The revolution in Vienna was bloodless as Charles I withdrew.

The Habsburg Empire broke apart before the armistice on 3 November 1918 and there was no way the Allies could have brought it together again. But in no other part of the world was it more difficult to reconcile Wilson's ideals of national self-determination and national frontiers as the different peoples of the Balkans did not live in tidily delineated lands. There would always be people who formed majorities and minorities. The defeat of the dominant Austrians and Hungarians now determined that they and not the Slavs, Romanians and Italians would constitute new minorities within the 'successor states' of the Habsburg Empire.

The Allies at Paris modified the central European frontiers created by strong national leaders, attempted to ensure good treatment of minorities and enforced punitive conditions on the defeated Hungarians and German Austrians; in its

essentials, however, power had been transferred to the new nations already. Austria was reduced to a small state of 6.5 million inhabitants. The peace treaties forbade their union with Germany. The principle of national self-determination was violated as far as the defeated were concerned. The Italians had been promised the natural frontier of the Brenner Pass, even though this meant incorporating nearly a quarter of a million German-speaking Tyrolese into Italy. The new Czechoslovak state was granted its 'historic frontiers', which included Bohemia, and another 3.5 million German-speaking Austrians and also Ruthenes were divided between the Czechs and Poles and separated from the Ukraine. Hungary was reduced to the frontiers where only Magyars predominated. Hungary was now a small state of some 8 million, nearly three-quarters of a million Magyars being included in the Czechoslovak state. The Hungarians remained fiercely resentful of the enforced peace, and their aspirations to revise the peace treaties aroused the fears of neighbouring Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

A peace settlement in the Near East eluded the 'peacemakers' altogether. With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish acceptance of an armistice on 30 October 1918, the Arab people had high hopes of achieving their independence. The Americans, British and French were committed by public declarations to the goal of setting up governments that would express the will of the peoples of the former Turkish Empire. But, during the war Britain and France had also secretly agreed on a division of influence in the Middle East. To complicate the situation still further, the British government had promised the Zionists 'the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people' in what became known as the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917). How were all these conflicting aspirations now to be reconciled? Wars and insurrections disturbed Turkey and the Middle East for the next five years.

The Arabs were denied truly independent states except in what became Saudi Arabia. The other Arab lands were placed under French and British tutelage as 'mandates' despite the wishes

of the inhabitants. Iraq and Palestine became British mandates and Syria and Lebanon, French. Within a few years, the Arab states of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq emerged but remained firmly under British and French control.

Peace with Turkey proved even more difficult to achieve. The Sultan's government had accepted the peace terms of the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920, but a Turkish general, Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, led a revolt against the peace terms. The Greeks, meanwhile, were seeking to fulfil their own ambitions and landed troops in Turkish Asia Minor. The disunity of the Allies added to the confusion and made the enforcement of the Treaty of Sèvres quite impossible. By skilled diplomacy – by dividing the Anglo-French alliance, and by securing supplies from the French and Russians – Kemal gathered and inspired a Turkish national movement to free Turkey from the foreign invasions. He defeated the Greeks in September 1922 and then turned on the British troops stationed in the Straits of Constantinople. In October 1922 Lloyd George, unsupported by his former allies, was forced to accept Kemal's demands for a revision of the peace treaty. This was accomplished by the Lausanne Conference and a new treaty in July 1923 which freed Turkey from foreign occupation and interference. Shortly afterwards Turkey was proclaimed a republic and Kemal became the first president. Of all the defeated powers, Turkey alone challenged successfully the terms of peace the Allies sought to impose.

It was clear to President Wilson that the effort of reaching peace had involved unsatisfactory compromises and that Allies and former enemies were both deeply dissatisfied with some of the terms. One ally, Italy, had left the conference over the decision not to yield the port of Fiume to it, and the Italians returned only for the formal concluding ceremonies. The Japanese were offended by their failure to have a 'racial equality' clause incorporated in the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Hungarians and Germans did not regard the treaties as just and were determined to revise them. Wilson nevertheless pinned his hope for the future on the League of Nations.

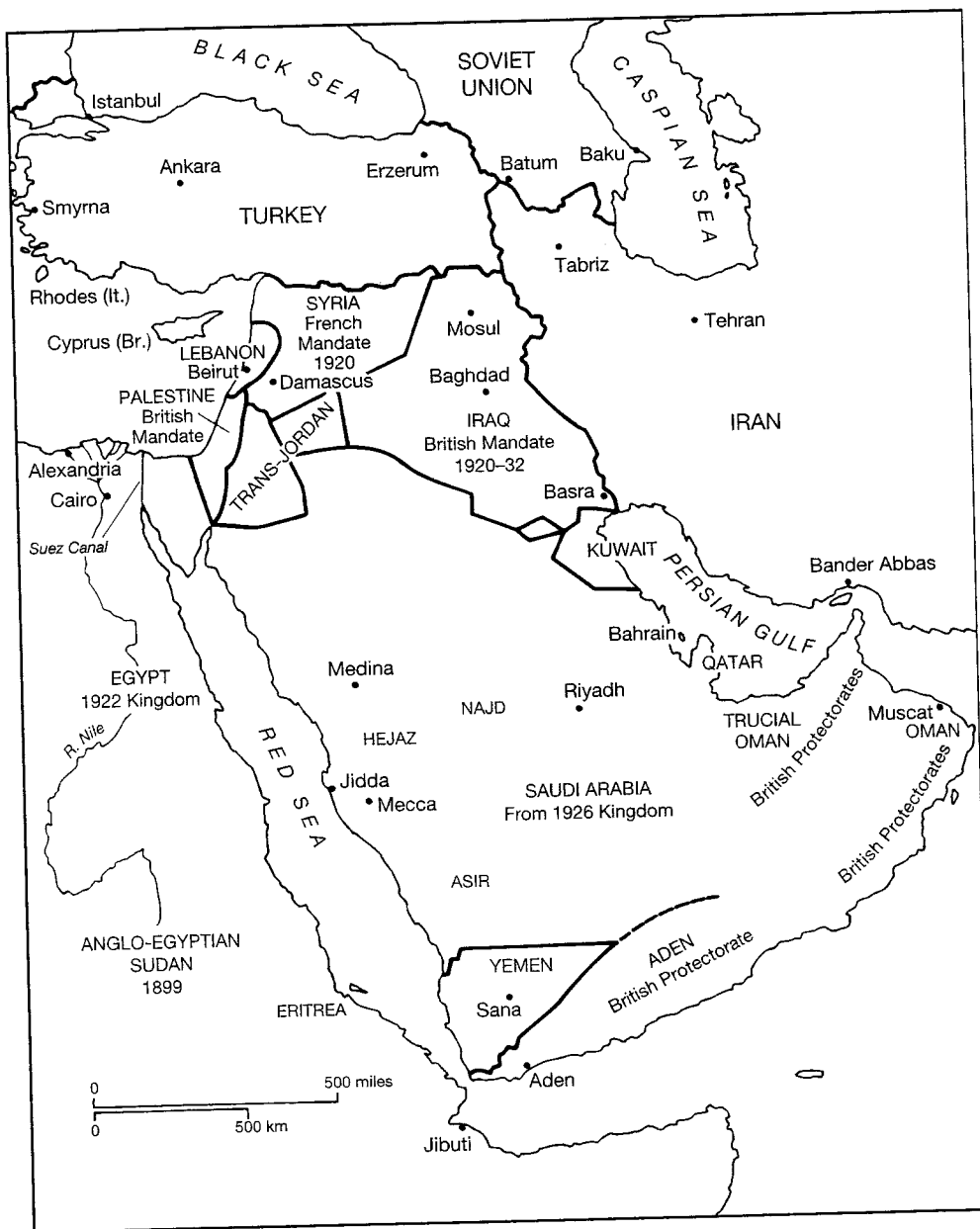
The real purpose of the League of Nations was to find a better way of solving disputes that could lead to war than by the kind of devastating conflict through which the world had just passed. In the League great states and small states were to find security with justice. Within ten years of its founding, these high hopes seemed unlikely to be fulfilled. Britain, France and the US would not risk war in the 1930s to uphold the League's ideals when the aggressors were other great powers – Japan, Italy and Germany and the Soviet Union. The strength of the League depended on its members and not on the rules and procedures laid down; to be sure, if these had been applied and observed they would most likely have preserved peace. At the heart of the Covenant of the League lay Article 10 whereby all the members undertook to preserve the existing independence of all other members. Furthermore, if there were aggression against a member, or a threat of such aggression, then the Council of League would 'advise' on the best way in which members could fulfil their obligations. Possible sanctions of increasing severity were set out in other articles which, if adopted, would hurt the aggressor. The weakness of the League was that each member could in effect decide whether or not to comply with a Council request to apply sanctions. Furthermore, the Council, consisting of permanent great-power members together with some smaller states, could act only unanimously, so that any one of its members could block all action. The League was not a world government, lacked armed force of its own and remained dependent on the free cooperation of its members to behave according to its principles and to join with others in punishing those states that did not.

It was a heavy blow to the League when the US repudiated Wilson's efforts. Before a treaty to which the US is a party can be valid, a two-thirds majority of the Senate has to vote in its favour. There were genuine misgivings about the wide-ranging but unique commitment of Article 10, whereby the US would literally be obliged 'to preserve' the independence of every nation in the world. The president might have won the necessary majority if he had dealt tactfully with the opposition. But he would not admit the obvious

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gap between the utopian aims of the League and realistic national policies. Wilson rejected the compromise of accepting Senate reservations to the treaty and toured the country in September 1919 to appeal over the heads of the Senate to the people. On his return to Washington, he suffered

a severe stroke. The chance of compromise with the Senate was lost. The treaty without amendments was lost twice when the Senate voted in November 1919 and March 1920. But this did not mean that the US was as yet 'isolationist'. The US would have joined the League with no more



The Middle East, 1926

reservations than, in practice, the other great powers demanded for themselves. The treaty of alliance with France signed together with Britain at Paris in 1919 is often lost sight of in Wilson's debacle over the League. It was Wilson who lost all interest in it. For him it was a question of the League or nothing. The alliance treaty between the US, France and Britain, if it had been ratified by the Senate, could have altered subsequent history. Opponents of universal and vague commitments to the League, such as the powerful Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, were in favour of this treaty of alliance or, as it was called, guarantee. But the treaty was never submitted to a Senate vote.

The presidential elections of 1920 reflected the new mood of the people. With the slogan 'Return to Normalcy' the Republican candidate Warren Harding won by a large margin. The American

people turned their backs on Wilson's leadership and Wilson's vision of America's mission in the world.

The conditions for a stable peace had not been laid by 1920. The French, deprived of the treaty of guarantee, were well aware how far Europe was from achieving any balance of power. Much now depended on the attitude the British would take to the issues of the continent; much, too, would depend on the course of German history. Nor had any reconciliation of conflicting interests been achieved in Asia. The Japanese had secured Germany's former rights in China in the province of Shantung and so incensed the Chinese delegation in Paris that it refused to sign the peace treaty of Versailles. The sure foundations of peace had not been achieved in 1919. Perhaps it was unrealistic to expect they would be.