

national independence, a desire encouraged by Allied war aims that included calls for the independence of the subject peoples. By the time the war ended, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been replaced by the independent republics of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia and a new southern Slavic monarchical state that eventually came to be called Yugoslavia. Other regions clamored to join Italy, Romania, and a reconstituted Poland. Rivalries among the nations that succeeded Austria-Hungary would weaken eastern Europe for the next eighty years. Ethnic pride and national statehood proved far more important to these states than class differences. Only in Hungary was there an attempt at social revolution when Béla Kun (BAY-luh KOON) established a Communist state. It was crushed after a brief five-month existence.

## The Peace Settlement

**Q FOCUS QUESTION:** What were the objectives of the chief participants at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and how closely did the final settlement reflect these objectives?

In January 1919, the delegations of the victorious Allied nations gathered in Paris to conclude a final settlement of the Great War. By that time, the reasons for fighting World War I had been transformed from selfish national interests to idealistic principles. At the end of 1917, after they had taken over the Russian government, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had publicly revealed the contents of secret wartime treaties found in the archives of the Russian foreign ministry. The documents made it clear that European nations had gone to war primarily to achieve territorial gains. At the beginning of 1918, however, the American president, Woodrow Wilson, had attempted to shift the discussion of war aims from territorial gains to a higher ground.

### Peace Aims

On January 8, 1918, President Wilson submitted to the U.S. Congress an outline known as the “Fourteen Points” that he believed justified the enormous military struggle as being fought for a moral cause. Later, Wilson spelled out additional steps for a truly just and lasting peace. Wilson’s proposals included “open covenants of peace, openly arrived at” instead of secret diplomacy; the reduction of national armaments to a “point consistent with domestic safety”; and the **self-determination** of peoples so that “all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction.” Wilson characterized World War I as a people’s war waged against “absolutism and militarism,” two scourges of liberty that could only be eliminated by creating democratic governments and a “general association of nations” that would guarantee the “political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike” (see the box on p. 790). As the spokesman for a new world order based on democracy and international cooperation, Wilson was enthusiastically cheered by many Europeans when he arrived in Europe for the peace

conference. Wilson’s rhetoric on self-determination was also heard by peoples in the colonial world and was influential in inspiring anticolonial nationalist movements in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (see Chapter 26).

Wilson soon found, however, that other states at the Paris Peace Conference were guided by considerably more pragmatic motives. The secret treaties and agreements, for example, that had been made before the war could not be totally ignored, even if they did conflict with the principle of self-determination enunciated by Wilson. National interests also complicated the deliberations of the Paris Peace Conference. David Lloyd George, prime minister of Great Britain, had won a decisive electoral victory in December 1918 on a platform of making the Germans pay for this dreadful war.

France’s approach to peace was primarily determined by considerations of national security. Georges Clemenceau, the feisty premier of France, believed that the French people had borne the brunt of German aggression and deserved revenge and security against future German aggression (see the box on p. 790). Clemenceau wanted a demilitarized Germany, vast German reparations to pay for the costs of the war, and a separate Rhineland as a buffer state between France and Germany—demands that Wilson viewed as vindictive and contrary to the principle of national self-determination.

Yet another consideration affected the negotiations at Paris: the fear that Bolshevik revolution would spread from Russia to other European countries. This concern led the Allies to enlarge and strengthen such eastern European states as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania at the expense of both Germany and Bolshevik Russia.

Although twenty-seven nations were represented at the Paris Peace Conference, the most important decisions were made by Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George. Italy was considered one of the so-called Big Four powers but played a much less important role than the other three countries. Germany, of course, was not invited to attend, and Russia could not because of civil war, although the Allies were also unwilling to negotiate with the Communist regime that was then fighting for power in Russia.

In view of the many conflicting demands at the conference table, it was inevitable that the Big Three would quarrel. Wilson was determined to create a “league of nations” to prevent future wars. Clemenceau and Lloyd George were equally determined to punish Germany. In the end, only compromise made it possible to achieve a peace settlement. On January 25, 1919, the conference adopted the principle of the League of Nations. The details of its structure were left for later sessions, and Wilson willingly agreed to make compromises on territorial arrangements to guarantee the establishment of the League, believing that a functioning League could later rectify bad arrangements. Clemenceau also compromised to obtain some guarantees for French security. He renounced France’s desire for a separate Rhineland and instead accepted a defensive alliance with Great Britain and the United States. Both states pledged to help France if it was attacked by Germany.

Opposing Viewpoints continued)

The Negroes of the world demand that hereafter the natives of Africa and the peoples of African descent be governed according to the following principles:

1. The Land: the land and its natural resources shall be held in trust for the natives and at all times they shall have effective ownership of as much land as they can profitably develop. . . .
2. Labor: slavery and corporal punishment shall be abolished and forced labor except in punishment for crime. . . .
3. The State: the natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the government as fast as their

Source: Woodrow Wilson, *Speeches*. From Woodrow Wilson, *Speeches*, May 26, 1917; April 6, 1918; January 3, 1919. Georges Clemenceau, *Grandeur and Misery of Victory*. From Georges Clemenceau, *Grandeur and Misery of Victory* (New York: Harcourt, 1930), pp. 105, 107, 280. Pan-African Congress. Excerpts from Resolution from the Pan-African Congress, Paris, 1919.

## The Treaty of Versailles

The final peace settlement of Paris consisted of five separate treaties with the defeated nations—Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Versailles with Germany, signed on June 28, 1919, was by far the most important. The Germans considered it a harsh peace, conveniently overlooking that the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which they had imposed on Bolshevik Russia, was even more severe. The Germans were particularly unhappy with Article 231, the so-called War Guilt Clause, which declared Germany (and

development permits, in conformity with the principle that the government exists for the natives, and not the natives for the government.



How did the peacemaking aims of Wilson and Clemenceau differ? How did their different views affect the deliberations of the Paris Peace Conference and the nature of the final peace settlement? How and why did the views of the Pan-African Congress differ from those of Wilson and Clemenceau?

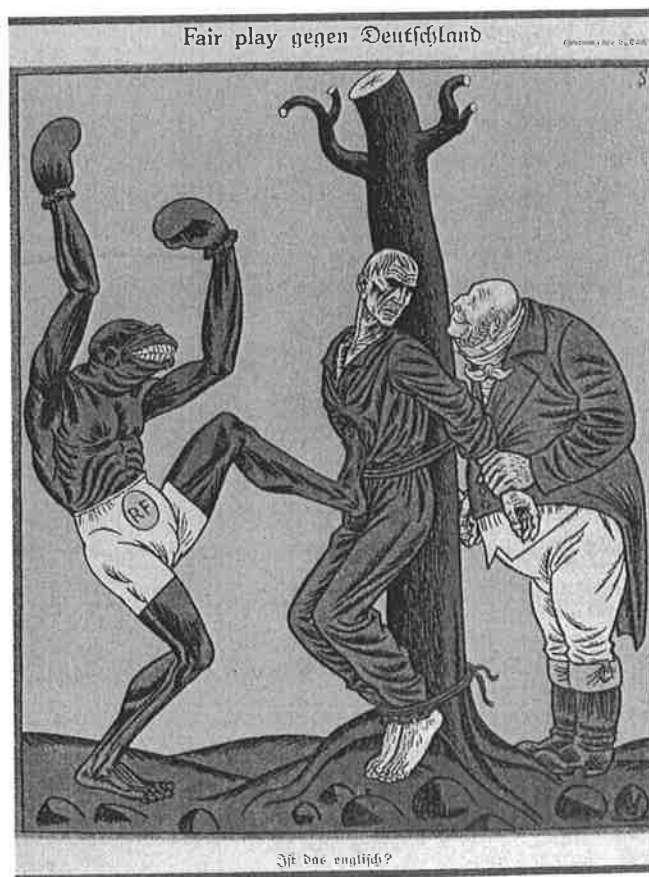
Austria) responsible for starting the war and ordered Germany to pay **reparations** for all the damage that the Allied governments and their people suffered as a result of the war “imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.” Reparations were a logical consequence of the wartime promises that Allied leaders had made to their people that the Germans would pay for the war effort. The treaty did not establish the amount to be paid but left that to be determined later by a reparations commission (see Chapter 26).

The military and territorial provisions of the treaty also rankled the Germans, although they were by no means as harsh as the Germans claimed. Germany had to reduce its



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The Treaty of Versailles. Shown above are the three most important decision makers at the Paris Peace Conference, Georges Clemenceau, Woodrow Wilson, and David Lloyd George, shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. The Germans' reaction to what they considered a harsh and unfair peace treaty is captured on the cover of *Simplicissimus*, a German satirical magazine published in Munich. A black man representing France is seen beating a German tied to a tree trunk while an Englishman looks on with a grin on his face.



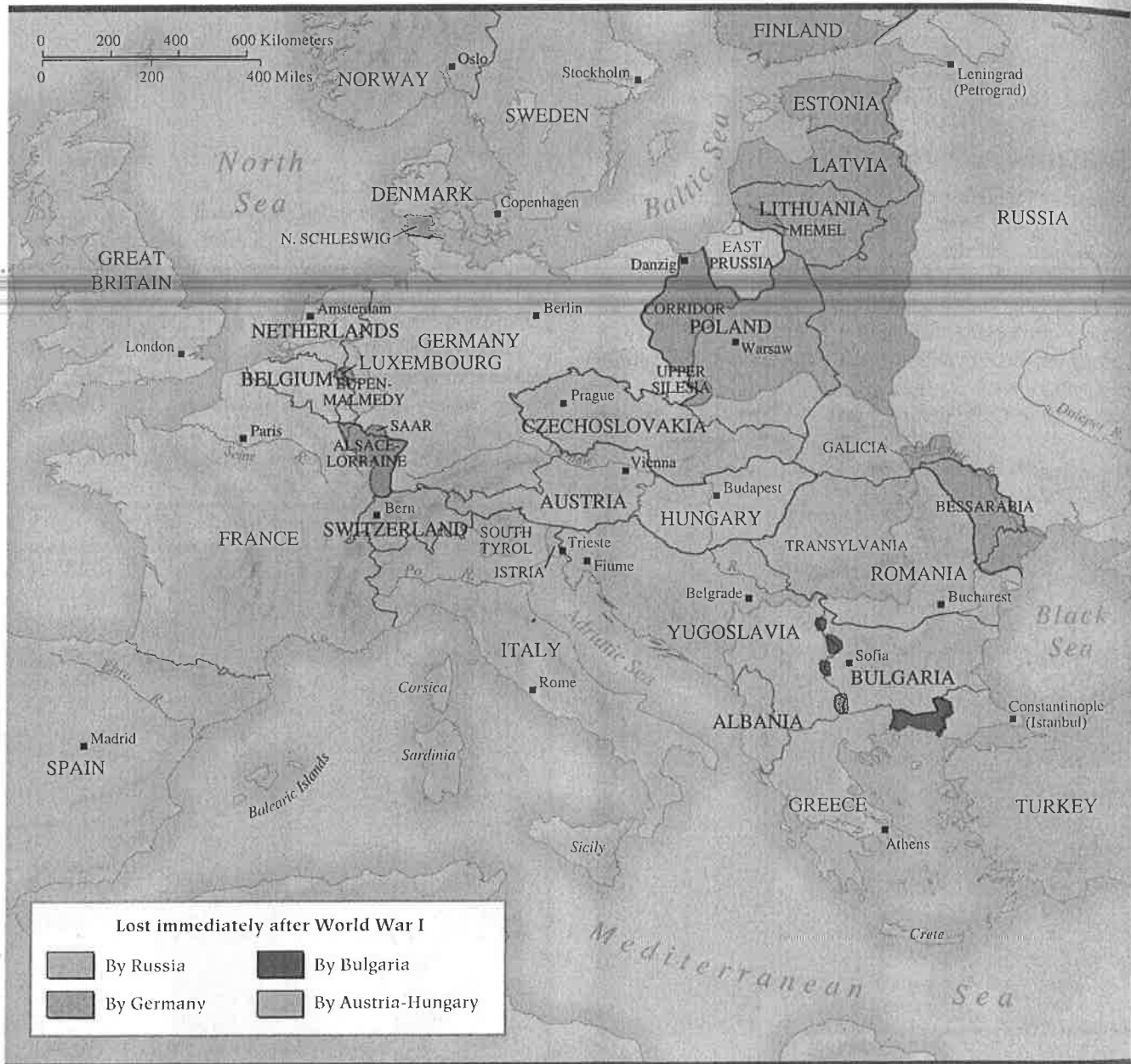
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris/Archives Charmet/The Bridgeman Art Library

army to 100,000 men, cut back its navy, and eliminate its air force. German territorial losses included the cession of Alsace and Lorraine to France and sections of Prussia to the new Polish state. German land west and as far as 30 miles east of the Rhine was established as a demilitarized zone and stripped of all armaments or fortifications to serve as a barrier to any future German military moves westward against France. Outraged by the "dictated peace," the new German government vowed to resist rather than accept the treaty, but it had no real alternative. Rejection meant a renewal of the war, and as the army pointed out, that was no longer practicable.

## The Other Peace Treaties

The separate peace treaties made with the other Central Powers extensively redrew the map of eastern Europe. Many of these changes merely ratified what the war had already accomplished. The empires that had controlled eastern Europe for centuries had been destroyed or weakened, and a number of new states appeared on the map of Europe (see Map 25.5).

Both the German and Russian Empires lost considerable territory in eastern Europe, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire



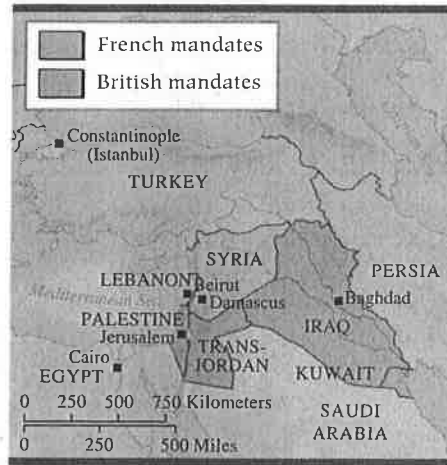
**MAP 25.5 Europe in 1919.** The victorious allies met to determine the shape and nature of postwar Europe. At the urging of the American president Woodrow Wilson, the peace conference created several new countries from the prewar territory of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia in an effort to satisfy the nationalist aspirations of many former imperial subjects.

**Q** What new countries emerged, and what countries gained territory when Austria-Hungary was dismembered?

disappeared altogether. New nation-states emerged from the lands of these three empires: Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary. Territorial rearrangements were also made in the Balkans. Romania acquired additional lands from Russia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Serbia formed the nucleus of the new state of Yugoslavia.

Although the Paris Peace Conference was supposedly guided by the principle of self-determination, the mixtures of peoples in eastern Europe made it impossible to draw boundaries along neat ethnic lines. Compromises had to be made, sometimes to satisfy the national interest of the victors. France, for example, had lost Russia as its major ally on Germany's eastern border and wanted to strengthen and expand Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania as much as possible so that those states could serve as barriers against Germany and Communist Russia. As a result of compromises, virtually every eastern European state was left with a minorities problem that could lead to future conflicts. Germans in Poland; Hungarians, Poles, and Germans in Czechoslovakia; and Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Albanians in Yugoslavia all became sources of later conflict.

The centuries-old Ottoman Empire was dismembered by the peace settlement after the war. To gain Arab support against the Ottomans during the war, the Allies had promised to recognize the independence of Arab states in the Middle Eastern lands of the Ottoman Empire. But the imperialist habits of Europeans died hard. After the war, France took control of Lebanon and Syria, and Britain received Iraq and Palestine. Officially, both acquisitions were called **mandates**. Since Woodrow Wilson had opposed the outright annexation of colonial territories by the Allies, the peace settlement had created a system of mandates whereby a nation officially



The Middle East in 1919

administered a territory on behalf of the League of Nations. The system of mandates could not hide the fact that the principle of national self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference was largely for Europeans.

The peace settlement negotiated at Paris soon came under attack, not only by the defeated Central Powers but also by others who felt that the peacemakers had been shortsighted. Some people agreed, however, that the settlement was the best that could be achieved under the circumstances. They believed that self-determination had served reasonably well as a central organizing principle, and the establishment of the League of

Nations gave some hope that future conflicts could be resolved peacefully. Yet within twenty years, Europe would again be engaged in deadly conflict. As some historians have suggested, perhaps a lack of enforcement, rather than the structure of the settlement, may account for the failure of the peace of 1919.

Successful enforcement of the peace necessitated the active involvement of its principal architects, especially in helping the new German state develop a peaceful and democratic republic. The failure of the U.S. Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, however, meant that the United States never joined the League of Nations. The Senate also rejected Wilson's defensive alliance with Great Britain and France. Already by the end of 1919, the United States was pursuing policies intended to limit its direct involvement in future European wars.

This retreat had dire consequences. American withdrawal from the defensive alliance with Britain and France led Britain to withdraw as well. By removing itself from European affairs, the United States forced France to stand alone facing its old enemy, leading the embittered nation to take strong actions against Germany that only intensified German resentment. By the end of 1919, it appeared that the peace established mere months earlier was already beginning to unravel.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo in the summer of 1914 led within six weeks to a major war among the major powers of Europe. The Germans drove the Russians back in the east, but a stalemate developed in the west, where trenches extending from the Swiss border to the English Channel were defended by barbed wire and machine guns. The Ottoman Empire



joined Germany, and Italy became one of the Allies. After German submarine attacks, the United States entered the war in 1917, but even from the beginning of the war, battles also took place in the African colonies of the Great Powers as well as in the East, making this a truly global war.

Unprepared for war, Russia soon faltered and collapsed, leading to a revolution against the tsar. But the new provisional government in Russia also soon failed, enabling the revolutionary Bolsheviks of V. I. Lenin to seize power. Lenin established a dictatorship and made a costly peace with Germany. After Russia's withdrawal from the war, Germany launched a