

**AFTER  
THE GREAT  
WAR** 

A NEW EUROPE 1918–1923

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EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

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## INTRODUCTION

### ENRS STEERING COMMITTEE

The First World War was a conflict on a scale that the world had never seen before. What spurred the people of Europe when the weapons finally fell silent on the Western Front in 1918, or in East-Central Europe, where the war in many places did not end?

The years after the Great War were forged for the first time by supranational bodies such as the League of Nations, which tested the possibilities and limits of international action. Changing borders often caused chaos, new feelings of despair in East-Central Europe in 1918 and, in the years that followed, often a birth of deeply entrenched emotions of loss or pride. To this day, memory sometimes divides us more than it unites us. An understanding of differences in interpretation of the past to which this exhibition is dedicated is therefore not a luxury, but is essential for the success of the people of Europe living together.

Over 73 million were mobilised with over 21 million wounded. Approximately 9.5 million were killed on the front of whom approximately one-half have no known graves. Moreover, several million civilians died as a consequence of epidemics, prolonged war, hunger and cold. These figures only give a rough idea of the drastic changes that took place during the years of war and immediate postwar years. The exhibition 'After the Great War. A New Europe 1918–1923' shows the five year period starting with the end of the First World War to 1923. This short but critical period first saw the fall of four empires, local wars, revolutions, numerous economic and social problems and eventually the creation of a 'New Europe' ensuring a degree of consolidation. More significantly, however, attention was sharply drawn to the ongoing threat to the democratic order marked by the rise of fascist movements in Italy and Germany. These years were on one hand shaped by efforts to meet the independence aspirations of many nations of East-Central Europe, while establishing an international structure for peace and a road to emancipation. On the other hand, this period was also defined by political revisionism and territorial claims, as well as a level of political violence that was effectively a continuation of war in many places, albeit in different conditions. Radical political changes coincided with cultural and social ones that were by no means less important: civilisational advancement, a wave of urbanisation, women's suffrage or new trends in art and architecture.

The experience differs significantly across European societies. For some nations such as Czechs, Estonians, Finns, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles or Slovaks, this was a time of long-awaited independence and reconstruction of their own sovereign states, whereas for Romanians, for instance, it meant postwar reconstruction, while for Hungarians, Germans, Austrians and Bulgarians, these years signified defeat, humiliation and territorial losses. Ukrainians and Belarusians lost their drive toward independence, but retained their hope for emancipation. Russia experienced the Bolshevik revolution, which produced profound change in nearly every aspect of life and the emergence of a new dictatorial state claiming countless victims. Meanwhile, many national minorities faced a new reality of nation states, which, eventually in some respects proved more difficult for them than previous orders.

In retrospect, it did not take very long for Versailles conference postulates to be contested by different ethnic and political groups. This dissatisfaction was further promoted, among others, by an economic crisis and the emergence of various forms of authoritarian rule, including Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany. This exhibition may prompt questions such as: Was it possible to avoid what was to come, among others, the economic crisis and the rise of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes? If so, what should have been done differently? Can we identify the mistakes that were made then and where we stand after 100 years? Which 'old' questions still move us today?

We, as exhibition organisers, are convinced that a synthesis of any type is not possible without giving various parties a voice. Only by emphasising different narrations and presenting the complex mosaic of issues involved can we all move closer to particular events and peoples' motives. Only such a complex picture can constitute a proper basis for dialogue on how the events of that time and erstwhile decisions continue to influence our present day.

Dr Florin Abraham  
 Dr Réka Földváryné Kiss  
 Dr Ján Pálffy  
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 Prof. Matthias Weber  
 JUNE 2019

## INTRODUCTION

ENRS INSTITUTE DIRECTOR

This catalogue accompanies the touring open-air exhibition 'After the Great War. A New Europe 1918–1923' created by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. Through this project we wish to draw the public's attention not only to the centenary of the end of the First World War, but also to the establishment of a new order in East-Central Europe.

First shown in October 2018 in Prague, this exhibition is to be presented in urban spaces of European cities until the end of 2023. It focuses on the aftermath of one of the key armed conflicts in human history, with particular emphasis on the profound social, political, economic and cultural changes that ensued in East-Central Europe. However, it also has many references to the situation in the West as essential context. The exhibition provides insight into the founding of nations in the 19th century, as well as the history of the Great War and erosion of the Versailles order in the 1930s. However, it primarily addresses processes taking place in 1918–1923, the time when the new order in East-Central Europe was established. The region was called the 'New Europe', a term coined by the President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. It includes a broad region bordered by Germany and Russia, Finland and Turkey. Also stressed are the long-term, often still persistent, consequences of these changes and their direct impact on many contemporary issues and the memory of those events in Europe.

This unique historical synthesis of the interwar period's turbulent start, recalled in so many different ways, is the joint work of more than 40 renowned historians from 18 countries. The exhibition comprises over 200 different elements such as archival photos and films, interactive maps or infographics. Its main narrative is accompanied by individual testimony of witnesses to history, thus providing a more varied and emotionally engaged insight into the atmosphere of these times. The authors devoted much attention to the new roles of women, issues related to national minorities, war commemorations already conducted during the interwar period and the attitude of respective societies toward the new order. All of these subjects aim to create a complex yet coherent picture of the 'New Europe' established in the East-Central part of the continent immediately after the First World War.

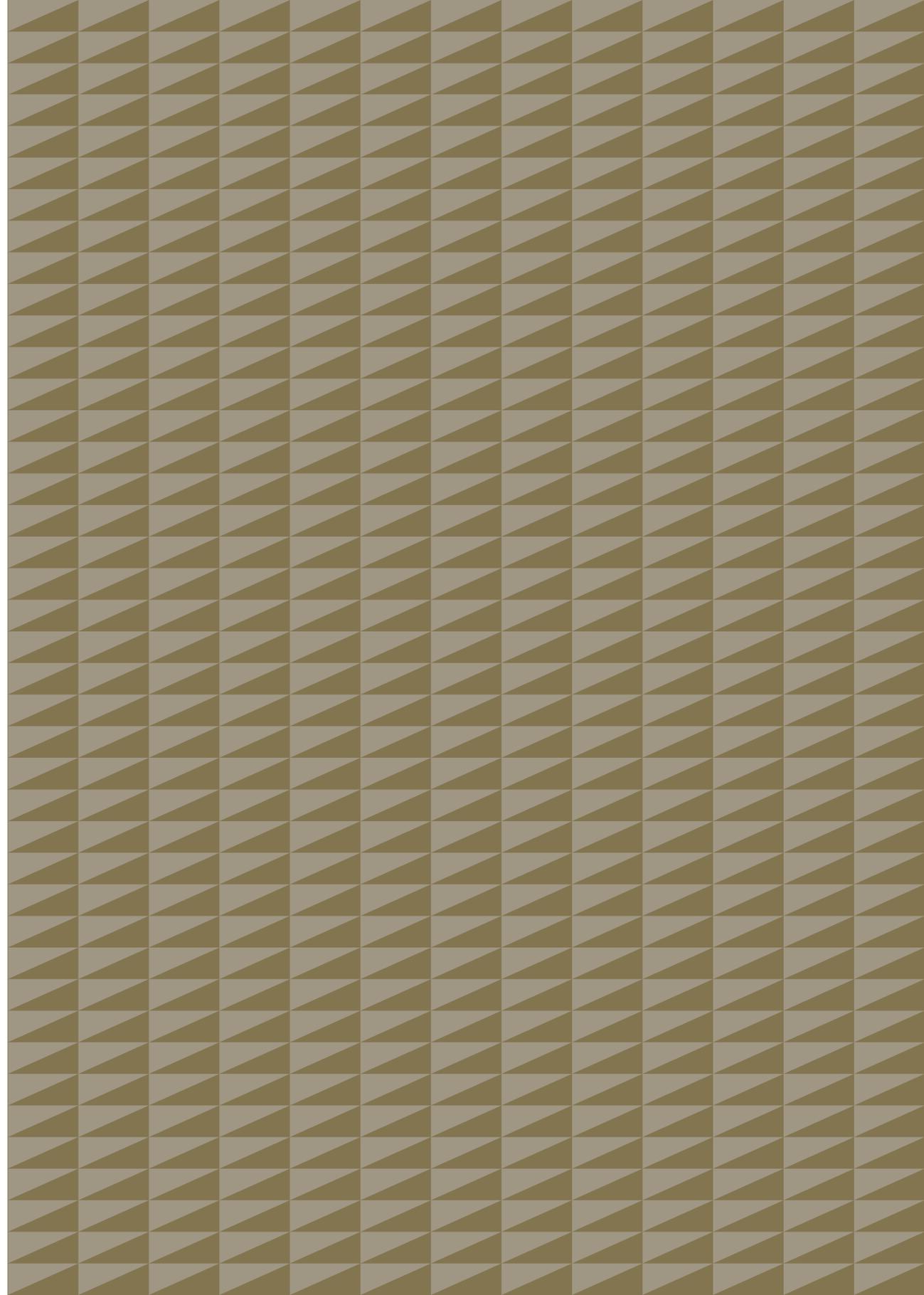
The new and – as it turned out – fragile political order was the result of the Great War, revolutions, peace conferences, plebiscites and border wars. Almost all borders were redrawn and many political systems changed, thereby influencing all spheres of life in the region. We should bear in mind that while some nations in this part of Europe such as the Czechs, Estonians, Finns, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles or Slovaks and for a brief time Belorussians and Ukrainians managed to achieve their long-awaited goals of independence, others experienced bitter defeat and the tragedy of dismemberment.

Although the memory of the Great War and its aftermath is overshadowed by the Second World War, we believe that modern-day Europe is still marked by its consequences. This is why reliable knowledge of these events is essential for a better understanding of many problems we face today. As memory of those times varies, even being contradictory at times, we find it worthwhile to juxtapose different voices and to allow them to enter into dialogue on equal terms. Therefore, the Great War and its aftermath should be viewed from a regional perspective through various international experts, from the region and elsewhere, thus giving the floor to a variety of interpretations and memories. This is exactly how we want to contribute – now and in the future – to developing a culture of memory founded on respect for different identities, experiences and sensibilities. It is up to you to assess the extent to which we have achieved this goal.

I would like to thank the international team of over 60 experts involved in this project. It included: curators and co-authors, academic councils of the exhibition and the ENRS, the JAZ+ studio, which designed and built it and, last but not least, the ENRS team. The project is financed by the ministries of culture of ENRS member states: Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Poland (mainly through the Multi-annual NIEPODLEGŁA Programme of the Polish Government).

Rafał Rogulski

JUNE 2019



Children playing with worthless paper money during hyperinflation in Germany, 1923



Photo from: World History Archive/East News

Polish actress and singer Zula Pogorzelska in her car, 1929



Photo from: National Digital Archive

# FOREWORD

The First World War, which took place between 1914 and 1918, completely changed East-Central Europe. Here, upon the ruins of four old empires, a dozen or so new countries appeared, and almost all borders were redrawn, often in the course of ongoing military conflicts, which lasted until 1923. After having suffered staggering losses, the region embarked on rebuilding and modernising. A so-called New Europe was established there. Some nations remember the war's outcome as a monumental tragedy, whereas for others it meant the culmination of efforts to gain independence. Although these events took place a century ago, their consequences are still visible, and we will not understand our times without knowing that history. We hope that the exhibition prepared by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity will enable visitors to better understand how East-Central Europe was re-shaped in the years 1918–1923 and how variously it is remembered, and will thus generate a deeper understanding among Europeans today.

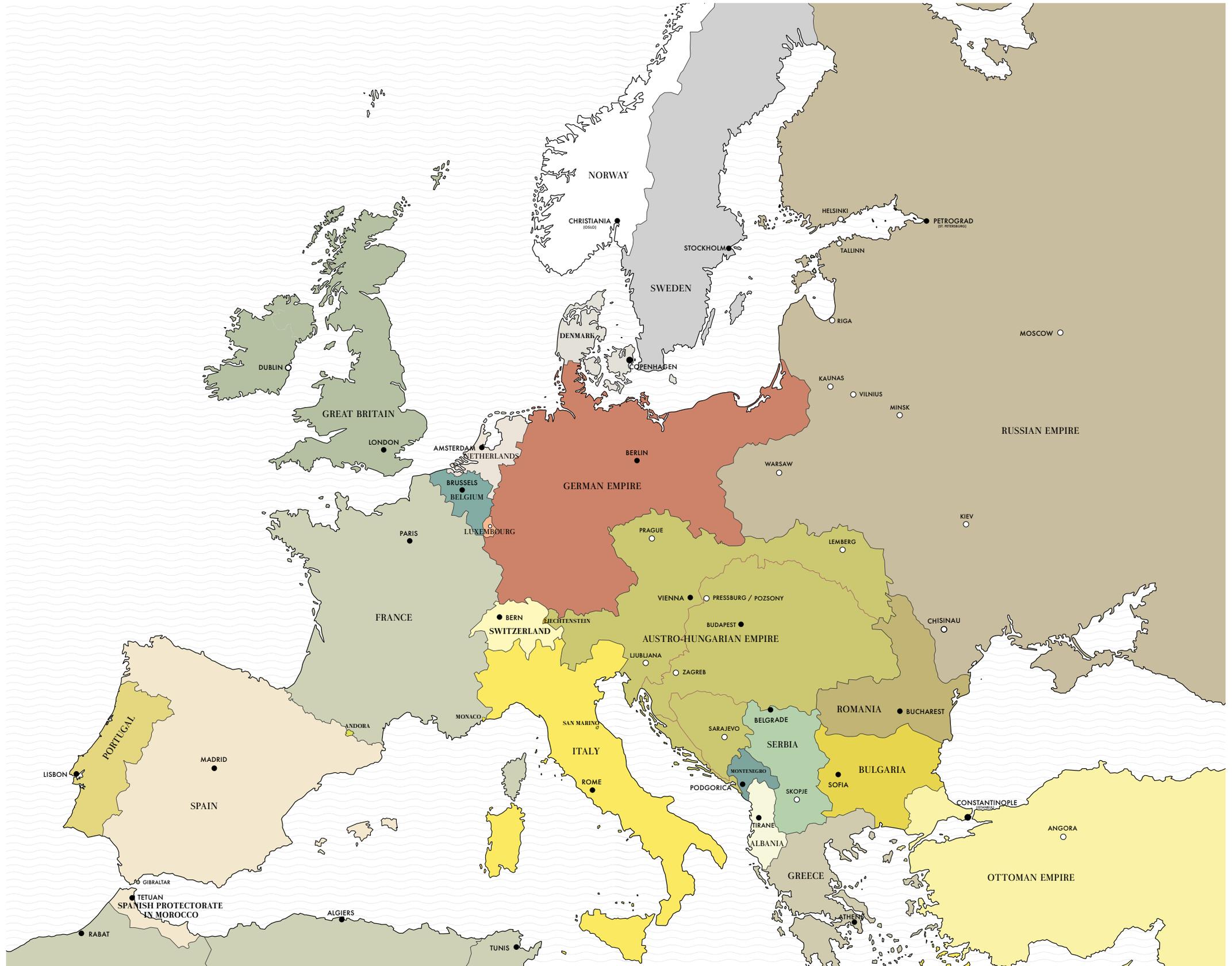


Photo from: Helsinki City Museum

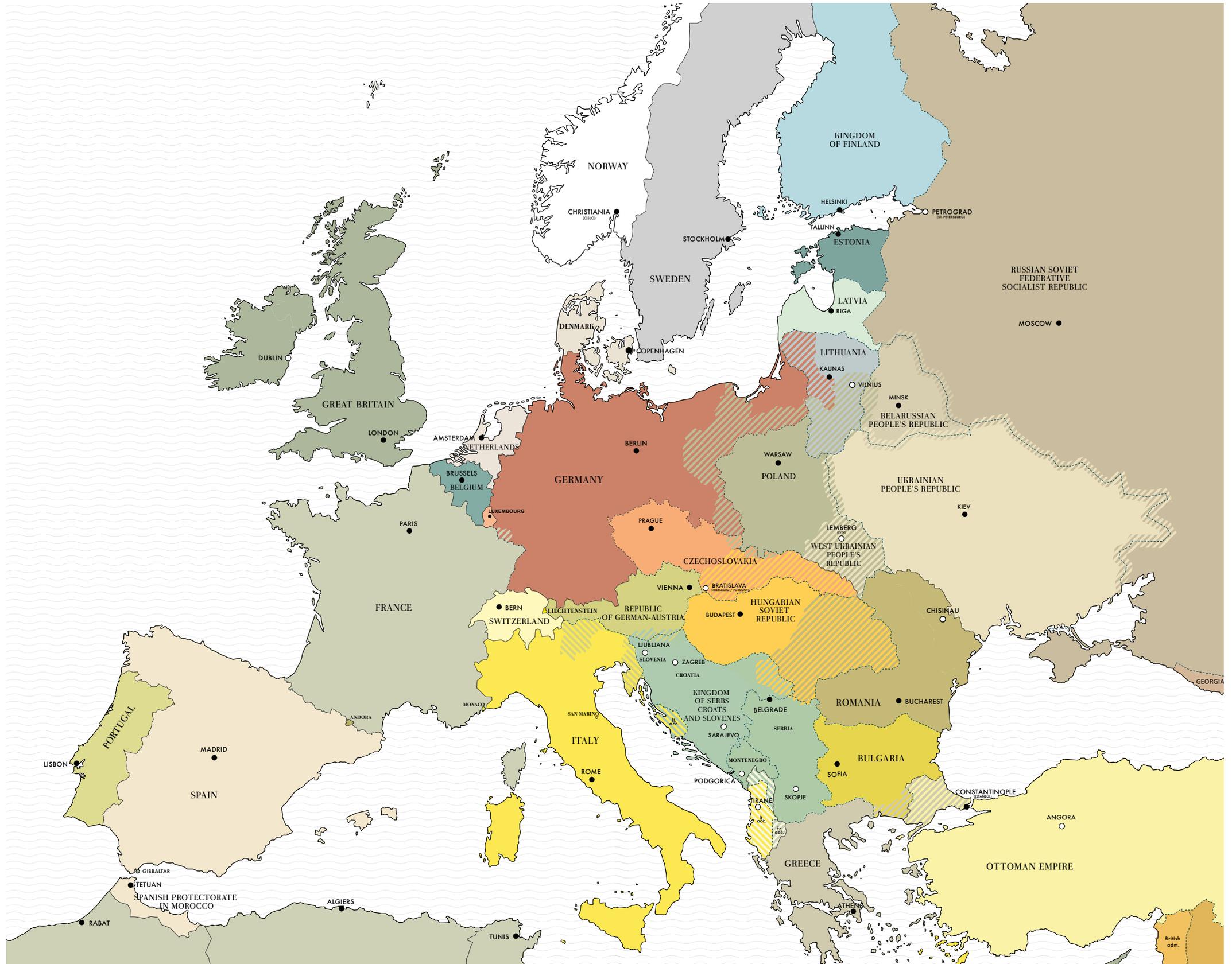
Buildings burnt down during the Civil War in Finland, Helsinki, April 1918



EUROPE IN 1914



EUROPE IN 1918



EUROPE IN 1923



EUROPE IN 2018

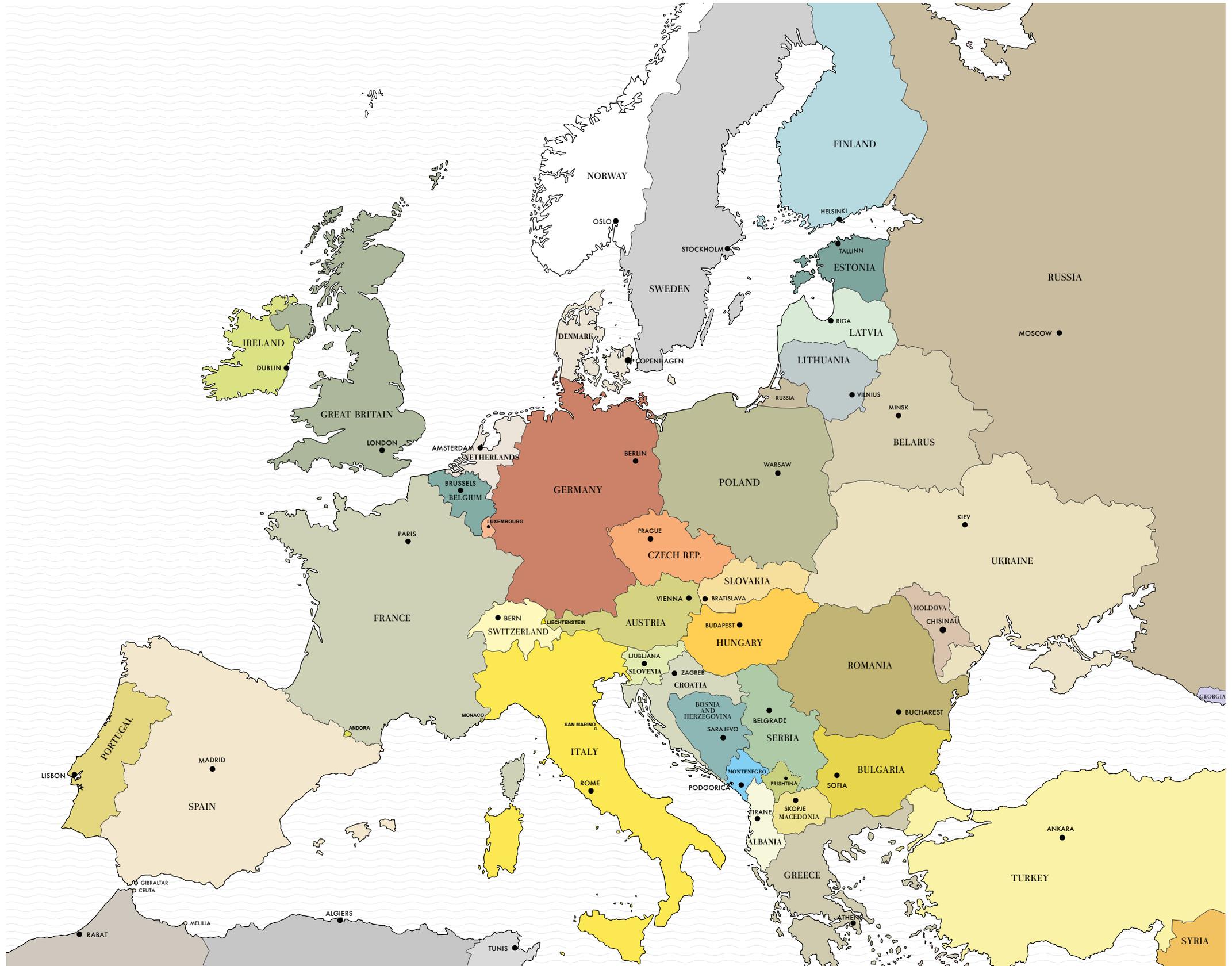




Photo from: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [reproduction number, e.g., LC-B2-1234]

# EUROPE BEFORE THE WAR

Emperor of Austria and King  
of Hungary Franz Joseph I at the wedding of  
his grandnephew Karl Franz Josef  
(later Charles I, Emperor of Austria)  
and Princess Zita of Bourbon-Parma,  
21 October 1911



Before the First World War, the political map of Europe differed considerably from that of today, in particular in the East-Central part of the continent. A number of countries that exist today did not exist back then. The region was dominated by four huge imperial monarchies: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Activists of many ethnic and linguistic groups living within these empires strove to win autonomy or even independence during the 19th century.

## THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN EUROPE

### ALLIANCES BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

- Triple Alliance (1882)
- Triple Entente (1907)
- Capital City

Before the First World War most European countries were constitutional monarchies. The monarchs' power was strong, but somewhat limited by constitutions and parliaments.



## ALLIANCES – CLASH OF EMPIRES

European states not only competed with one another but also entered alliances. The Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy) was established in 1882. In 1907 the Triple Entente was created (France, Russia and Great Britain). By the eve of the First World War the two alliances were almost equal in military power.

## MULTINATIONAL STATES

Before 1914 the empires in East-Central Europe were multi-ethnic. Their populations were diverse in languages, religions, cultures and national identities. Tensions between various nationalities and the state authorities were clearly visible.

Photo from: The National digital library of Latvia. The collection In search of lost Latvia



A shop entrance in two languages in Riga, c. 1900

## PARTITIONS OF THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth found itself in a unique position. It was divided between Prussia, Austria and Russia in the years 1772–1795. Uprisings and other efforts to regain the independence of Poland were brutally suppressed, especially by Russia. Poland was only able to regain statehood as a result of the conflict between the partitioning powers during the First World War.



Photo from: Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie / Muzeum Książąt Czartoryskich

Jan Matejko, 'Polonia', 1864.

The painting presents an allegory of Poland being handcuffed after the anti-Russian January 1863 uprising

POLISH-LITHUANIAN  
COMMONWEALTH  
PARTITIONED  
BETWEEN  
THREE EMPIRES,  
SITUATION  
AFTER 1871



- Border of Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth before 1772
- Capital City
- Austro-Hungarian Empire
- Russian Empire
- German Empire



**LANGUAGE GROUPS IN EUROPE AROUND 1914:**

— State borders in 1914  
 ▨ Multilingual areas

- Albanian
- Aromanian
- Belarusian
- Bosnian
- Bulgarian
- Croatian
- Czech
- Danish
- Dutch
- Estonian
- Finnish
- French
- German
- Greek
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Latvian
- Lithuanian
- Macedonian
- Norwegian
- Polish
- Pomak
- Romanian
- Russian
- Serbian
- Slovakian
- Slovenian
- Swedish
- Turkish
- Ukrainian/Ruthenian

**NATIONAL MOBILISATION**

During the 19th century, national identity was becoming increasingly important for Europeans. National groups within East-Central Europe's multi-ethnic empires wanted to gain greater autonomy or even establish their own countries.

The idea of a Czech-Slav unity (*Československá jednota*) was advocated by active intellectuals who underlined the cultural kinship and reciprocity of the two nations. Poster for the Czech-Slav ethnographic exhibition in Prague, 1895



Photo from: Wikipedia

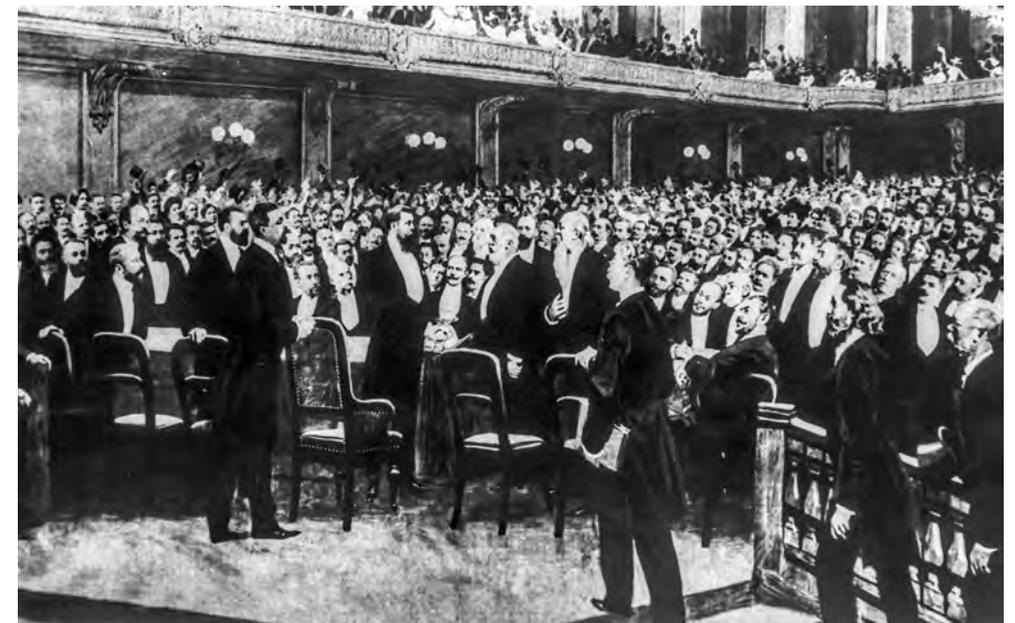


Photo from: Wikipedia

The first Zionist Congress was convened by Theodor Herzl in Basel, 1897. It gathered 197 Jewish delegates from around the world and formulated a programme of the Zionist movement called the Basel Programme, which sought to secure a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine



Photo from: Wikipedia

Polish children from Września who in 1901–1902 protested against forced Germanisation which banned praying in the Polish language at school



Photo from: Wikipedia

Some of the signatories of the Transylvanian Memorandum that was sent in 1892 to the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary Franz Joseph I. It asked for equal ethnic rights for Romanians and demanded an end to discrimination by the Hungarian state

## A SOUTH-SLAVIC FEDERATION OR A GREATER SERBIAN STATE?

The Catholic Croats and Slovenes and the Orthodox Serbs had two major ideas about how to organise their new states. The South Slavic project ('Yugoslavism') advocated the union of all South Slav territories into one federation, free from Austro-Hungarian rule. The Greater Serbia idea aimed at uniting all Serbs into one Serbian state. Till the beginning of the 20th century both ideas competed due to the conflicting interests of Serbs and Croats over the disposition of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the new post-Austrian state.



Photo from: Museum of City of Sarajevo, Inv. No.: 7991

Bosniaks in ceremonial costumes.  
Postcard from the World's Fair in Paris in 1900

## THE BALKAN WARS

In 1912–1913, two wars were waged in the Balkans, as a result of which the Ottoman Empire lost almost all its territories in Europe. After the first war Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece gained new lands, while Albania emerged as a state. After the second war in 1913 Bulgaria lost much of its previously gained territories. As a result of these conflicts, hundreds of thousands of people were expelled from their lands and were officially designated as refugees.

# PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

## German Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke in 1886 on possible future war:

'Gentlemen, if the war that has been hanging over our heads now for more than ten years like the sword of Damocles — if this war breaks out, then its duration and its end will be unforeseeable. The greatest powers of Europe, armed as never before, will be going into battle with each other; not one of them can be crushed so completely in one or two campaigns that it will admit defeat, will be compelled to conclude peace under hard terms, and will not come back, even if it is a year later, to renew the struggle. Gentlemen, it may be a war of seven years' or of thirty years' duration — and woe to him who sets Europe alight, who first puts the fuse to the powder keg.'

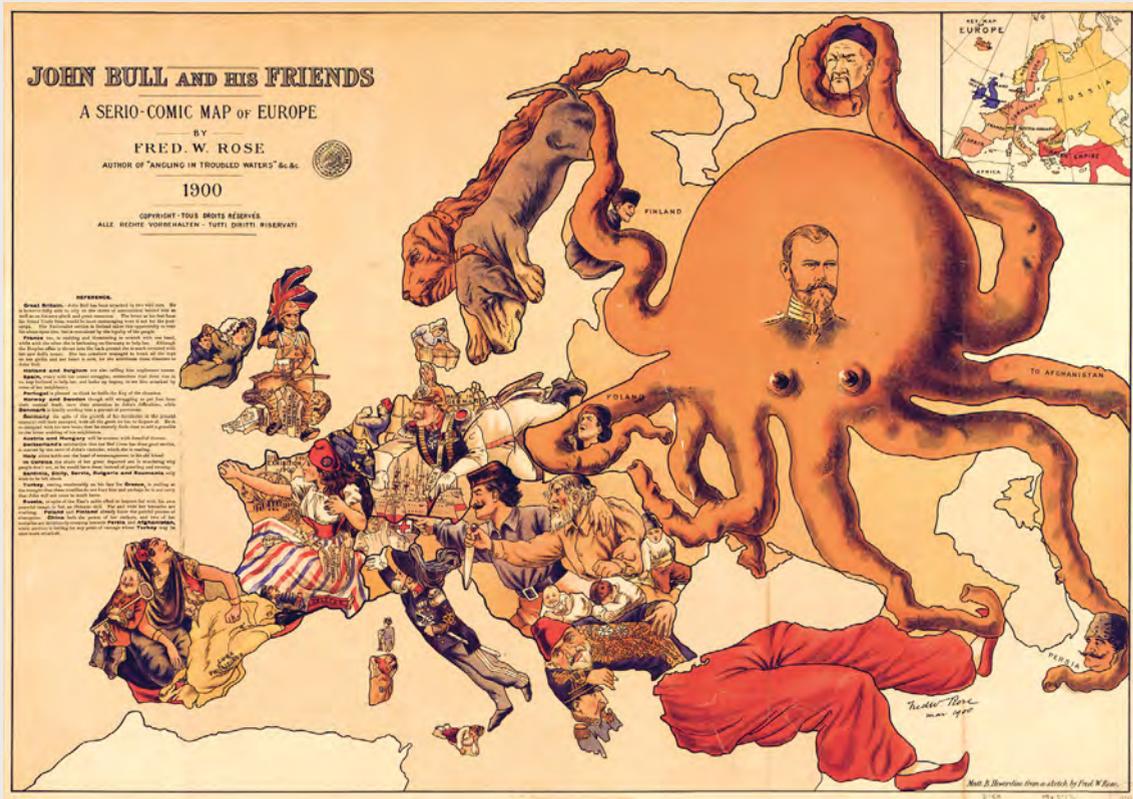


Photo from: United States Library of Congress's Geography & Map Division

Comic map of Europe depicting conflicting interests in Europe around 1900, F. W. Rose, 1900



# THE GREAT WAR

On 28 June 1914, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was visiting Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, then part of Austria-Hungary. He and his wife were shot dead by a member of a clandestine, Serbian-backed, Bosnian organisation fighting for the incorporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina into Serbia. This murder provided the spark for armed conflict between the Central Powers (without Italy) and the Triple Entente, which turned into a world war.

Photo from: East News

French infantrymen during the battle of Verdun, 1916



## THE START OF A GLOBAL WAR

One month after the Sarajevo assassination, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia (28 July 1914). After declarations of war by Germany on Russia and France, and by Great Britain on Germany, by Austria-Hungary on Russia, and by Great Britain and France on Austria-Hungary, the conflict drew in allies of those countries, with over 70 million soldiers from nearly all continents fighting against one another.

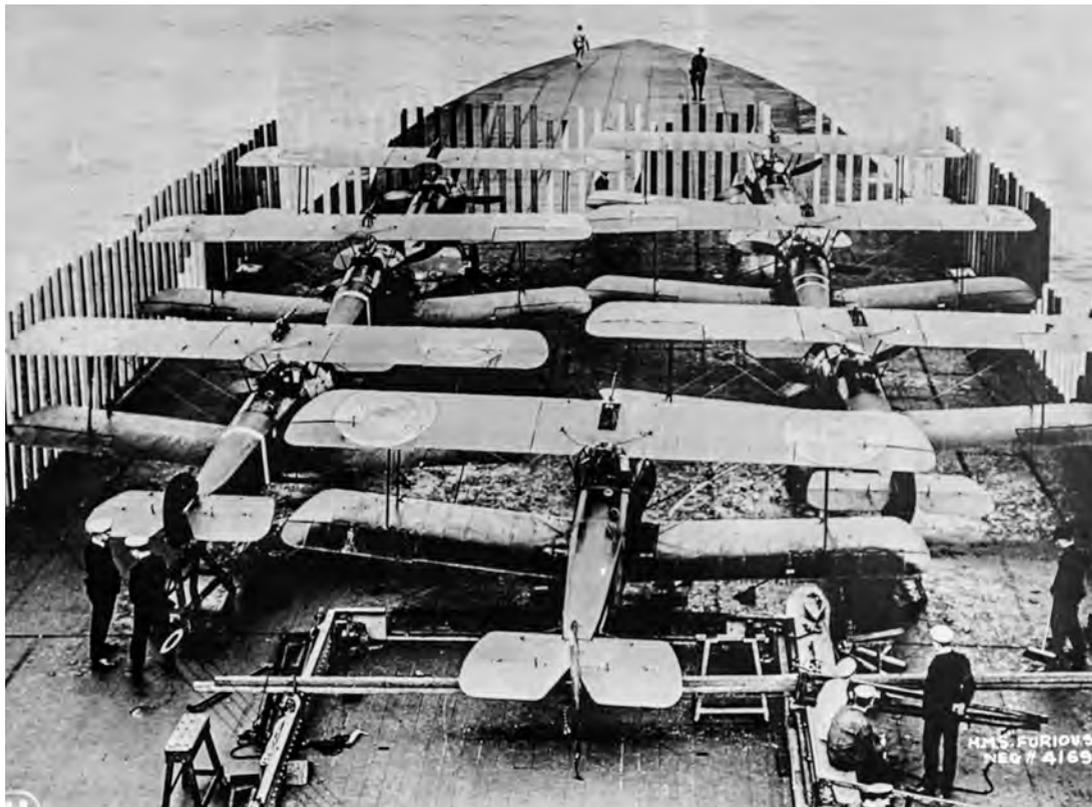


Photo from: ullstein bild/ullstein bild via Getty Images

Uniform of Archduke Franz Ferdinand  
with blood stains after his assassination

### MODERN WAR

The First World War was waged using new military technologies. It was the first time in history that modern artillery, tanks, combat planes, submarines and combat gases were used on a large scale. Huge losses were mainly caused, however, by artillery and machine gun fire. Nearly ten million soldiers lost their lives in wartime operations.



Shipment of planes on board the British aircraft carrier, HMS Furious, 1918

- Entente Powers
- Central Powers
- Neutral countries
- Major battles
- 1914
- 1915
- 1916
- 1917
- 1918
- Capital City
- Date of entering the War
- Country border in 1914

### FRONT LINES AND MAIN BATTLEFIELDS, 1914–1918 (STATE AT THE END OF EACH YEAR)

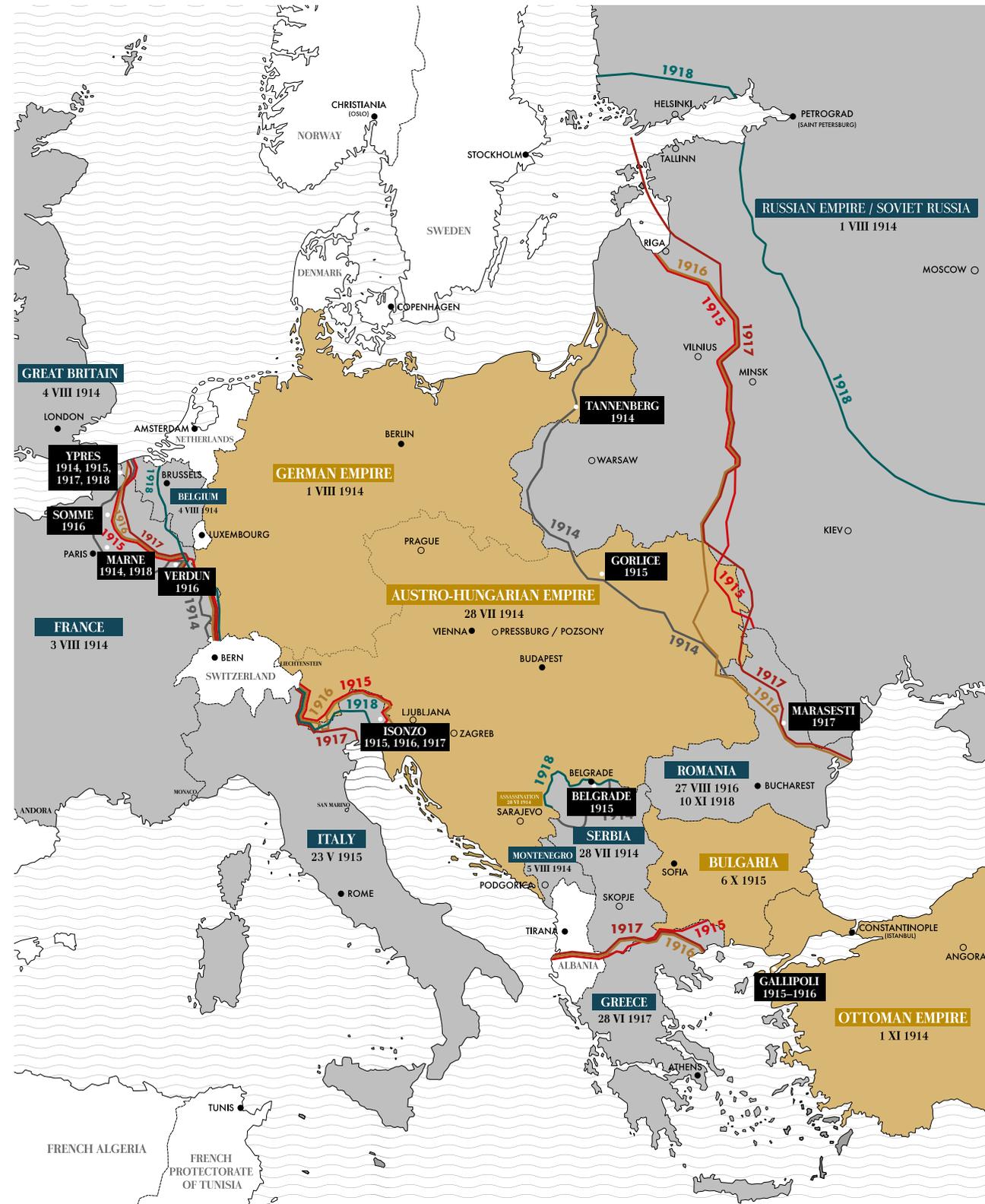
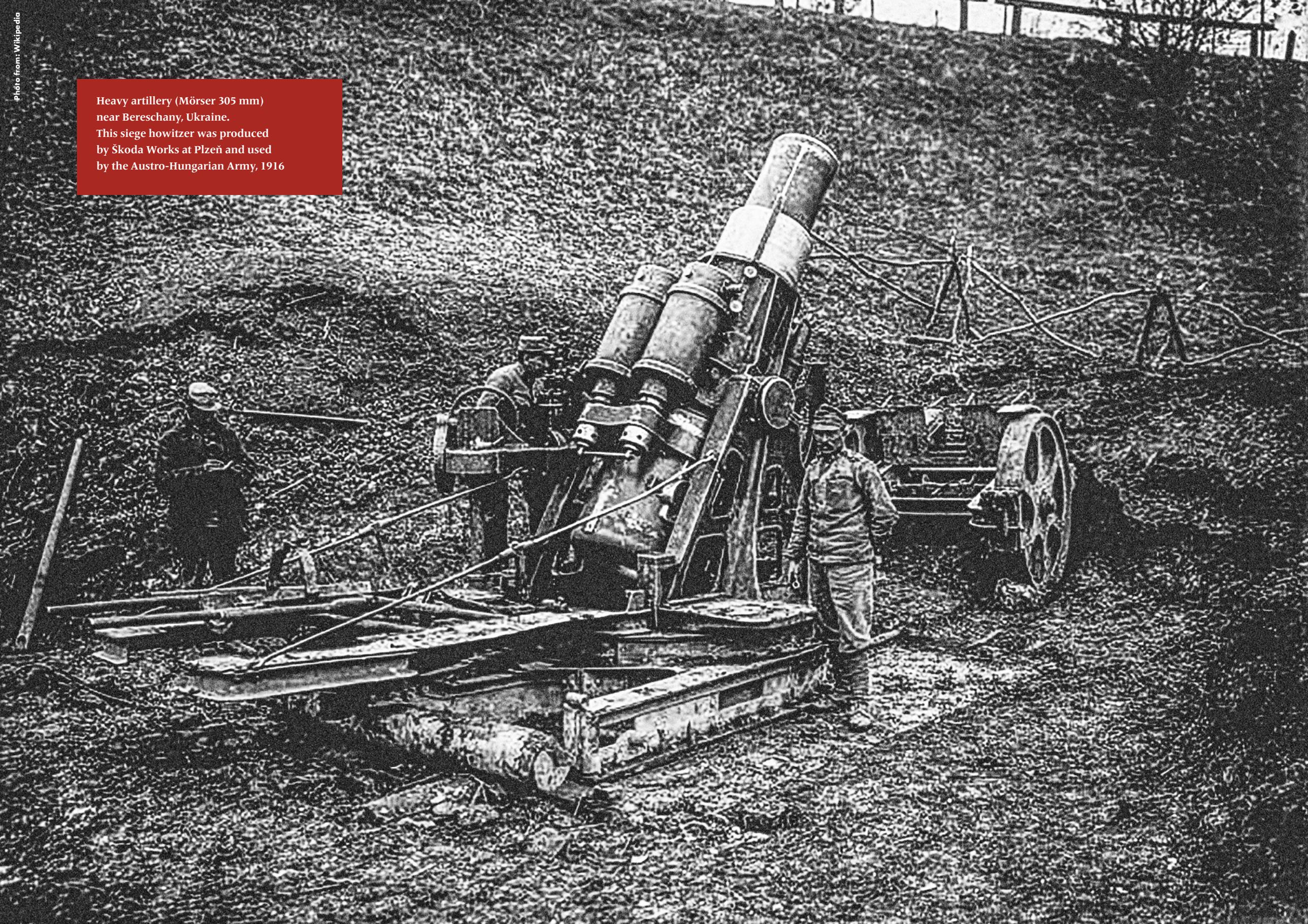
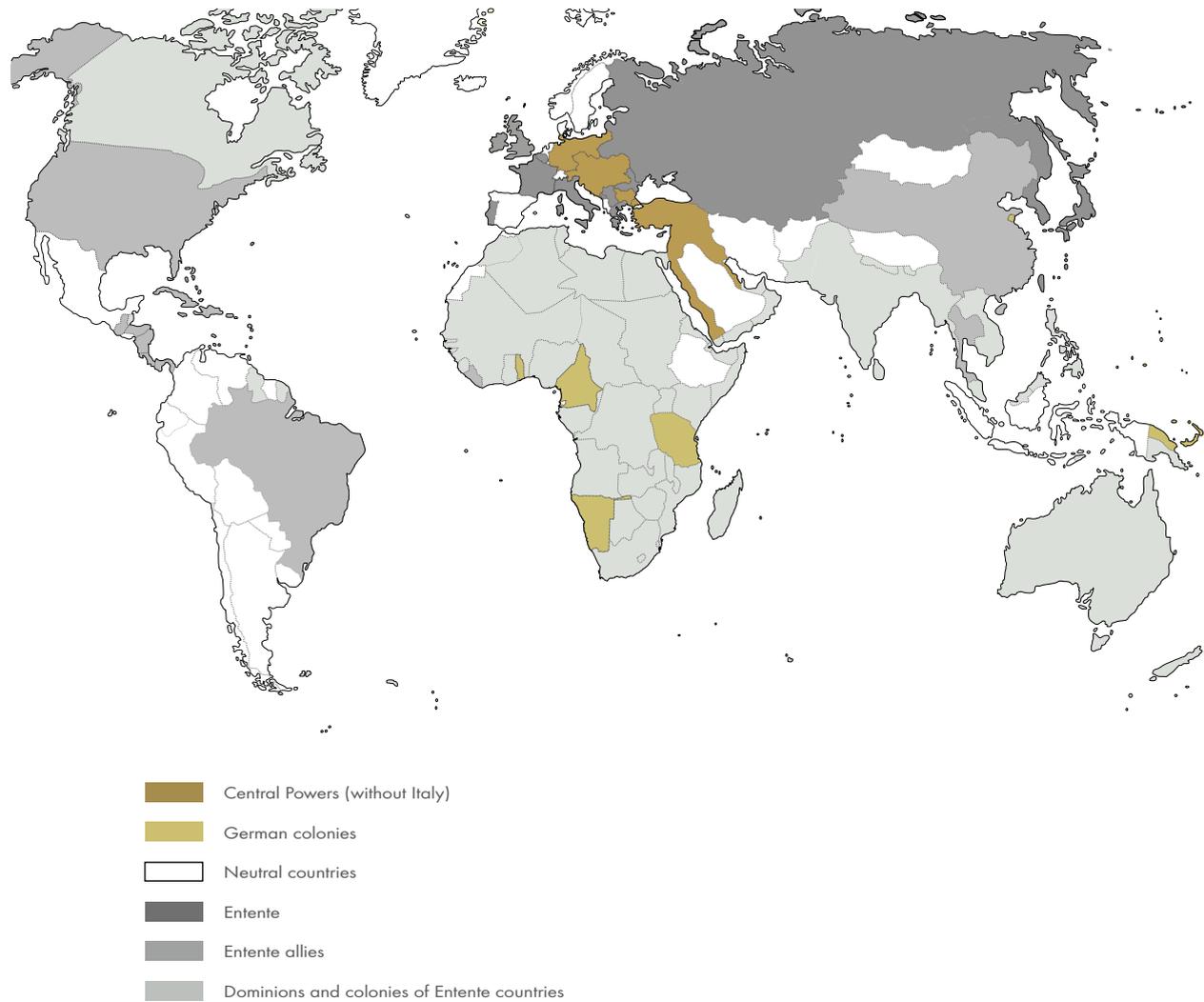


Photo from: Photo Archives, Naval History and Heritage Command

Heavy artillery (Mörser 305 mm)  
near Bereschany, Ukraine.  
This siege howitzer was produced  
by Škoda Works at Plzeň and used  
by the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1916



## GLOBAL RANGE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR



## TRENCH WARFARE ON THE WESTERN FRONT

In the West, the German forces tried to keep their hold on neutral Belgium and north-eastern France, yet were unable to occupy Paris. Later, the line of the western front did not change much until the end of the war. Millions of soldiers were waging trench warfare there, unable to break the enemy's resistance and suffering heavy losses.

Photo from: East News



Wounded American soldier receiving first-aid treatment from a comrade,  
France, September 1918

## WAR ON THE EASTERN FRONT

Unlike in the West, the eastern front line moved, but losses were also huge. The nationalities living in different countries were in particularly difficult circumstances, as they were now fighting each other. Poles, Ukrainians, Romanians or Serbs sometimes had to fight against those of their own nationality or ethnicity in the opposing imperial army.

German infantrymen aim their machine guns at Russian troops from a trench at the Vistula River, in 1914/1915



Photo from: Associated Press/East News

## ITALIAN FRONT

Despite being a member of the Triple Alliance, Italy refused to join the war after its outbreak. Instead it switched sides and went into the war in May 1915. Much of the Italian front was situated in difficult mountain terrain. The most important battles were fought near to the Isonzo (Soča) river.

Italian troops charging in the mountains in 1915

Photo from: Fototeca Gilardi/Getty Images



## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

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### **Polish legionnaire fighting on the eastern front:**

*'The Muscovites [...] began terrible firing from all guns, [...]. The whole mountain turned into a pile of debris and a cloud of smoke, in which flashed bursting shrapnel and grenades creating deep holes, throwing up high fountains of dirt and human parts. The incoming reserves melted in this conflagration like snow in the spring.'*<sup>2</sup>

### **French soldier on life in the trenches near Verdun:**

*'Horses and mules buried. A fetid mud sometimes reaches your ankle, disgorging an awful smell and a heavy opaque air. He who has not seen the wounded emitting their death rattle on the field of battle, without cares, drinking their urine to appease their thirst... has seen nothing of war.'*<sup>3</sup>

### **Ivan Turel, Slovenian soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army talking about mountain warfare on Mount Rombon and Mount Čukla, Slovenia:**

*'I had it the toughest on Mount Rombon, staying in the trenches on the summit. We would often descend by ropes to the precipitous cliffs just below the top. Once, a bolt of lightning killed six soldiers at the top. We were afraid of lightning and often warned our officers of the danger. We spent days on end in the trenches where we slept and ate. Food was scarce. We mostly ate canned goods. We collected water by melting snow.'*<sup>4</sup>

Austro-Hungarian troops climbing in the mountains in 1915

Photo from: Wikipedia



## BALKAN FRONT

Serbia was attacked by Austria-Hungary in 1914. After initial successes the Serbian army was defeated by German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian forces. In 1916, the Serbian army retreated to Greece, which joined the war in 1917. Despite support from the Allies, Serbia and half of Romania, which entered the war in 1916, remained occupied by the Central Powers until October 1918.



Photo from: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

## CRIMES AGAINST CIVILIANS

Photo from: EverettCollection/EastNews



The execution of civilians by Austro-Hungarian troops, Serbia, during the First World War

The war brought much suffering to civilians when towns and villages were destroyed during combat. Civilians were targeted, especially by the Central Powers as they carried out military operations in hostile territories. Further misery was inflicted by the allied naval blockade, which caused shortages and eventually death through starvation of thousands of civilians in Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Serbian artilleryman in action on the Balkan front, c. 1915

Polish refugees from German-occupied  
Polish territories, 1915



## ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Protecting the nation at war against its supposed internal enemies was used as a pretext for the first genocide of the 20th century and other crimes against a country's indigenous civilian population. The most tragic case was the genocide carried out by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians between 1915 and 1917, during which more than one million Armenians died. In various countries various terms are used for this historical fact.



Photo from: PAP/Alamy

Ottoman military and paramilitary forces massacred huge numbers of Armenians. Picture taken by Armin T. Wegner, German soldier and medic who was an eyewitness of the genocide in 1915

## TEMPORARY PEACE IN THE EAST

After the October Revolution in 1917, the new communist (Bolshevik) authorities wanted to take Russia out of the war. Eventually the Central Powers signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Ukraine in February 1918 and with Soviet Russia in March 1918, thus formally ending the war on the eastern front. Germany made peace conditional on very harsh concessions on the part of Russia, which lost vast western territories inhabited mainly by the non-Russian population. The treaty was revoked by Soviet Russia when the German Empire collapsed in November 1918.



Photo by AKG/East News

Signing of the Peace Treaty between Russia and the Central Powers in Brest-Litovsk, March 1918

## TREATY OF BUCHAREST

Entering the war in 1916, Romania suffered severe defeats, and after the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty was forced to capitulate. The Central Powers imposed harsh conditions on it: for example, the German Empire was to control Romanian oil wells for 90 years. Romania lost part of its territory but gained Bessarabia. The terms of the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 and Bucharest in May 1918 show how Europe might have looked had the war been won by the Central Powers.



Photo from: Wikipedia

A French caricature depicting the mercilessness of the Central Powers imposing highly unfavourable peace terms on Romania in 1918

Armenian refugees waiting on a beach, probably on the Bay of Antioch, 1915

Photo from: AFP/EastNews



## THE END OF THE WAR IN THE WEST

After Germany's decision to launch unrestricted submarine warfare, the USA joined the war in April 1917 on the side of the Entente. The American reinforcements put new pressure on the Central Powers, already exhausted by the protracted war. Ultimately, the Central Powers requested an armistice in the autumn of 1918.

Photo from: Interim Archives/Getty Images



Photo from: AP/East News



Train carriage in the woods of Compiègne near Paris, where the German delegation signed the armistice on 11 November 1918

American troops on the deck of a ship transporting them to the fighting in France in 1917

## WILSON'S FOURTEEN POINTS

On 8 January 1918, US President Woodrow Wilson issued a statement known as the Fourteen Points, in which he outlined his conception of a new world order to come after the war. Among his proposals were a diplomatic end to the war, international disarmament, the formation of an international organisation called the League of Nations, withdrawal of the Central Powers from occupied territories, the creation of a Polish state, preservation of a reformed Austria-Hungary and the drawing up of new borders based on the self-determination of nations.

First page of 'The Evening World' – newspaper from New York. Listed on the right are all Fourteen Points by Woodrow Wilson. 8 January 1918



Photo from: Library of Congress, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers site



Photo from: Orlowski, 1940

Renowned Polish pianist, diplomat and future Polish Prime Minister Ignacy Jan Paderewski who agitated worldwide for Polish independence before and during the Great War, talking here to US president Woodrow Wilson, Paris 1919

## EMERGENCE OF COUNTRIES IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

After the Central Powers started occupying vast areas in the east, Belarusians, Estonians, Finns, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles and Ukrainians set about creating their own states. They were often supported in this by Germany, which wanted to build a sphere of influence in East-Central Europe (called 'Mitteleuropa'). However, those proclaiming independence did not share this vision.

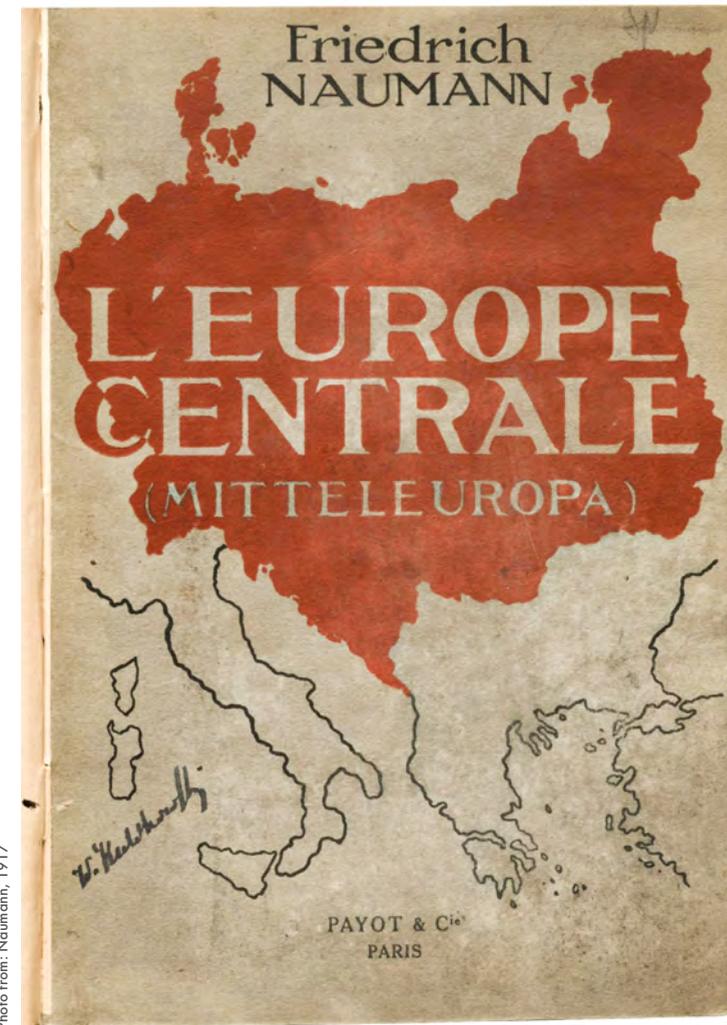


Photo from: Naumann, 1917

'Mitteleuropa' by Friedrich Naumann published in 1915 (this is the 1917 French edition)

# REVOLUTIONS

The war had opened the floodgates for revolutions as many people had suffered extreme deprivation during the war, and regimes, particularly those in the defeated states, had lost their legitimacy. Some of these revolutions were inspired by the ideology of communism. Although unrest and strikes took place also in the west of Europe, in its east-central part they were much more violent and had more far-reaching consequences. Together with wars over borders and civil wars, they left a trail of violence, devastation, hunger and suffering well beyond the official end of the First World War in East-Central Europe. However, gaining independence or introducing democratic changes also meant a kind of revolution.

Photo from: Verlag J. J. Weber in Leipzig/Illustrierte Zeitung



Fights at a street barricade, Berlin, January 1919

## REASONS FOR SOCIAL UNREST

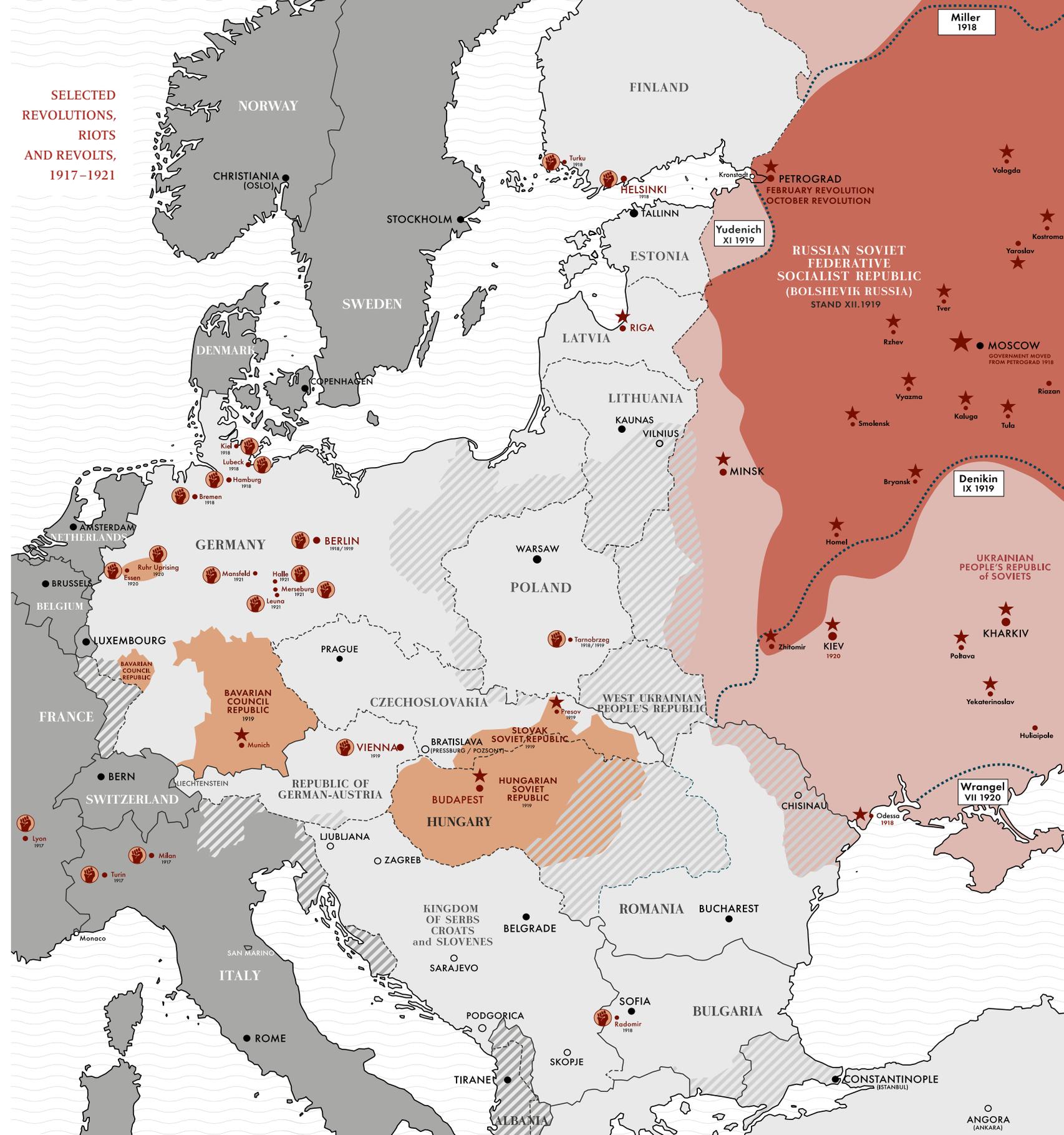
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As the First World War drew to an end, numerous factors – military defeats and casualties, deterioration of living conditions, hunger, epidemics, the experience of extreme violence in combat – prompted widespread unrest among the people, including war veterans resulting in expectations of a political change. A groundswell of support for extremism from the political ‘Right’ and ‘Left’, resulted in strikes, riots, assassinations, revolutions and counter-revolutions in East-Central Europe. These revolutionary conflicts were a way of searching for a new political, social and economic order.

## RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS

In February 1917 a revolution broke out in Russia, and the Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate. However, his fall did not end social conflict, since a provisional government decided to continue the war and did not significantly improve the country's harsh living conditions. Additionally, Germany supported Vladimir Lenin in his return to Russia, hoping that this would further destabilise it. In October 1917 a second revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power. Vladimir Lenin led the new government. A bloody civil war ensued and the new regime initiated a rule of terror targeting its opponents. It also led to the murder of the Tsar and his family in July 1918. The so-called policy of 'war communism', which limited private property, led to severe shortages and hunger. Uprisings and rebellions against the new government followed. In 1918–1921 around 3,5 million people died.

-  State borders in 1918
-  State borders of emerging countries (1918)
-  Centres of Bolsheviks' power
-  Selected revolutionary strikes and revolts
-  Capital city
-  Areas under communist rule
-  Areas under Bolsheviks' rule in March 1921
-  Areas controlled by Bolsheviks in December 1918
-  Maximum advance of White Army forces
-  Disputed areas
-  White forces' commanders
-  New Europe





## THE SPREAD OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The communists tried to extend the revolution from Russia to East-Central and Western Europe. This led to armed conflicts with newly established states. Finland experienced a civil war in which anti-communists were supported by German troops. In the emerging Baltic states, squads of pro-independence volunteers defeated local communists backed by armed Russian revolutionaries. A hard-fought war broke out between Soviet Russia and emerging Poland, which was won by the latter. However, some other countries – Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – failed to sustain their new-found independence and were mostly incorporated into the new Soviet Union.

Photo from: AKG/East News

'Bolshevik', painted by Boris Kustodiev, 1920

## REVOLUTION IN GERMANY

In Germany in early November 1918, war, food shortages and discontent among soldiers and civilians delegitimised the authorities and sparked a democratic revolution. In many places power was taken over by councils of soldiers and workers, controlled mainly by social democrats – most importantly in Berlin. In Munich (Bavaria) a communist republic was created in 1919. Soon, right-wing social democrats together with conservative forces and paramilitary units of demobilised soldiers turned against the communists and defeated them. These confrontations claimed several thousand lives.



Photo from: East News

Revolutionary sailors demonstrating in Petrograd (St. Petersburg), 1917



Photo from: AKG/EastNews

Troops of the soldiers' and workers' council in front of the Berlin Castle, Germany, 1918/1919

## REVOLUTION IN HUNGARY

In Hungary, a new coalition government presented a democratic agenda in October 1918. Due to serious economic, political and military crises, it was overthrown by the united socialists and communists in March 1919. A dictatorship of the proletariat was announced in the form of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, led by Béla Kun. Nationalisation of industrial plants and banks ensued and agricultural reform was introduced. The new regime set up a blood-stained apparatus of terror. In April, Romanian and Czechoslovak troops intervened and by late July 1919 the Hungarian Soviet Republic had been overthrown. The new government initiated a 'white terror' campaign against anyone associated with the communist regime.



Photo from: Hungarian National Museum

'For the Red Parliament. Vote for Social democrats'.  
Poster designed during the Hungarian Soviet Republic  
by Mihály Bíró, 1919

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**Seventeen-year old lyceum pupil Siiri witnessed the decisive battle of Tampere in early April 1918:**

*'I faced a horrible scene. Blocks of houses were burned to ashes leaving only black ruins standing. There were bodies of Red soldiers, horses and cows along the streets. The bodies of the White soldiers had been collected and moved away. The windows were broken and the streets were dirty and bloody. Charred bodies and burned items were lying in the ruins.'*<sup>5</sup>

Photo from: Museokeskus Vapriikki



Bodies on streets after the battle of Tampere, Finland, March/April 1918



# NEW STATES, NEW DEMOCRACIES

By the last year of the First World War the multinational empires of Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary had begun to fall apart. The nations living there started to consolidate and to set up their own sovereign states. A number of new countries emerged around 1918, mainly in East-Central Europe. The only countries created in Western Europe were Ireland and the Kingdom of Iceland, latter in personal union with Denmark. Almost all of these states exist today. This proved to be one of the most far-reaching consequences of the First World War.

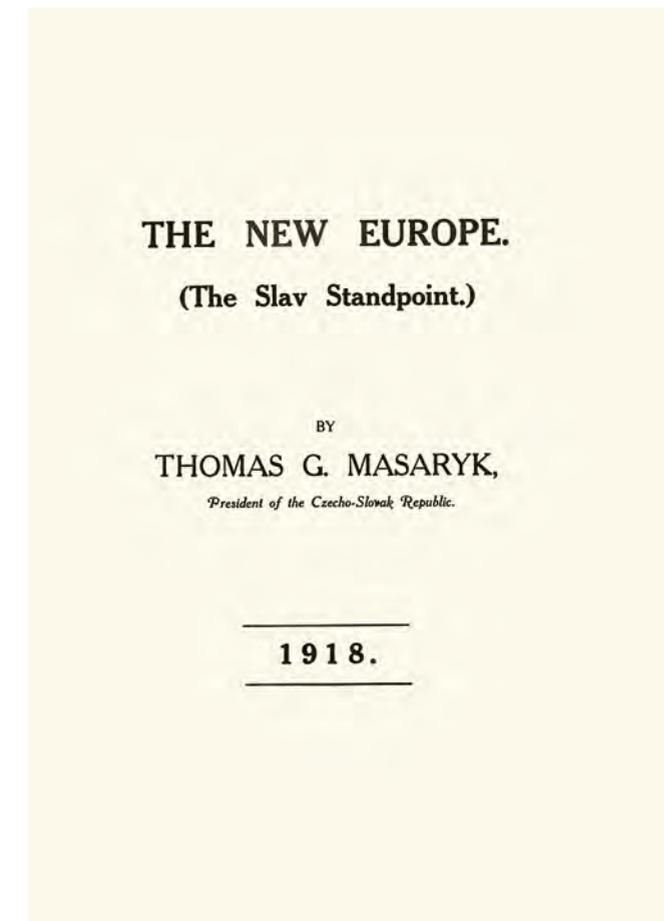
Photo from: Mary Evans Picture Library / East News

Czechoslovak troops accompanying  
President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk,  
Prague, December 1918

## THE NEW EUROPE

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In 1918, the first President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, published a book entitled 'The New Europe', where – inspired by the principle of self-determination of nations – he described a new approach to the politics of the region bordered by Germany and Russia, Finland and Turkey: a zone of nation states, which he called the New Europe.



The cover of the book 'The New Europe'  
written by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, 1918

## NEW EUROPE AFTER THE WAR

### ALBANIA

When the Great War started, the Albanian government declared neutrality. Nevertheless, the country was drawn into the conflict, becoming a battleground of foreign armies. The front line in the Balkans, established from the beginning of 1916 until November 1918, passed through Albania and divided the country between the Austro-Hungarians, Italians and French. After the war the country established a National Assembly and a government which at the Peace Conference demanded recognition of Albanian independence and territorial integrity. In March 1920, US President Woodrow Wilson intervened to guarantee the independence and integrity of Albania. In December 1920 the League of Nations recognised Albania's sovereignty by admitting it as a full member.



Photo from: Library of Congress, Prints&Photographs Division

Ahmet Zogu – the leader of Albania from 1922 to 1939. He first served as Prime Minister of Albania, then as President, and finally as King Zog I

### AUSTRIA

In a last-ditch attempt to save the Habsburg monarchy, Emperor Karl I offered a federal solution for Austria on 16 October 1918. It was immediately rejected by the Hungarian government, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk proclaimed the creation of an independent Czechoslovak State. In Vienna, from 21 October a 'Provisional National Assembly' had begun to lay the foundations of an 'Independent German-Austria'. Social Democrat, Christian Social and Pan-German deputies were united in desiring that German-Austria not only be a republic, but also part of the future German Republic. On 12 November 1918, one day after Austrian Emperor Karl I abdicated, the German-Austrian Republic was proclaimed. But the Saint-Germain-en-Laye Peace Treaty banned the incorporation of Austria into Germany and ordered the use of the name 'Republic of Austria'. As early as February 1919, the new, small Austria held its first parliamentary elections. In September 1920 a 'grand coalition' of Social Democrats and Christian Socials promulgated a new constitution with a balance between centralist and federalist elements and the separation of Vienna from Lower Austria. They failed, however, to find compromises on socio-economic and cultural issues.

## BELARUS

The First World War gave Belarus a chance of independence, despite the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century its national movement was only just emerging. After the Bolsheviks retreated from Minsk in February 1918, national activists announced the creation of the Belarussian People's Republic (BNR). Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, on 25 March 1918, the BNR was declared independent, but creating a sovereign state under German occupation was mired in difficulty. After the offensive of the Bolshevik army in the autumn of 1918, Soviet power was established in the territory of Belarus in the form of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus, eventually integrated into Soviet Russia. From 1919 the BNR leadership continued its activity in exile.

## BULGARIA

After signing the Armistice of Salonica on 29 September, 1918 Bulgaria faced protests and revolts throughout the country. Tsar Ferdinand was forced to abdicate and was replaced by his son, Boris. Despite its numerous internal problems, the country managed to hold democratic elections in 1919. A landslide victory was won by the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) under the charismatic leadership of Alexander Stamboliyski. The main goal of his policy was to transform the political, economic, and social structures of the state, though he did not intend to abolish the monarchy. As Prime Minister he signed the terms of the Neuilly-sur-Seine Peace Treaty in November 1919. The tough provisions of the treaty were later exploited by Bulgaria's far-right and criticised as capitulation. In June 1923 an opposition coup overthrew Stamboliyski, who was consequently brutally killed. The new Prime Minister, Alexander Tsankov, tried to assure the alarmed Western Allies that his government would adhere to the terms of the Neuilly Treaty and reestablish democratic rule in Bulgaria. For the rest of the 1920s, however, violence remained a constant feature of Bulgarian politics.



Photo from: Central State Archive, Sofia

Alexander Stamboliyski, ruled 1919–1923

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

During the First World War Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk strove for Czech independence in a union with Slovakia, based on the idea of so-called Czechoslovakism, a united political Czechoslovak nation. Domestic anti Austro-Hungarian resistance activities and the existence of volunteer Czechoslovak legions in Russia played a major role in the recognition by the Entente of Czechoslovak ambitions. Even before the end of the war, France, the United Kingdom and the United States acknowledged the right of Czechoslovaks to an independent state, which was officially proclaimed in Prague on 28 October 1918. Slovak politicians claimed allegiance to the common state two days later. In November 1918 Masaryk became President of the Czechoslovak Republic. In May 1919, troops from the Hungarian Soviet Republic marched into Slovakia and a Slovak Soviet Republic was declared. A month later it was liquidated by Czechoslovak troops.

## ESTONIA

The Estonian Gubernia gained autonomy in April 1917 after the February Revolution in Russia and the first free elections held on 5 June 1917. Estonia's declaration of independence, the 'Manifesto to all People of Estonia', was proclaimed on 24 February 1918. After the withdrawal of German occupation forces in November 1918, the Soviet Red Army attacked Estonia. The Estonian War of Independence ended with a peace treaty signed in Tartu on 2 February 1920. The constitution was adopted four months later, in June 1920.



Photo from: Estonian History Museum, KLM FT 1105:44 F

Estonian armoured train equipped with a heavy gun during the Estonian War of Independence, c. 1919

## FINLAND

The revolutionary year of 1917 opened up unanticipated possibilities for Finnish sovereignty. The parliament declared Finland independent from Bolshevik Russia on 6 December 1917. The Bolshevik government acknowledged the independence of Finland at the beginning of 1918, and many of the Western governments followed. Despite this, the divided society drifted into a short but bloody Civil War between the revolutionary, socialist Reds and the non-socialist Whites led by General Carl Gustaf Mannerheim. German troops fought on the side of the victorious Whites, and under pressure from them the Finnish parliament established a German-led Finnish monarchy. However, after the German defeat in the First World War, Finland was declared a republic in 1919 and German troops moved further toward the Baltic states. The Peace Treaty of Tartu in 1920 established Finnish independence.



Photo from: Helsinki City Museum

Finnish White troops leading captured Red soldiers to the Suomenlinna prison camp during the Civil War, c. 1918

## GERMANY (WEIMAR REPUBLIC)

War, defeat and revolution in Germany eventually led to the fall of the monarchy on 9 November 1918. Kaiser Wilhelm fled to the Netherlands. The division between moderate and radical Social Democrats was visible in the double proclamation of the German Republic by the moderate Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann and the radical Social Democrat, later co-founder of the Communist Party of Germany, Karl Liebknecht on 9 November 1918. The republic was threatened, however, by the Spartacist uprising foiled in Berlin in January 1919, at the cost of many lives. Therefore the Constitutional Assembly met in Weimar from February 1919 to May 1920. On 31 July, a broad majority of its members accepted the democratic order of the new state thereafter referred to as the 'Weimar Republic'. The situation was far from stabilised, as between April and May 1919 the Bavarian Council Republic was announced. The democratic changes of the Weimar Republic were also threatened by the unsuccessful right-wing Kapp coup in March 1920.



Photo from: Wikipedia

Philipp Scheidemann proclaiming the Republic from the window of the Reichstag (parliament) building in Berlin, 9 November 1918

## GREECE

The end of the Great War found the Kingdom of Greece on the victorious side. According to the Sèvres Treaty (1920), Greece had the opportunity to expand its territory, so as to include Eastern Thrace and, in Anatolia, the region of Smyrna. The defeat of the Ottoman Turks presented Greece with a new chance to realise the nation's 'Great Idea', the political programme that promoted the expansion of the Greek state so as to include all communities considered Greek in the Ottoman Empire. As a result, Greece led a military campaign into Anatolia so as to liberate the 'unredeemed Greek communities'. The campaign was opposed by the reconstituted Turkish army under Mustafa Kemal and resulted in a military disaster for the Greek army. The Greek presence in Anatolia came to an end. After the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the compulsory exchange of populations, Greece and Turkey would carry on as more or less homogenous nation states, with Christian minorities in Turkey and Muslim minorities in Greece. Greek imperial dreams were over. The most pressing problem facing them was the accommodation and inclusion of refugees in both Greece and Turkey. The lost war led to a major political change – the King Constantine I and then his son George II were forced to abdicate. In a plebiscite in 1924 Greeks voted for a republic.



Photo from: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Greek refugees from Asia Minor (Turkey) settling in a refugee camp in Athens in front of the Temple of Theseus, 1922

## HUNGARY

A combination of military losses, economic woes and social tensions led István Tisza, the former Hungarian Prime Minister, to declare on 17 October 1918 that the monarchy had lost the war. The dualist system of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy fell apart and the so-called Aster Revolution (soldiers returning from the front replaced the symbol of the king with this flower) opened the way to the proclamation of the People's Republic on 16 November 1918. The situation was further aggravated by the incoming of refugees from Hungarian state territories integrated into the emerging successor states of the Habsburg monarchy. At the end of the war, the Hungarian government sought an agreement with leaders of the Romanians in Transylvania. The latter, however, considered the union with Romania the ultimate step in the lengthy struggle for a Romanian national state including Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. When it became clear that the peace conference was preparing to grant Romania vast territories beyond Transylvania proper, the Hungarian government resigned on 21 March 1919. Additionally, ensuing military conflicts, the desperate economic situation and the growing success of communist propaganda resulted in a new revolution: a coalition of social democrats and communists proclaimed the Hungarian Soviet republic in April 1919 that was led by Béla Kun. The new communist dominated government tried to achieve its territorial aims through an armed conflict with Romania. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' collapsed after 133 days following the intervention of Romanian and Czechoslovak troops. Counterrevolutionary forces organised in Szeged and Vienna helped Admiral Miklós Horthy take power. He ruled the country as Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary until 15 October 1944. The new regime punished the leaders and followers of the 'red terror' by means of a 'white terror' and hoped to consolidate the country by achieving a fair and just peace settlement for Hungary.



Photo from: National Archives and Records Administration

Revolutionaries on the streets during the Hungarian Revolution of 1919

## KINGDOM OF SERBS, CROATS AND SLOVENES (YUGOSLAVIA)

The First World War saw the re-emergence of the South Slavic project. After Serbia's and Montenegro's military defeat in 1915 and 1916, in the Declaration of Corfu (20 July 1917) South Slavic émigrés from the Habsburg monarchy agreed with the Serbian government-in-exile to constitute after the war a common kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Following the examples of the Poles and the Czechs, representatives of the South Slavic parties in Austria-Hungary had established a National Council in Zagreb, demanding self-determination and the foundation of an independent, democratically organised state. On 29 October 1918 they broke off all ties with Austria and Hungary and proclaimed a new state including all the South Slavic lands of the former Habsburg monarchy. The National Council also declared its desire to integrate with Serbia and Montenegro. On 1 December 1918 the independent Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS) was born in Belgrade, and its constitution was adopted in 1921. The official name of the state was changed to the 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia' in 1929.



Photo from: Digital Knjižnica Slovenije

Border guards from SHS (left) and Italy (right) standing on the border established by the Treaty of Rapallo signed in 1920. Photo published in the magazine *Ilustrirani Slovenec*, 1925

## LATVIA

Throughout the First World War, Latvia was a battlefield between Imperial Germany and Russia. Hundreds of thousands of common people fled as refugees, and thousands more fought in the war. The armistice brought more uncertainty: German forces were ordered to remain while a resurgent Soviet Russian army threatened to reclaim the territory. On 18 November 1918 a coalition of Latvian political organisations declared an independent Republic of Latvia headed by Kārlis Ulmanis. The newly created state called for military assistance by German paramilitary troops against the Red Army. However, due to violence by German paramilitary troops against the civilians as well as after defeating the Bolsheviks, the new Latvian government demanded that the German troops leave Latvia. This led to a clash between the German troops and the Latvian army, supported by the Estonians and Poles. War came to an end in August 1920 when Soviet Russia renounced all claims and recognised Latvia's independence. An elected Constituent Assembly formalised a democratic parliamentary republic.

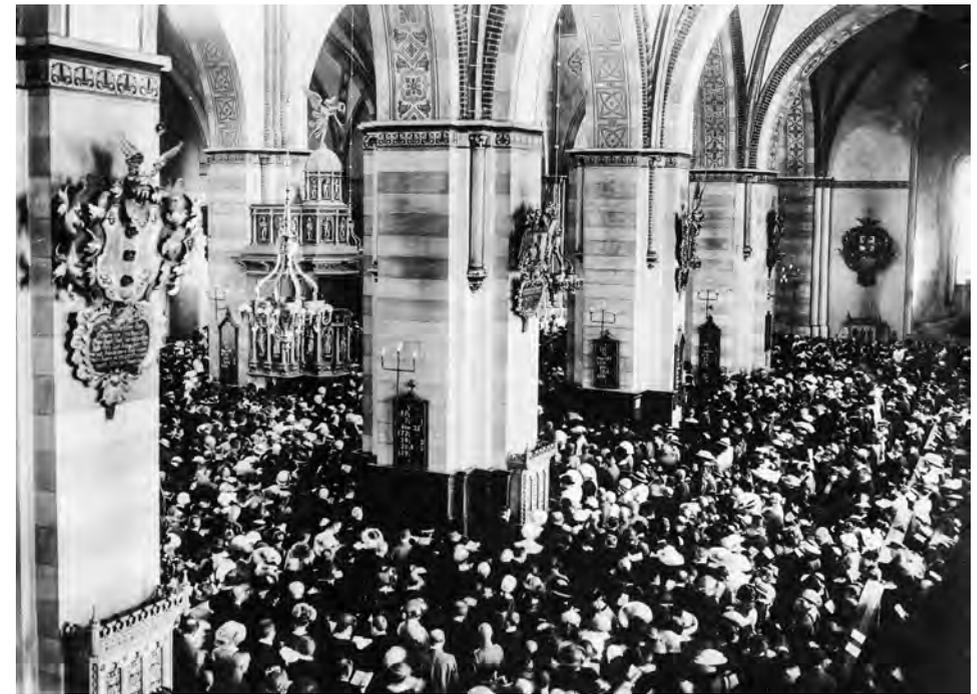
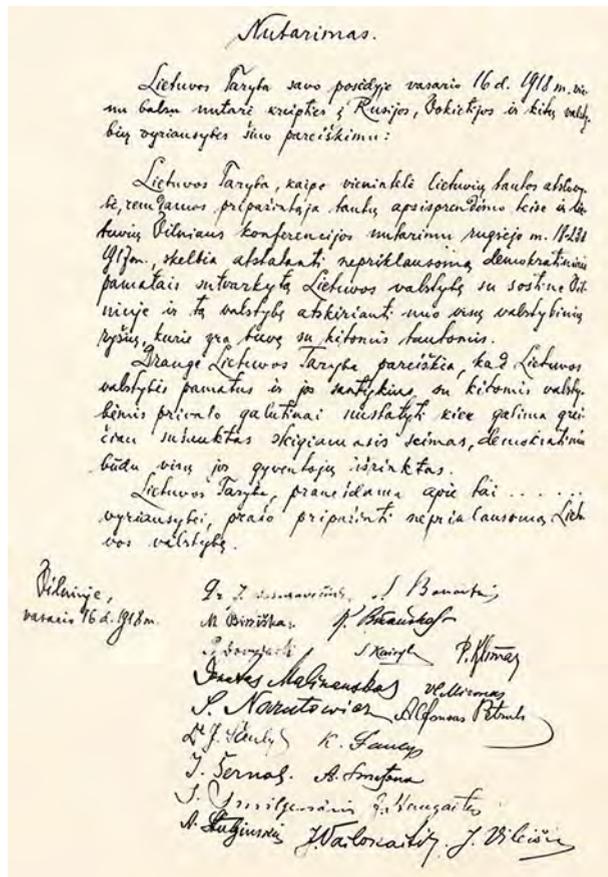


Photo from: AKG/East News

Thanksgiving mass after the foundation of the Republic of Latvia on 18 November 1918

## LITHUANIA

After the Russian October Revolution in 1917, Germany hoped that Lithuania would proclaim its independence from Russia and ally itself with Germany. Instead, the Act of Lithuanian Independence was signed on 16 February 1918, without a commitment to the Central Powers, whose troops were still in Lithuania. After the German defeat, the boundaries of the Lithuanian state were still unsettled. From 1918 to 1920, Lithuania fought against both the Bolsheviks and the Western Russian Volunteer Army in the so-called 'Wars of Independence'. Kaunas was designated as a provisional capital, since Vilnius was attached to Poland in 1922, which was perceived in Lithuania as occupation. Palanga was formally recognised as part of Lithuania after negotiations with Latvia in 1921; the Klaipėda Region, then under provisional French administration, was made part of Lithuania after the Klaipėda revolt in 1923. The first elections in the new state were held in 1920, and the first permanent constitution was adopted in 1922.



Handwritten Act of Independence of Lithuania with 20 original signatures, 1918

Photo from: Wikipedia

## POLAND

Almost from the start of the war, the Polish cause had been of interest to the Central Powers, which soon took control of the part of Poland which had been under Russian occupation since 1795. During the First World War, Poles were recruited to both sides of the conflict. Moreover, some Poles fought in units designated as Polish, the best known of which were the Legions formed by Józef Piłsudski. In January 1918, US President Woodrow Wilson stressed in his Fourteen Points that a free Poland should be established. In October and November 1918, various centres of regional power started to emerge across Polish territories. The symbolic moment for the regaining of Poland's independence was the handover of supreme command over the Polish army on 11 November 1918 to Józef Piłsudski, who soon started ruling the country as its provisional Chief of State. During the peace conference, the diplomatic efforts of the Polish delegation, led by Roman Dmowski, focused on the shape of Poland's borders. The new Polish authorities set about consolidating the territories previously incorporated into Prussia (later Germany), Austria and Russia in the 18th century, while engaging in wars over its new borders, the biggest of them being the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921). Polish rule was established in western Poland after demonstrations and an uprising (1918) and in Upper Silesia as a result of a plebiscite and uprisings (1919, 1920 and 1921). The Polish constitution was adopted in March 1921.



Polish insurgents participating in a field mass during the third Silesian Uprising, 1921

Photo from: National Digital Archive

## ROMANIA

Romania joined the First World War in August 1916 on the side of the Entente, which acknowledged Romania's right to Transylvania and Bukovina. After the Russian revolutions, Romania's military position deteriorated. Two-thirds of the country was occupied by the Central Powers, which imposed a peace treaty, signed in Bucharest in May 1918. At the same time, Bessarabia declared its independence from Russia and later chose to unify with the Kingdom of Romania. On 10 November 1918, Romania again declared war on the Central Powers, placing itself on the winning side of the First World War. On 28 November 1918, Bukovina and on 1 December 1918, Transylvania joined the Kingdom of Romania. Peace Treaties created borders which doubled the size of pre-war Romania. The biggest challenge for the Romanian authorities between 1918 and 1923 was the integration of Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia into the structures of the state. A new constitution was adopted in 1923. The Kingdom of Romania remained a constitutional monarchy ruled by Ferdinand I.



Assembly in Alba Iulia, which accepted the Union of Transylvania with Romania, 1918

Photo from: Samoilă Mărza, National Museum of the Union, Alba Iulia / Poză făcută de Samoilă Mărza, Muzeul Național al Unirii din Alba Iulia

## SOVIET RUSSIA

In February and October 1917, two revolutions broke out in Russia. After the first revolution, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate. In October 1917, after seizing power, the new communist authorities adopted a peace decree leading to Russia's withdrawal from the war, and a land decree leading to the takeover of the property of the landed gentry – a move designed to pacify returning soldiers, who were largely peasants. The state also took over banks and business enterprises. Between 1917 and 1921 the state waged border wars with its neighbours as well as a bloody civil war against counter-revolutionaries. In order to salvage the economy and preserve their own power, in 1921 the communist authorities began to temporarily restore some aspects of a market economy. The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was proclaimed in 1922.



Vladimir Lenin, communist revolutionary leader giving a speech, Moscow 1919

Photo from: Laski Diffusion/East News

## TURKEY

The Armistice of Mudros, signed on 30 October 1918, officially ended hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente. The new Ottoman parliament passed a daring resolution in January 1920, the so-called 'National Pact', which articulated Turkish resistance to the occupation of the country by the Allies. The sultan dissolved parliament, but it was moved by the leader of the national resistance movement, Mustafa Kemal, to a new capital, Ankara, from which he led the fight against the draconian Treaty of Sèvres. The nationalist parliament in Ankara rejected both the terms of the treaty and the Sultan's claim to represent the Turkish nation. This break with the past and Greek intervention in Turkey ignited the Turkish War of Independence, also known as the Greco-Turkish War. Eventually the bloody war ended with victory for the Turks, enabling them to replace the Sèvres Treaty with a new Treaty in Lausanne in 1923. Soon afterwards the Ankara parliament abolished the sultanate, and the new republic was established officially on 29 October 1923.



Photo from: Wikipedia

People gathered in front of the Grand National Assembly building in Ankara, 1920

## UKRAINE

On the eve of the First World War, the territories of present-day Ukraine were situated in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. The newly-formed Ukrainian government announced the creation of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) on 25 January 1918, which was situated in the eastern part of the Ukrainian territories, bordering Russia. On 9 February it was recognised by the Central Powers which signed a peace treaty at Brest-Litovsk with the UNR. At the beginning of November 1918, Ukrainians in Austria-Hungary seized power in Lviv and proclaimed the creation of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR), which bordered Poland. Both Ukrainian states soon faced conflicts: UNR with the Russian Red Army, which temporarily established a Bolshevik government in Kiev, while ZUNR fought against Poland. An 'Act of Unification' announced on 22 January 1919 tried to bring both Ukrainian republics into one state. In 1919–1920 the territory of Ukraine suffered from multiple civil wars and military conflicts resulting from the collapse of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. As a result, after a series of military defeats, Ukrainian territory was divided between the Soviet Union and Poland.



Photo from: Wikipedia

Ukrainian armoured train, which was used by the Ukrainian National Army during the war with the Bolsheviks, 1919

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

### Polish Prime Minister Jędrzej Moraczewski in 1918 on gaining independence:

*'It is impossible to explain the ecstasy, this frenzy of joy that engulfed Polish society in that moment. After 120 years, the borders had fallen! There is no 'them'! Freedom! Independence! Union! Our own state! Forever! Chaos? That`s nothing! It will be fine.'*<sup>6</sup>



Photo from: Saryusz-Wolski / Sempolowska 1938

German signs removed from the streets of Warsaw, 10 November 1918

### Article by Jánka Kupála published in 'Belarus' magazine on 28 November 1919:

*'Our independence is a thorn in our neighbours' side. [...] It turns out that Belarus should either be discarded from history and geography, or should be divided into parts and joined to the neighbouring states so as to eradicate its name. But Belarus, like any other nation, has the right to become an equal and free state flanked by its neighbours. And it will do so, sooner or later.'*<sup>7</sup>



Photo from: Wikipedia

Caricature showing the division of Belarus between  
Poland and the Soviet Union within the Riga Peace Treaty in 1921



Photo from: Bettmann/Getty Images

German helmets destroyed during disarmament, 1919

# PEACE TREATIES: THE MAKING OF A NEW EUROPE

In the autumn of 1918, the exhausted Central Powers were forced to ask for an armistice. In 1919 a peace conference convened in Paris; Great Britain, Italy, France, United States, and Japan led the victorious Allies. The defeated countries were excluded from the talks. A separate peace treaty was signed with each of them. The provisions of the peace treaties had a key impact on the history of the continent in the years to come.

## PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE AND ITS OUTCOMES

### KEY ISSUES:

Working out the political, economic, and military terms of peace in Europe and the Middle East

Assigning the entire responsibility for the First World War (war guilt) to Germany and its allies: Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire

Deciding on the borders of all new states in East-Central and South-Eastern Europe

Establishing the League of Nations in order to guarantee peace and international cooperation



Allied officers standing on chairs and tables to see into the Hall of Mirrors where the Peace Treaty of Versailles was being signed, 28 June 1919

Photo from: Henry Guttman/Getty Images

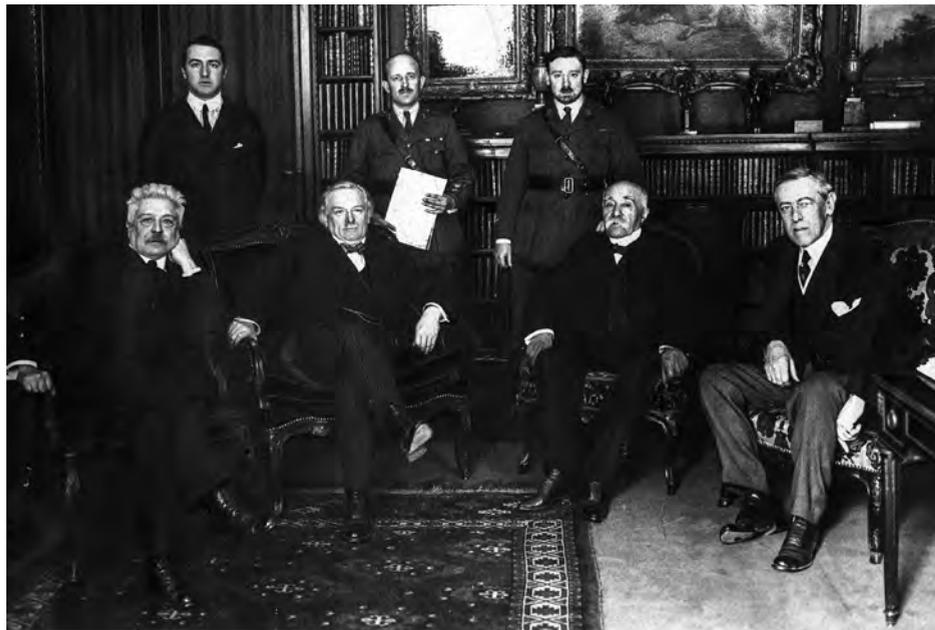


Photo from: Leemage / East News

The Big Four during the conference in Versailles, 1919. From the right (sitting): Woodrow Wilson (USA), Georges Clemenceau (France), David Lloyd George (Great Britain), and Vittorio Emanuele Orlando (Italy)



Photo from: State Historical Society of North Dakota

Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, trying to create harmony among various national interests, caricature from the 'Grand Forks Herald', 1919

## VENUES OF THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

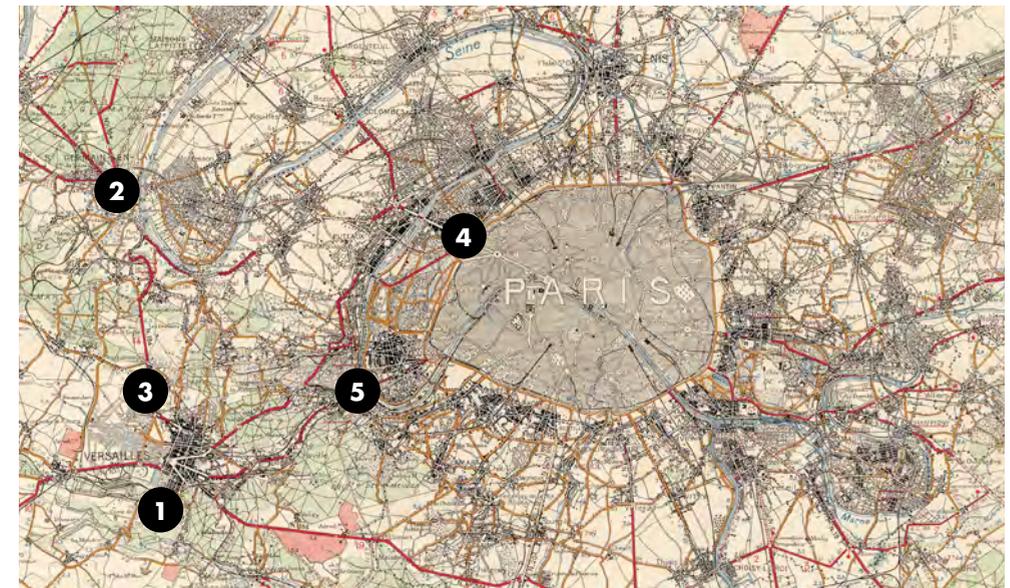


Photo from: French National Library, GED-7761

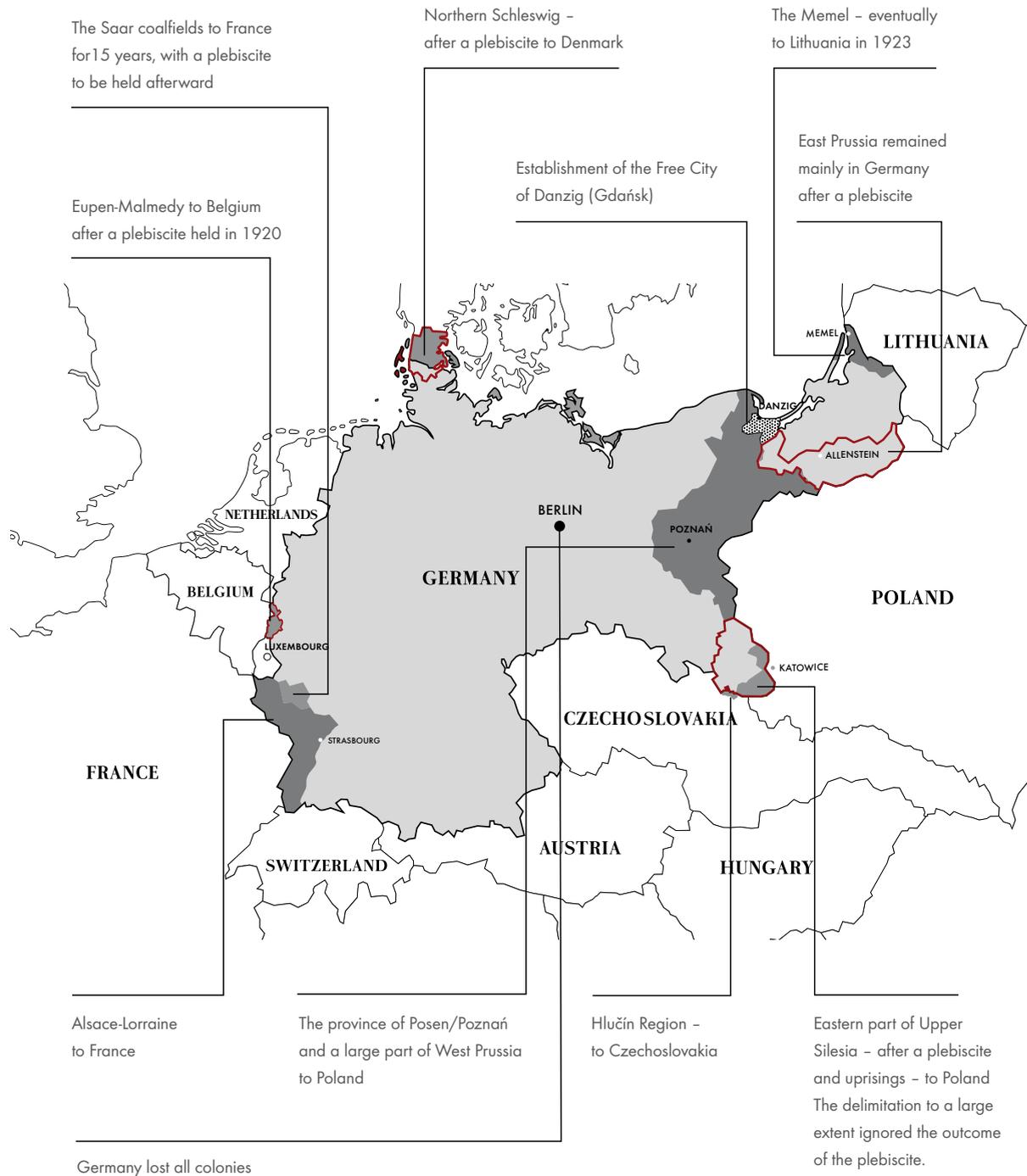
1. Versailles
2. Saint-Germain-En-Laye
3. Trianon
4. Neuilly-sur-Seine
5. Sèvres

### 1. VERSAILLES

**28 June 1919**

**A PEACE TREATY WITH GERMANY:**

- Army restricted to 100 000 men, no air force, tanks, armoured cars or submarines.
- Most of the navy and the bulk of merchant shipping delivered to Great Britain.
- War reparations (to be fixed later): the sums varied over time – in 1921 the obligation was set to pay 132 billion gold marks (approx. 31,5 billion US dollars, which is around 470,61 billion current US dollars).
- Territorial changes meaning a loss of around 13% of Germany's territories.



- Plebiscites areas
- Territorial changes after the Treaty of Versailles
- Territories which remained in Germany after the peace treaty
- Germany in 1914

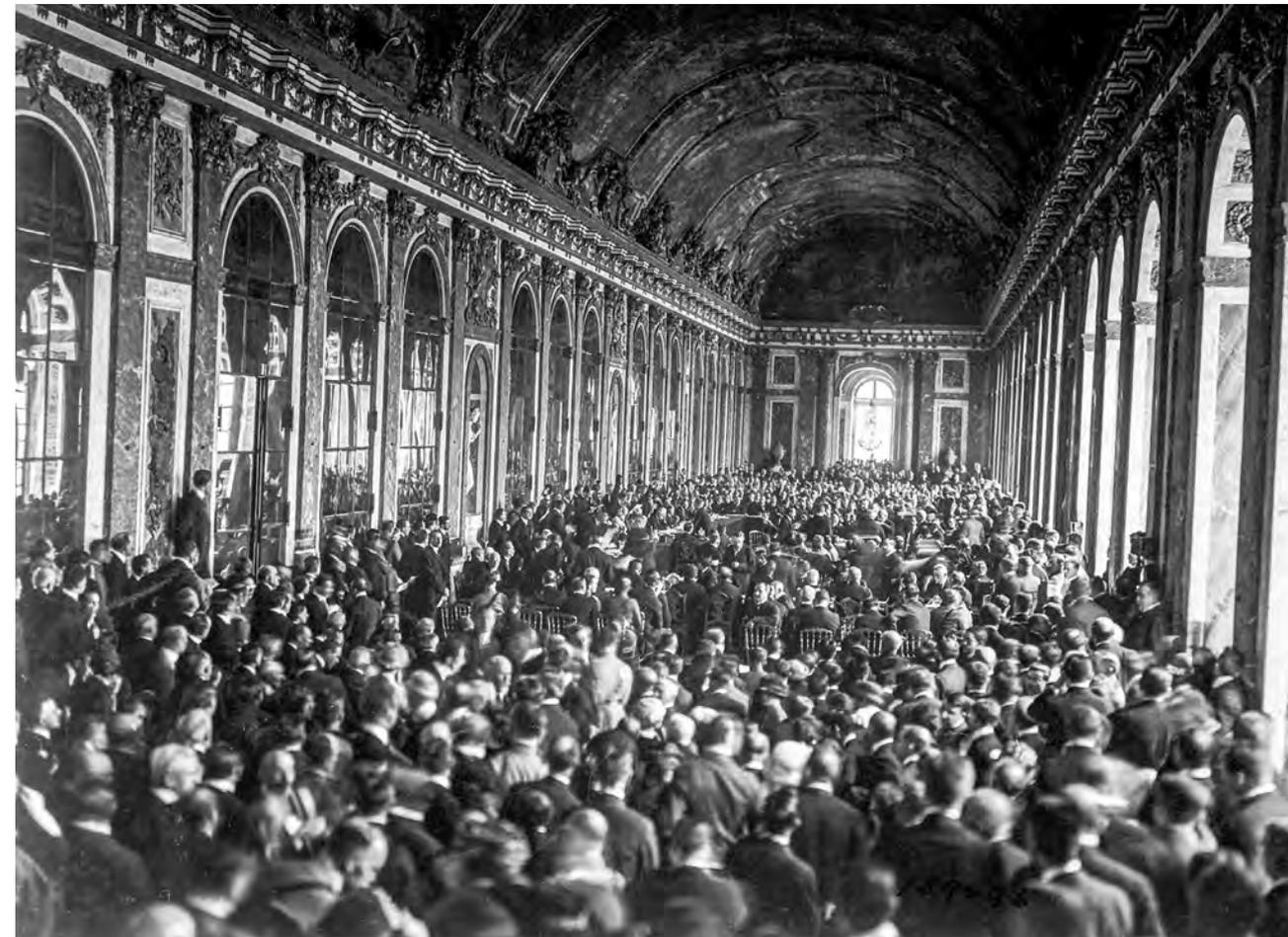


Photo from: Everett Collection/East News

The signing of the Treaty of Versailles, 28 June 1919

## 2. SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE

**10 September 1919**

**A PEACE TREATY WITH AUSTRIA:**

- Austria-Hungary ceases to exist in formal terms.
- Ban on merging with Germany.
- Army restricted to 30 000 men; The Danube fleet surrendered to the League of Nations.
- Obligation to pay two thirds of Austrian-Hungarian loans and more than one third of its war debts.
- Austria to supply Italy, Serbia and Romania with about 20 000 farm animals.
- The territory of the Republic of Austria was reduced by 73% compared with the previous area of the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire.



The signing of the treaty in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919

Photo from: Roger Violey/East News

- Plebiscites areas
- Austria-Hungary in 1914
- Territorial changes after the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye
- Territorial changes after the Peace Treaty of Trianon
- Territories which remained in Austria after the peace treaty
- Territories which remained in Hungary after the peace treaty



### 3. TRIANON

4 June 1920

A PEACE TREATY WITH HUNGARY:

- The Hungarian army was restricted to 35 000 professional soldiers.
- War reparations: 200 million gold crowns to be paid over the next 20 years.
- A mandatory delivery of 28 000 cattle to Italy, SHS and Greece as well as hard coal to SHS.
- The territory of the new Kingdom of Hungary was reduced by 71% compared with the area of the previous territory of the Kingdom of Hungary.

### 4. NEUILLY-SUR-SEINE

27 November 1919

A PEACE TREATY WITH BULGARIA:

- Radical reduction of its military: army restricted to 20 000 troops; additional 13 000 for border guards and gendarmes.
- War reparations: 2.25 billion gold francs to be paid over 38 years.
- Resettling the Bulgarian minority from Greece and the Greek minority from Bulgaria.
- Territorial changes meant a loss of around 10% of Bulgaria's territories.

The signing of the treaty in Trianon, 4 June 1920



The signing of the treaty in Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919

Negotin, Caribrod, Bosilegrad, and Strumica  
to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes



- Territorial changes after the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine
- Territories which remained in Bulgaria after the peace treaty
- Bulgaria in 1914

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**Charles Seymour – American historian,  
member of the US delegation  
to the Paris Peace Conference – on the use of maps:**

*'One of the most picturesque scenes of the Conference took place in Mr. Wilson's drawing room in Paris, with the President on all fours in front of a large map on the parquet floor, other plenipotentiaries in like posture, with Orlando crawling like a bear to get a better view, as Wilson delivered a succinct and accurate lecture on the economics and physiography of the Klagenfurt Basin. Maps were everywhere. They were not all good. Westermann refers to certain maps introduced by claimants in the Near East which it would be 'a bitter derision to publish.' But the appeal to the map in every discussion was constant.'*<sup>8</sup>



Officers working on a map of Poland for the Peace Conference following the First World War, Paris, c. 1919

## 5. SÈVRES

10 August 1920

A PEACE TREATY WITH THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE,  
WHICH NEVER CAME INTO FORCE:

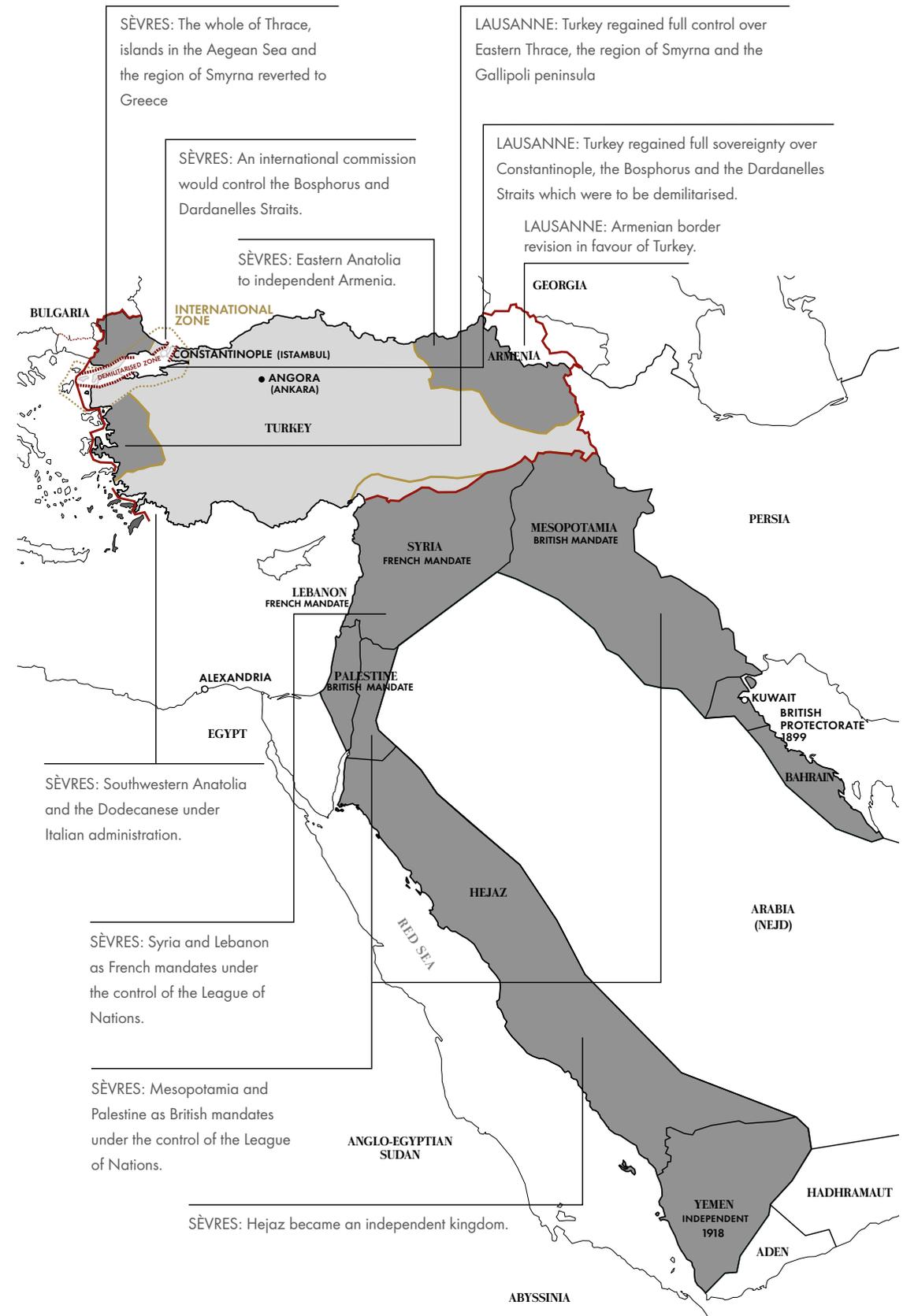
- Loss of 73% of its pre-war territory.
- Radical reduction of its military: The Turkish army restricted to 50 000 men, the navy reduced.
- The country's finance controlled by the Allies.
- The punishment of war criminals.
- Provisions of the treaty were implemented only partially and were superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923).



Photo from: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographies, EI-13 (2636)

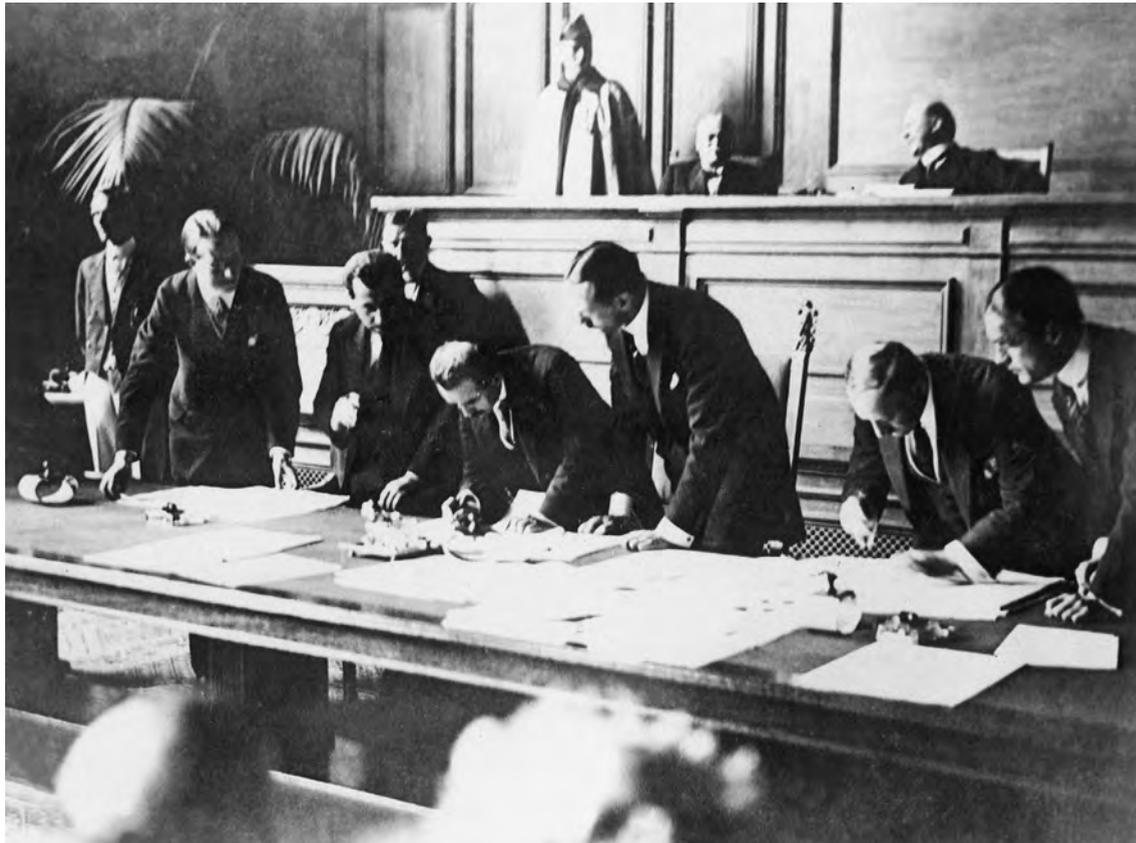
The signing of the treaty in Sèvres, 10 August 1920

- Ottoman Empire in 1920 after the Peace Treaty in Sèvres
- The Ottoman Empire's territorial losses after the treaty of Sevres
- Territories that remained in the ottoman empire after the peace treaty in Sevres
- Republic of Turkey in 1923 after the Peace Treaty in Lausanne



## TREATY OF LAUSANNE

Signed on 24 July 1923 after a bloody war between Turkey and Greece. Turkey regained control over Anatolia. It retained full sovereignty over Constantinople, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits which were to be demilitarised. The new provisions were a success for the emerging Turkish Republic and constituted a major defeat for Greece, which was among the victors in 1918.



Signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, Switzerland

Photo from: Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images

## PLEBISCITES

The territorial changes agreed in the peace treaties of 1919 and 1920 were radical. As the victors claimed to be guided by the principle of self-determination of nations, in some contested territories inhabited by various nationalities, they ordered plebiscites. Thus, those nationalities could peacefully decide which state they would belong to. In Upper Silesia, however, the Poles found the result of the plebiscite and the way it was conducted unsatisfactory and turned to armed struggle against Germany in order to gain the disputed territories.

Polish propaganda poster saying: 'Vote for Poland and you will be free', Upper Silesia, 1921



Photo from: Wikipedia

'Mother, do not vote for Yugoslavia, or I will be drafted for King Peter,' Austrian propaganda plebiscite poster, Carinthia, 1920



Photo from: Digital Knjiznica Slovenije



Photo from: Muzeum Historii Katowic

A German propaganda poster saying: 'Germany is our common motherland,' Upper Silesia, 1921



Photo from: Digital Knjiznica Slovenije

'Let us go and vote! It is our sacred duty, our homeland is calling us. You are Carinthians, and you shall remain Carinthians!' Slovene propaganda plebiscite poster, Carinthia, 1920

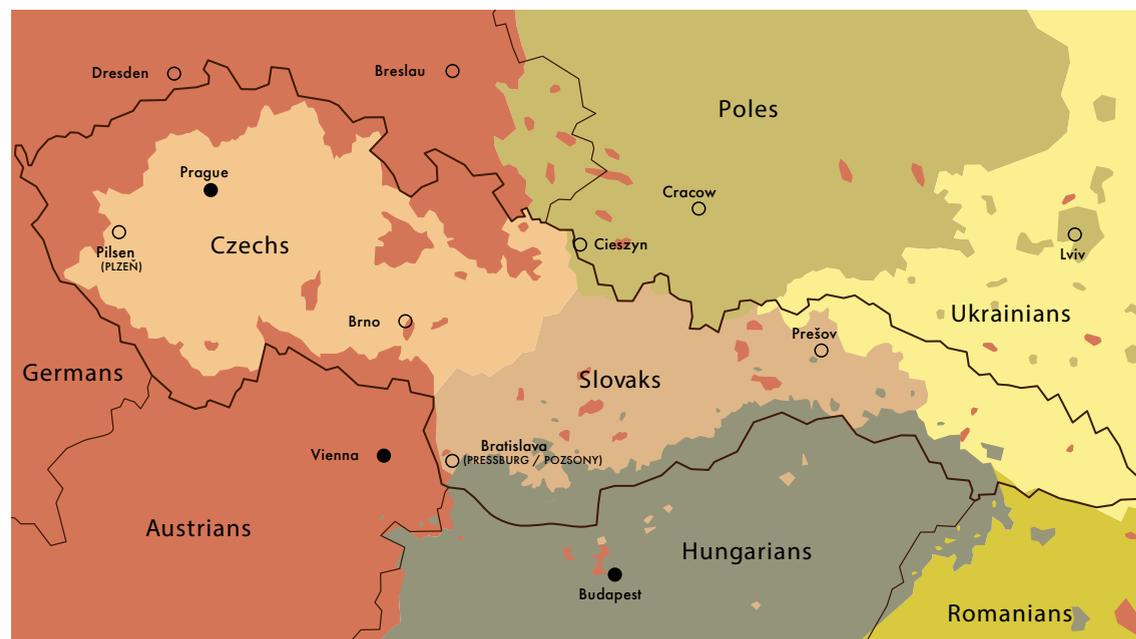
## SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL?

The victors were not consistent in respecting the right of nations to self-determination, particularly in the case of countries that had lost the First World War. Austrians were not allowed to join Germany; the Transylvanian Hungarians, who were an important minority in the region, were not allowed to say through a plebiscite whether they wanted to be citizens of Romania. There were similar instances in several other regions of Europe. Self-determination did not apply to the colonies.



'Long live the Republic of Germany!'  
Demonstration in Vienna demanding that Austria merge with Germany, 1919

Photo from: Photo 12/UiG/Getty Images



Nationalities in Czechoslovakia around 1923

— Country border in 1923  
● Capital city

## INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

After the catastrophe of the war, attempts were made to address problems in international relations by establishing the League of Nations (the predecessor of the United Nations), which was founded in 1920. Efforts aimed at establishing international standards pertaining to the rights of workers led to the establishment in 1919 of the International Labour Organisation, still in existence today.



Photo from: A. Frankl, 1920 / Owner: National Library of Norway

First sitting of the League of Nations, Geneva 1920



# WARS OVER INDEPENDENCE AND BORDERS

The end of the global war did not mean peace. In 1918–1923, there were a dozen or so major international armed conflicts in Europe over independence and borders, a majority of them taking place in the New Europe. That is much more than in the course of the 70 years after the Second World War. These conflicts had a major impact on the identity of some of the nations that constituted the new states. At the same time, these wars entrenched or aggravated hostilities between neighbouring nations. In some cases, their consequences last to this day.

Photo from: National Digital Archive

Polish troops during  
the Polish-Soviet War, 1920

## CONFLICTS OVER DRAWING BORDERS

A vast majority of conflicts took place in East-Central Europe, where many new states were emerging. It was very difficult to draw borders between their territories since in many places members of various ethnic groups and nations lived as neighbours. Individual states sought the most favourable borders for themselves. The wars either changed borders or created new ones, which were then often confirmed by the victorious Entente countries. In some cases plebiscites were organised. However in the cases of Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey their views on the new borders were very often ignored by the Entente.



Lithuanian and Polish delegates during border negotiations  
in October 1920 in Suwalki, Poland

## POLISH-SOVIET WAR 1919–1921

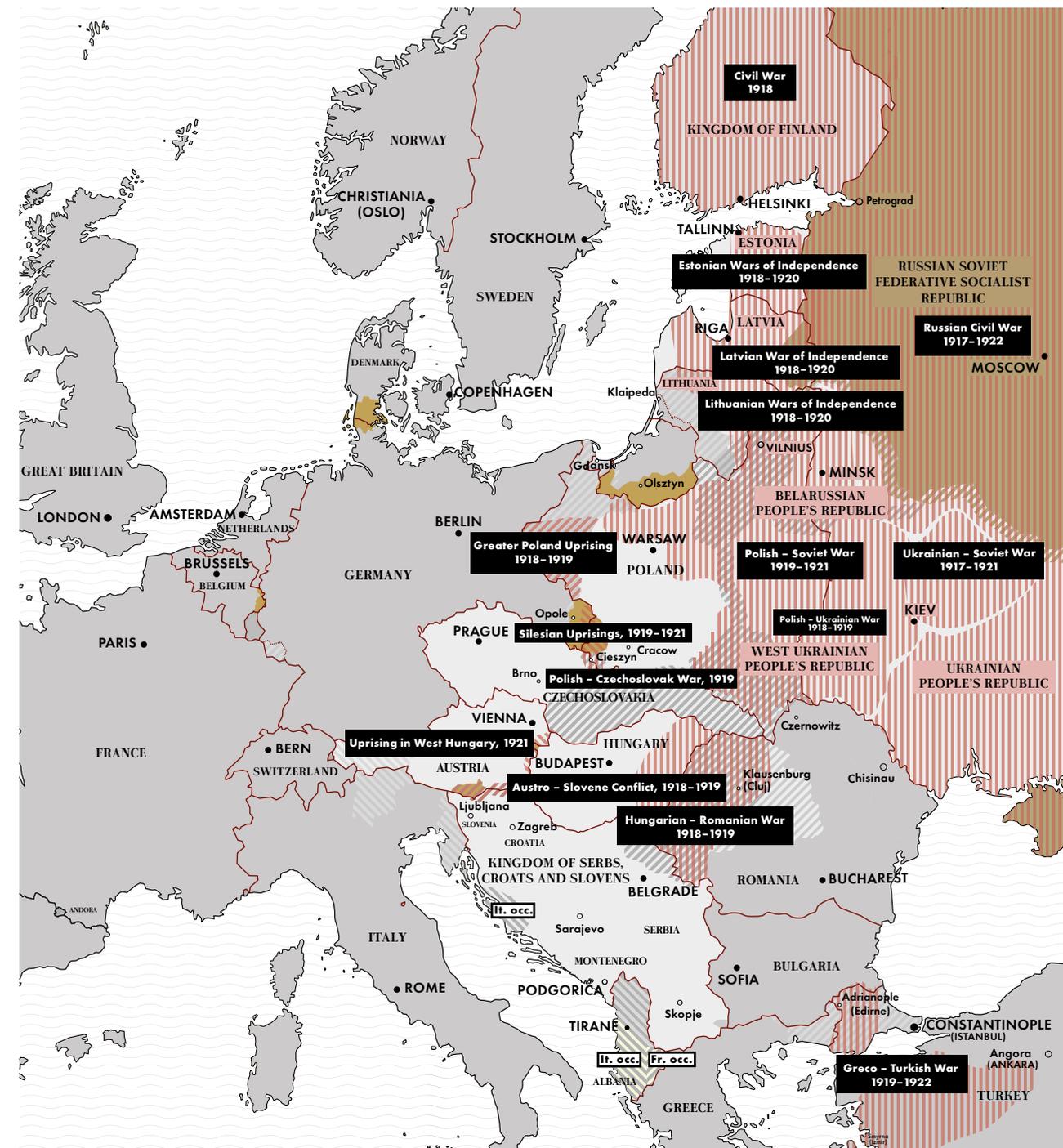
One of the major wars of the time was the Polish-Soviet conflict. Poland tried to secure favourable borders in the east and supported the independence of Ukraine and Belarus. This led to war with Bolshevik Russia in 1919. The Red Army was to conduct a huge offensive to carry the communist revolution over to the west of Europe. The offensive was launched against Poland in July 1920 and in a short time moved to its centre. However, Polish forces won a bloody battle near Warsaw and started a successful counter-offensive that pushed the Bolsheviks far to the east. Poland's victory put a stop to the march of communism into Western Europe.



Photo from: National Digital Archive

The so-called Hussars of Death – an elite Polish cavalry unit during the Polish-Soviet War, August 1920

### PLEBISCITES AND BORDER CONFLICTS 1918–1923



New countries created in 1918–1923		Country border in 1918		Italian occupation	<b>It. occ.</b>
Countries existing before 1914		Country border in 1923		French occupation	<b>Fr. occ.</b>
Disputed areas		Capital city		WARSAW	
Areas of armed conflict		Name of conflict		Civil War 1918	
Plebiscite areas					

## CONFLICT BETWEEN HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC AND ROMANIA

At the end of the war Hungary attempted to negotiate its territorial claims with Romania over Transylvania. The Hungarian government resigned, disagreeing with the demarcation line set by the Paris Peace Conference. The new communist government refused to recognise the union of the former Hungarian region of Transylvania with Romania, and in April 1919 attacked the Romanian army. Its troops eventually entered Budapest in August 1919, ending the war and communist rule in Hungary. Transylvania remained in Romania, but with a large Hungarian minority.

‘To arms. Join the volunteer army!’ – A Polish propaganda poster portrays the Bolshevik threat as a hydra, 1920



Photo from: Polish Army Museum



Photo from: Wojtek Laski/East News

‘Make hay while the sun shines’ – A Russian propaganda poster portrays a ‘Polish master’ as a repulsive dwarf and a Bolshevik as a worker taking revenge on him, c. 1920



Photo from: Picture Library of the National Military Museum King Ferdinand I

Romanian soldiers in the Heroes' Square in Budapest, August 1919



## GRECO-TURKISH WAR

Greece was given control of broad Turkish territories, including Smyrna, by the Sèvres Peace Treaty. With British support, Greece sent troops to occupy Smyrna, which triggered a long war throughout western Anatolia. This led to the brutal killing of Turkish and Greek civilians by both armies. After Turkish troops defeated Greek forces, the Sèvres Treaty was replaced by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. Greek territorial entitlement was reduced to Turkey's European side. Population exchange based on religion ensued: approximately 1 200 000 Orthodox Christians from Asia Minor were resettled to Greece; around 400 000 Muslims living in Greece were sent to Turkey.

War between Greece and Turkey. Group of refugees on ships, 1923

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**The British correspondent George Ward Price  
on the burning of Smyrna, Daily Mail dispatch.  
16 September 1922, at 4 am:**

*'What I see as I stand on the deck of the Iron Duke is an unbroken wall of fire, two miles long, in which twenty distinct volcanoes of raging flames are throwing up jagged, writhing tongues to a height of a hundred feet. [...] The sea glows a deep copper-red, and, worst of all, from the densely packed mob of many thousands of refugees huddled on the narrow quay, between the advancing fiery death behind and the deep water in front, comes continuously such frantic screaming of sheer terror as can be heard miles away.'*<sup>9</sup>

Photo from: Bettmann/Getty Images



People fleeing from the burning Smyrna during Greco-Turkish clashes, c. 1922

## AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV BORDER CONFLICT

At the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference, the Republic of Austria demanded the entire province of Carinthia and the northern parts of Lower Styria, while the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes laid claim to the whole of Lower Styria and a third of Carinthia. As a result border clashes broke out. Eventually a plebiscite was held on 10 October 1920, in which 59% of the population voted to remain in Austria.



Photo from: Wikipedia

Slovenian soldiers with a machine gun overlooking the border city of Lavamünd (Slovenian: Labot) in eastern Carinthia, c. 1919



Food distribution by the American Relief Administration, Finland, c. 1919

# THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

Initial public support faded during the Great War as human losses, destruction and reduced living standards led to radicalisation in societies. All the political, economic, social and cultural processes taking place in the years 1918–1923 were overshadowed by war losses and traumas. Even after the war had ended, wartime damage was still visible, and war left in its wake many disabled soldiers, orphans and widows. For them the war had not ended.

## MILITARY LOSSES

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In the course of military operations, all the countries involved lost nearly 10 million soldiers while over 21 million were wounded. Men of many different nationalities in East-Central Europe which did not have their own states had fought against each other in imperial armies. For example, around 350 000 Poles were killed fighting in three armies: the Austro-Hungarian, the German and the Russian.

Photo from: Topical Press Agency/Getty Images



A Serbian soldier visits the grave of one of his colleagues in a field full of the graves of soldiers killed during an Austrian bombardment, c. 1915

### WAR LOSSES SUSTAINED BY INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES<sup>10</sup>

#### ALLIES

	Mobilised	Dead	Wounded	Missing/POW	Dead vs Mobilised
RUSSIA	18 100 000	1 800 000	4 950 000	2 500 000	9,9%
FRANCE	7 891 000	1 375 800	4 266 000	537 000	17,4%
BRITISH EMPIRE	8 904 467	908 371	2 090 212	191 652	10,2%
ITALY	5 615 000	578 000	947 000	600 000	10,3%
SERBIA	750 000	278 000	133 148	15 958	37,1%
ROMANIA	1 000 000	250 706	120 000	80 000	25,0%
USA	4 273 000	114 000	234 000	4 526	2,7%
BELGIUM	365 000	38 716	44 686	34 659	10,6%
GREECE	353 000	26 000	21 000	1 000	7,4%
PORTUGAL	100 000	7 222	13 751	12 318	7,2%
MONTENEGRO	50 000	3 000	10 000	7 000	6,0%
JAPAN	800 000	300	907	3	0,04%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48 201 467</b>	<b>5 380 115</b>	<b>12 830 704</b>	<b>3 984 116</b>	<b>11,2%</b>

#### CENTRAL POWERS

	Mobilised	Dead	Wounded	Missing/POW	Dead vs Mobilised
GERMANY	13 200 000	2 033 700	4 216 058	1 152 800	15,4%
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY	9 000 000	1 100 000	3 620 000	2 200 000	12,2%
TURKEY	2 998 000	804 000	400 000	250 000	26,8%
BULGARIA	400 000	87 500	152 390	27 029	21,9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25 598 000</b>	<b>4 025 200</b>	<b>8 388 448</b>	<b>3 629 829</b>	<b>15,7%</b>

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	Mobilised	Dead	Wounded	Missing/POW	Dead vs Mobilised
	<b>73 799 467</b>	<b>9 405 315</b>	<b>21 219 152</b>	<b>7 613 945</b>	<b>12,7%</b>

## CIVILIAN LOSSES AND FORCED MIGRATIONS

Military operations, hunger and diseases (including an influenza pandemic) took the lives of millions of civilians. Civilian losses represented less than 1% of the population of Germany, France and Austria-Hungary, but fully 10% of the population of Serbia. In addition, both before and after 1918, war displaced millions of civilians from their homes.

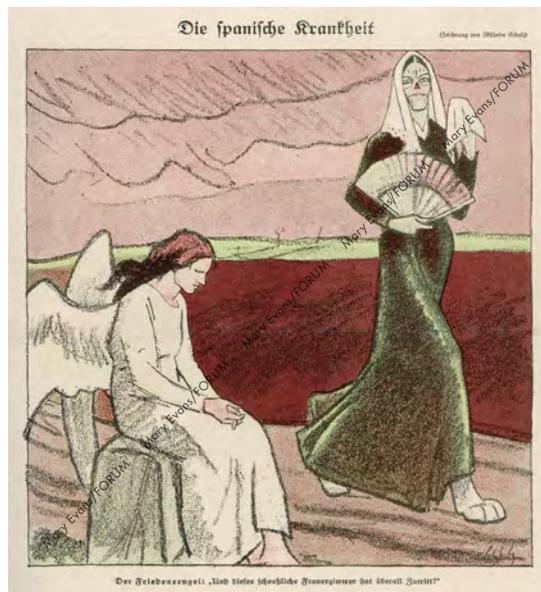


Photo from: Library of Congress, Prints&Photographs Division, American National Red Cross Collection [LC-DIG-enrc-04311]

Undernourished children at the refugee station at Riwne, Ukraine, October 1919

## EPIDEMICS

From 1918 to 1920 more lives were lost due to the influenza pandemic known at the time as the 'Spanish flu' than to war. Estimates of the death toll taken by this pandemic vary from 21 million to 100 million lives worldwide. Typhus was another epidemic which gave rise to a huge death toll in these years.



The Spanish flu shown as a woman, walking in a triumphant way beside the angel of peace. Picture by Wilhelm Schulz, 1918



"The louse and death are friends and comrades. Kill all lice carrying infection!" Russian poster warning against lice spreading the typhus epidemic, colored lithograph by O. Grin, 1919

## CRIPPLED BY WAR

As a result of the war, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly young, became disabled for life. Many were not fit for work and unable to resume their lives after the war. They bore their wounds on their faces and bodies, and endured long and painful medical treatment.



A French photograph which became a symbol of the French sacrifice in the Great War. It shows soldiers, placed at the entrance to the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, to signify the guilt of the German delegation signing the Peace Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919

## SHELL SHOCK

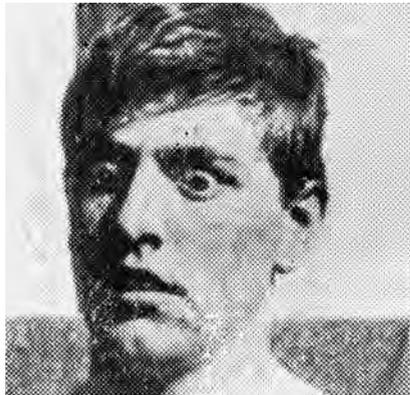


Photo from: Wikipedia

Many had to cope with war trauma. Shell shock appeared variously as panic or paralysis, an inability to reason, sleep, walk or talk. Years after the end of war there were still thousands of veterans suffering from it.

Patient suffering from shell shock

## SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES

Permanent contact with death and violence, exacerbated by economic difficulties, hunger and epidemics, led to lower moral standards and more criminality. Violence and theft were rampant, as were sexually transmitted diseases and prostitution.



Photo from: SZ Photo / Scherl / Bridgeman Images

Gambling on a street, Berlin 1919

## DRAMATIC CONDITIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Because the disastrous harvests of 1918–1921 in East-Central Europe yielded grain crops of only 60% to 70% of pre-war figures, the threat of malnutrition and famine loomed over a high percentage of the population. One important aid initiative was future US president Herbert Hoover's food-relief organisation which operated across all of war-torn Europe.

## WORKING WOMEN

To fill the gap left by millions of fighting men, during the war women were recruited to work in jobs previously done only by men. Although the end of war forced most women to leave their wartime roles, many of them remained professionally active in the work force. They did not retain access to all professions, and they did not gain equal pay for comparable work done by men. However, some gained economic independence.

Women laying bricks in Lancashire, 1914–1918

Photo from: Wikipedia



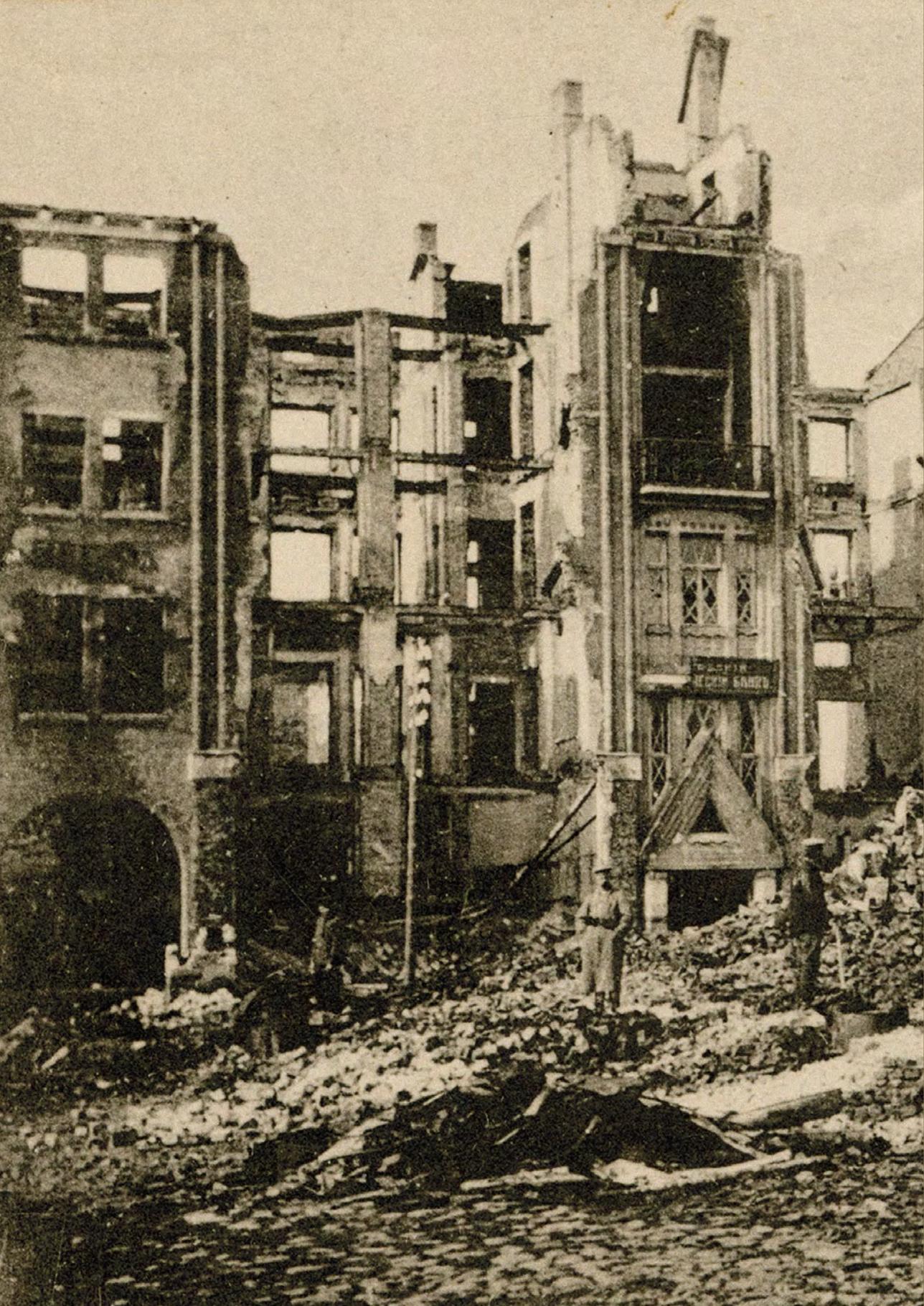
## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

### Polish writer Maria Czapka on the difficult conditions of everyday life in the winter of 1918:

*'Winter has come. Initial enthusiasm [after gaining independence] falters in the face of hunger and cold. Across the country, anarchy: plunder of war equipment left in warehouses by the occupants, almost daily demonstrations by the unemployed. Revolution from the East. Western provinces not yet liberated. The boundaries of the state are undefined.'*<sup>11</sup>



Map depicting levels of hunger in Europe in December 1918, created by United States Food Administration



# ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

The war caused destruction, distorted economies and currencies, and deprived millions of basic necessities. It also created new international trade relations, and saw the emergence of the United States as the world's leading economic power. The economic situation in the defeated and newly founded countries was also linked to war reparations and hyperinflation, which turned out to be one of the major traumatic experience after the war. But the first post-war years also saw the start of a process of reconstruction. In the second half of the 1920s, after overcoming inflation, the region began to develop quickly.

Photo from: The National digital library of Latvia. The collection In search of lost Latvia.

Destroyed buildings on Katolu street,  
Jelgava, Latvia, c. 1915



## WAR DESTRUCTION

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Among the primary costs of war was the destruction caused by military operations. The largest material losses were reported in Belgium, north-eastern France, north-eastern Italy, Poland and Serbia.



Photo from: Science Source/East News

French couple visiting their former house in the devastated region, vacated by the Germans, c. 1916

## WAR REPARATIONS

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The economic situation was exacerbated by high war reparations imposed on the economies of the Central Powers. However, these were necessary for the Allies to be able to rebuild destroyed towns and cities, to care for the disabled, and to pay off their wartime debts to the USA. Responsibility for reparations extended to the new states created on territories once belonging to the Central Powers.

## BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE

As many economic ties were severed, there were also changes in international trade. Additional difficulties, with the emergence of new states, included an increase in the number of customs borders and different currencies, and the splitting up of previously integrated transport systems.

Photo from: Estonian History Museum, AM F 32908



Komarovka – a railroad crossing point between Estonia and the Soviet Union, making resumption of previous economic life more difficult, 1920s

## (HYPER)INFLATION

Even before war's end, most countries involved in the fighting had experienced high inflation, which impoverished most citizens and caused widespread discontent. The most dramatic drop in the value of money, reflected in huge price rises – hyperinflation – was recorded in Germany, Austria, Hungary and Poland in 1922–1924. In the case of the former Central Powers, it was caused by high reparations and national debt, while in Poland it was due to wartime damage combined with the cost of the Polish-Soviet War.

At the time of hyperinflation in Germany, the banknotes were of such low value that people started to use them as heating fuel or wallpaper material



Photo from: East News

Increase of prices of 1 kg of rye bread in Germany in 1923. Prices in Marks (M)<sup>12</sup>

3.01.1923	163
4.07.1923	1 895
6.08.1923	8 421
3.09.1923	273 684
1.10.1923	9 474 000
22.10.1923	1 389 000 000
5.11.1923	78 000 000 000
19.11.1923	233 000 000 000



Banknote issued at the time of hyperinflation in Germany on 15 October 1923 with a face value of 200 000 000 000 Marks

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

### Memories of Erna von Pustau from Hamburg, October 1922:

*'By the end of the year, my allowance and all the money I earned were not worth one cup of coffee. You could go to the baker in the morning and buy two rolls for 20 marks; but go there in the afternoon and the same two rolls were 25 marks. The baker didn't know how it happened ... His customers didn't know...'*<sup>13</sup>



Photo from: Albert Harlingue/Roger Violette/Getty Images

Vegetable vendor with a separate basket for banknotes, Germany c. 1920

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF (HYPER)INFLATION

Inflation made it easier for all debtors (people and countries) to pay off their debts using money of increasingly low value – yet at the same time it ruined the lenders and people living on fixed incomes. The traumatic experience of hyperinflation contributed to political destabilisation in the countries affected, undermined trust in the state, and had an impact on how economists reacted in crises to come.



Photo from: Agencja Fotograficzna Światowid/The Historical Museum of the City of Kraków

Riots in Kraków, Poland, in November 1923, caused by hyperinflation and difficulties in ensuring adequate supply of goods

## LAND REFORMS

Agricultural reforms were undertaken in the new countries of East-Central Europe, with a view to making this often backward sector more efficient. Governments thus defused tension both in rural areas and – indirectly, by improving food supplies – also in towns.

## THE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF EUROPE AND THE USA AFTER THE WAR

Germany and Austria-Hungary funded the war mainly by printing money, through domestic war loans and taxes, while the Triple Entente also incurred debts with the USA. The huge spending on war and the Entente's indebtedness weakened Europe's position in the world economy. At the same time the role of the USA in global terms grew substantially.



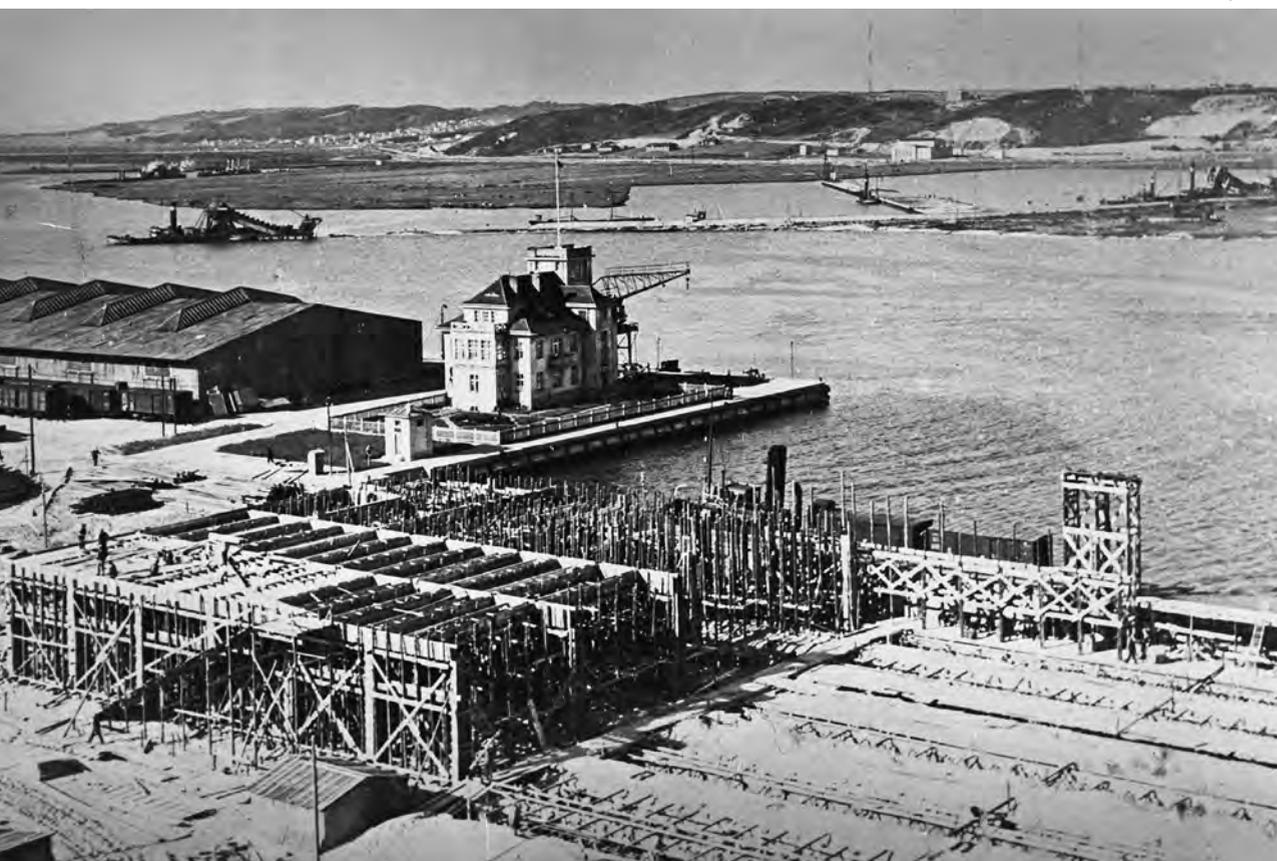
Farming in Hungary, c. 1929

## RECONSTRUCTION

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After the war, great reconstruction efforts were made to clear away what was destroyed and build new industrial, infrastructural and residential facilities. Large-scale investment projects, both governmental and private, accelerated the modernisation of the countries of New Europe, especially after overcoming inflation around 1923.

Photo from: PAP/CAF



Construction of a new maritime port in Gdynia,  
one of the key Polish investment projects of the 1920s

# A GREAT TRANSFORMATION

In East-Central Europe modernisation accelerated both after and as a result of the Great War. Transformation and (re)construction could be observed in many areas: politics, economy, technology, culture and even everyday life. Emerging political ideologies sought to create new ways of living and thinking. Some of these changes eventually led to the rise of authoritarian regimes. However, the new political context made possible the emancipation of nations, the creation of new states – mostly republics – and the granting of women's rights.

Polish actress and singer Zula Pogorzelska in her car, 1929

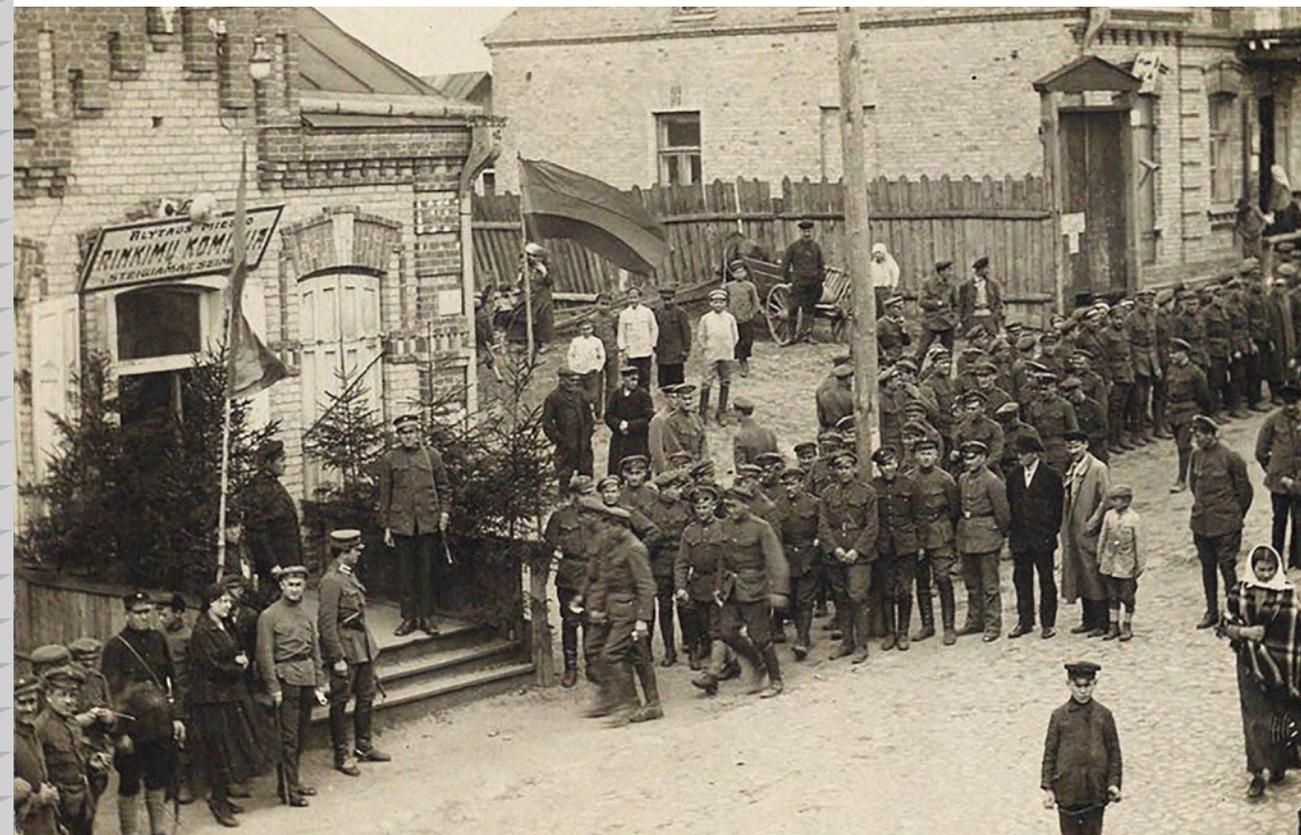
Photo from: National Digital Archive



## REPUBLICS REPLACE MONARCHIES

The Southern European countries already in existence were monarchies. Most of the newly established nation states of Central and Eastern Europe became republics. Some West European countries remained monarchies, and some of them still are today.

Photo from: Alytus Ethnographic Museum



Elections to the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania in Alytus, 1920



## NEW RIGHTS AND NEW VOTERS

The newly established states held general elections; their parliaments adopted new constitutions setting a framework for public life. Among other innovations, New Europe featured voting rights for women. While prior to 1914 women held electoral rights in just five countries worldwide, during and shortly after the war they were granted such rights in over 20 countries, including almost all of the New Europe states.

Women voting during the elections to the City Council in Warsaw, 1927



Women members of the USPD party at the Weimar National Assembly, Germany, 1919

## TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

The war effort increased work on many inventions intended to facilitate combat, but which were later employed in peacetime. That was the case of developments in aviation, for instance. In East-Central Europe, Vienna-Lviv-Kiev airmail route was running as early as spring 1918. One of the milestones of aviation was Charles Lindbergh's first non-stop flight from the USA to Europe, in 1927.

## PROSPERITY AFTER THE (HYPER)INFLATION

After the crisis directly following the war and the struggle to overcome hyperinflation, New Europe began to flourish and its inhabitants were discovering new ways of spending their time and money.



Photo from: Fortepan

After the war the role of women in society changed, as reflected also through fashion. Here two women have shorter hair and wear fashionable fur coats, cloche hats and shorter dresses, Hungary 1923

## URBAN PLANNING AND URBANIZATION

Changes also took place in the understanding of urban space. Architects and urban planners sought to create a new type of living space, different from the existing cities they criticised. They offered a combination of urban and rural features where functional buildings and transport links were to shape the residents' way of life and support their professional activities.



Photo from: Wikipedia

Karl Marx-Hof, Vienna, Austria. A municipal tenement complex, built in 1927–1930 as part of the 'Red Vienna' social housing programme initiated in 1919



Photo from: Dom Novogo Byta/Oginaknauss

'Narkomfin' (Moscow) – A renowned example of constructivist architecture and avant-garde interior planning in the Soviet Union. The building on the right only had rooms for sleeping. Kitchen, bathroom, dining rooms and other facilities for all the tenants were located in the smaller building on the left



Photo from: Thomas Bata Foundation

Workers' houses built by the Bata footwear company in Zlin (Czechoslovakia) in the 1930s. This modern district of family homes was part of a programme of social reform, with its focus on the lifestyle of the individual – an alternative to the avant-garde ideas of collective housing

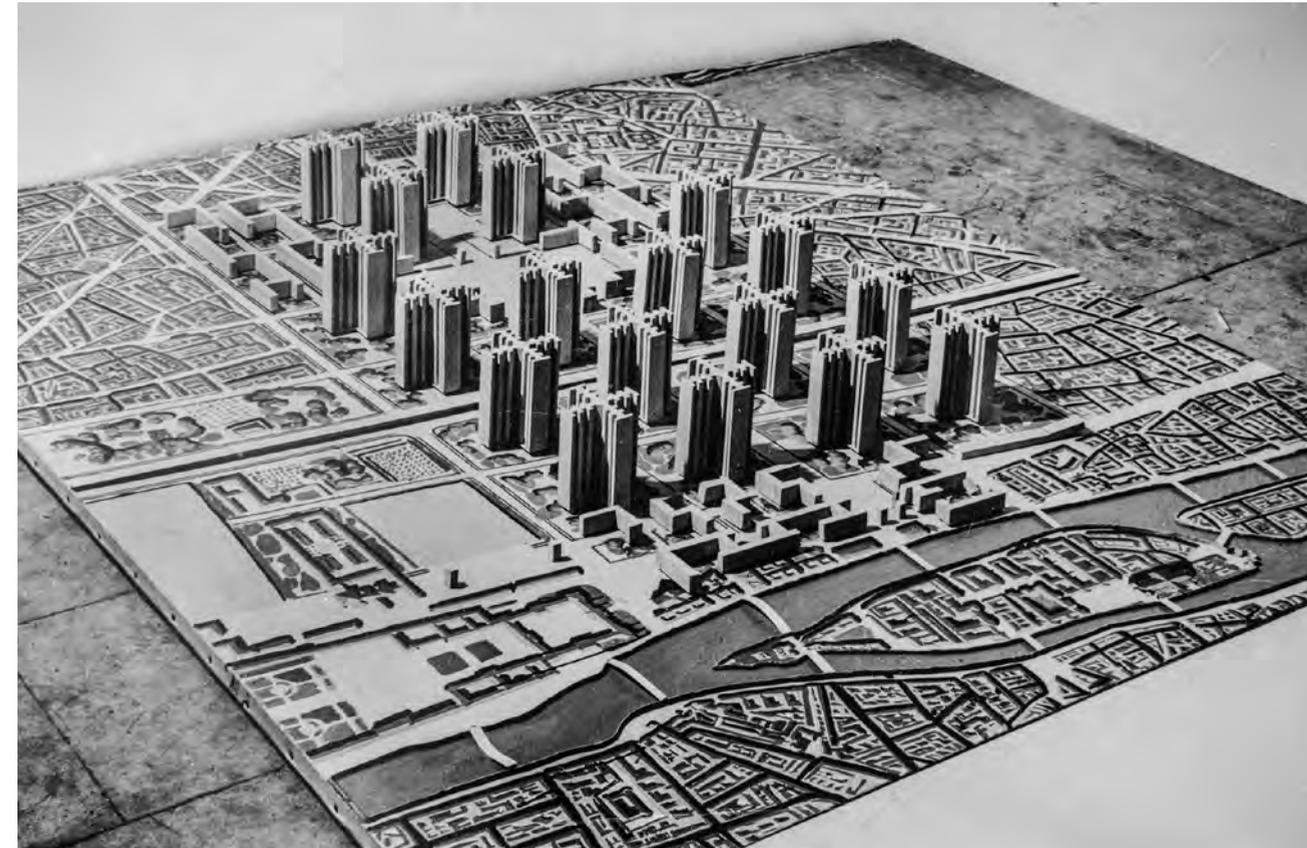


Photo from: AKG/East News

'Plan Voisin de Paris' – Unrealised project for rebuilding a district in Paris created in 1925 by the architect Le Corbusier in cooperation with carmaker Gabriel Voisin. Their plan connected roads for personal vehicles and skyscrapers

## ART AND CULTURE

The First World War reinforced the conviction that human life had to undergo a major renewal. This trend imposed a duty on modern artists to actively shape reality through art, adopting the slogan of social and political regeneration. The search for the artistic renewal of art itself and the urge to create a 'new man' drew some modern artists to the primitive, others to an exploration of the unconscious and still others to an emphasis on the social application and utilitarian value of their creative work.



Still from the movie 'Metropolis', a German expressionist epic science-fiction film directed by Fritz Lang in 1927, which presents a futuristic urban dystopia.

It draws influence from Bauhaus, Cubist and Futurist design

Photo from: AKG/East News



Photo from: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, © Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Sculptures 'Adam' and 'Eva' by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1920–1921. It is an example of primitivism, which focused on the renewal of supposedly traditionalist and empty European art by finding inspiration in the tribal art of Africa and Oceania

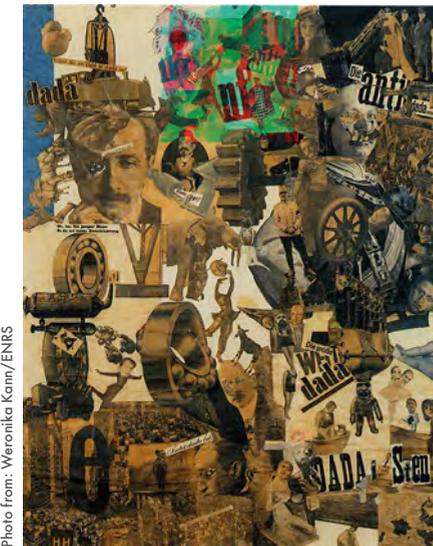


Photo from: Weronika Kamr/ENRS

Hannah Höch, 'Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany', 1919–1920. The photomontage technique was invented by Dadaists who replaced traditional composition materials with a collage of photography, advertisements or film stills.

The Dada movement reacted to the crisis of European culture by breaking with tradition and replacing it with joking, provocation and the absurd

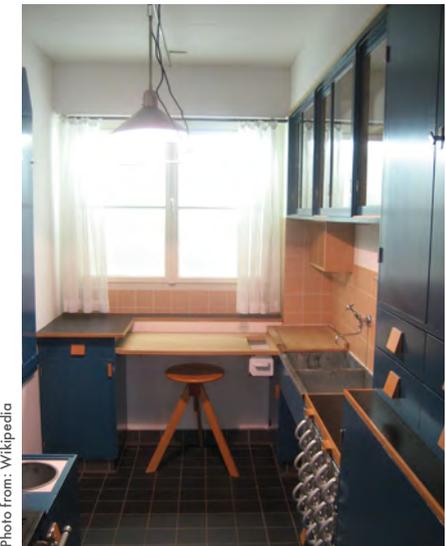


Photo from: Wikipedia

The reconstruction of the so-called Frankfurt kitchen which was designed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in 1926. This interior was a part of New Frankfurt (Neues Frankfurt) modernist district with affordable flats

## ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

As the newly established countries required new academic institutions, universities and research centres were established. This was of great importance both for bolstering the identity of individual nations and for the advance of science; it also drove improvements in general education levels in New European societies.



Inauguration of the academic year  
at the University of Helsinki, which played an important role  
in advancing the use of the Finnish language, Finland, 1919

Photo from: Sundström Eric/Helsinki City Museum

## CHURCHES AFTER THE WAR

The war was a moment of religious crisis in many countries. In East-Central Europe the churches maintained their central role in the new states. They were an important factor in strengthening the identity of various national minorities. In the newly formed Soviet Union, the church faced very different conditions, experiencing systematic persecution as an opponent of the communist regime.



Bolshevik Red Army soldiers plundering  
the Saint Simonov Monastery in Moscow, Russia, 1927

Photo from: ullstein bild/ullstein bild via Getty Images

In all countries of the New Europe a substantial number of people belonged to national, ethnic or religious minorities. This situation resulted in numerous tensions between the state or majority and the minorities; however, it also contributed to the region's richness. Some members of the minorities cooperated or assimilated with the majority, some decided to emigrate, whereas some activists strove for autonomy or acted in favour of revising the borders. Jewish communities often experienced anti-Semitism, of varying degrees of violence.

# STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY

Photo from: Mauša Fligelis/© Šiauliai Aušros Museum



The football team of the Jewish youth sports club Macabi,  
Šiauliai County, northern Lithuania



## REINFORCING NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Most state representatives followed a policy of nation building, centralisation and unification. They viewed the new democratic systems as a fulfilment of national emancipation. Accordingly, any imperial legacies from before the war were now often treated as a symbol of foreign oppression.



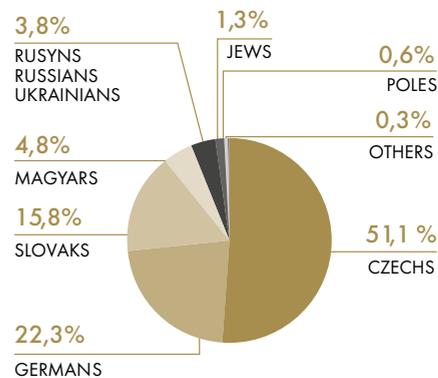
The demolition of a monumental Orthodox church erected by Russian authorities in central Warsaw, which many Poles considered a symbol of Russian rule, 1924–1926

## NATIONAL MINORITIES IN NUMBERS

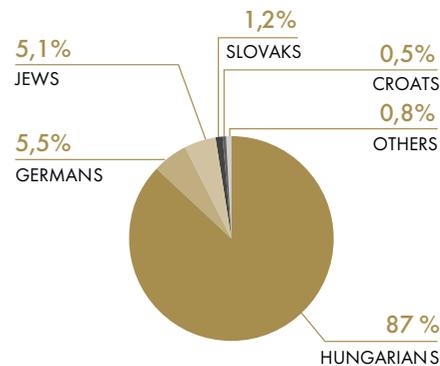
National minorities in nearly all new states of the region accounted for a significant percentage of the population. Territorial shifts created large cross-border minorities. Most of the nations making up the states in the New Europe had large diasporas living abroad.

### ETHNIC STRUCTURE DECLARED BY LANGUAGE <sup>14</sup>

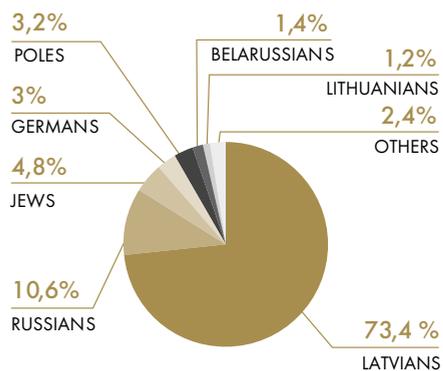
CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1930



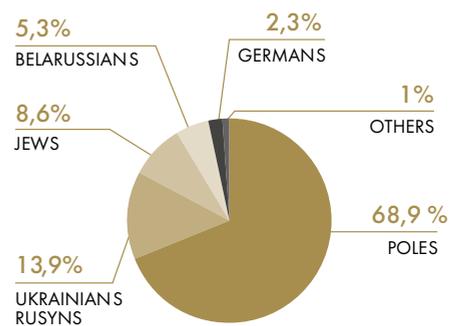
HUNGARY 1930



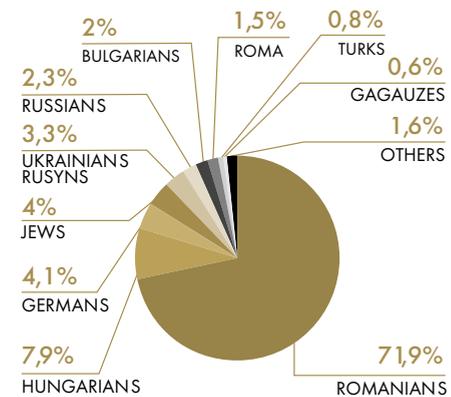
LATVIA 1930–1935



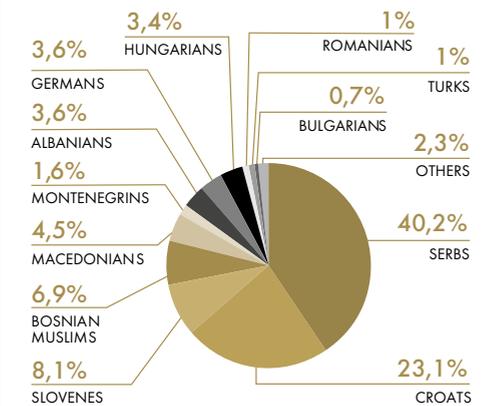
POLAND 1930



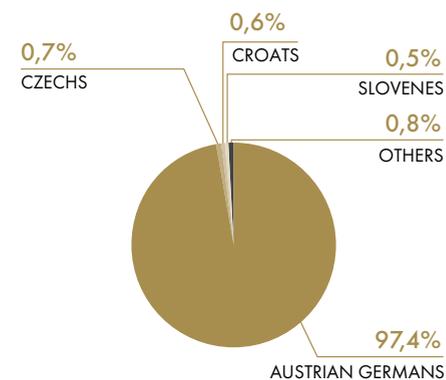
ROMANIA 1930



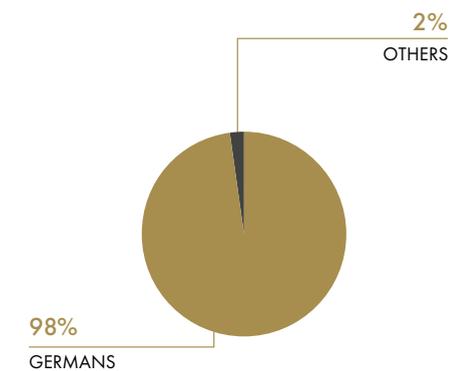
YUGOSLAVIA 1931



AUSTRIA 1934



GERMANY 1930



## ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATIONAL MINORITIES

Contrary to the spirit of the new minority protection system of the League of Nations, most of the new governments treated regional movements and representatives of national minorities with distrust. Some administrative measures were even aimed at the assimilation or containment of minority populations. On the other hand many of the minorities did not want to integrate into the new states. In everyday life in most regions, however, national conflicts were still not as pronounced during the 1920s as they would become later.

## THE (IN)SECURITY OF MINORITY RIGHTS

Signed after the 1919 Paris peace conference, multilateral and bilateral treaties concerning the protection of national minorities aimed to limit conflicts in the new multi-national states created after the war in territories formerly within the German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. Similar regulations were not imposed however on Western European countries. Although these provisions were increasingly ignored by the respective governments, they remained the basis of international minority rights protection until the outbreak of war in 1939.

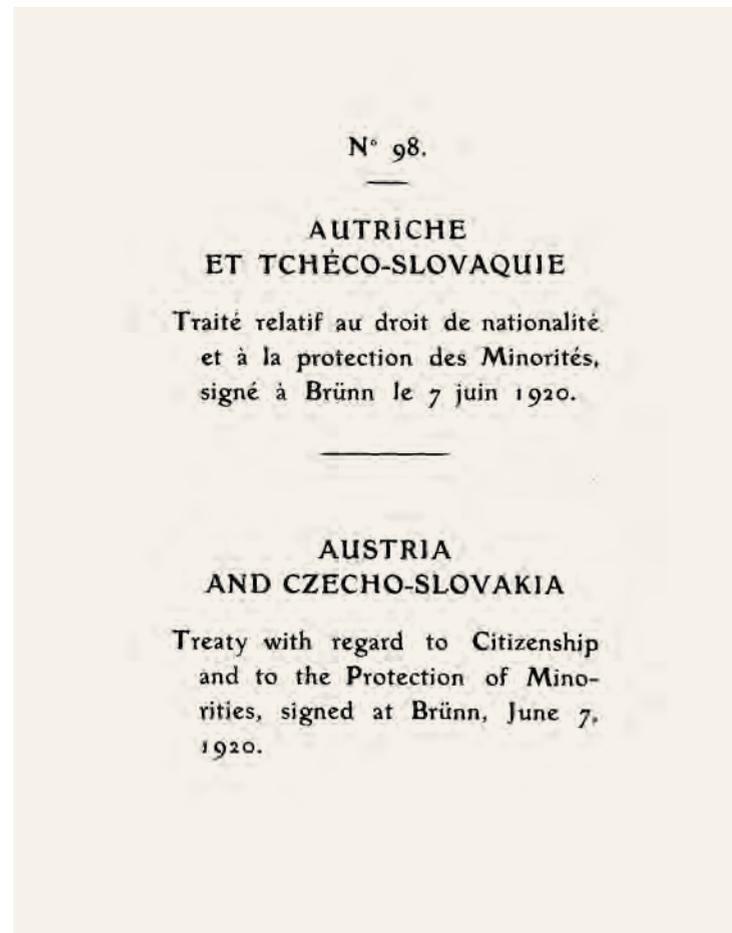


Photo from: United Nations, League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 3, registration no.98, 1921, p.189

The bilateral Minorities Treaty, signed in 1920 by Austria and Czechoslovakia, undertook to respect the rights of national minorities on their territories

## MINORITIES – THE REGION'S RICHNESS

Although the coexistence of national majorities and minorities produced tensions, the ethnic and cultural mosaic was at the same time a testimony to the region's richness, and many members of national minorities played a major part in the development of the new states in various fields.



Photo from: Fortepan

Romani musicians in Szombathely, Hungary, 1928



Photo from: Imagno/Getty Images

Ödön von Horváth (Edmund Josef von Horváth), playwright and novelist. Born in Austro-Hungarian Fiume (today Rijeka, Croatia), he wrote in German and used a Hungarian name and passport

## JEWES IN SOCIETY

Many Jews lived in poverty, mainly in small towns and impoverished districts of large cities of East-Central Europe. At the same time, some Jews were truly assimilated. Many made a major contribution to the development of the new states. Their religious and cultural life was very rich. A number of Jews, however, supported the Zionist movement favouring Jewish immigration into Palestine.



Photo from: AKG/East News

Jewish bookstore in Berlin – a part of the streetscape in the 1920s



Photo from: Malat, Lithuania photograph from Jewish Digital Archive Project

A Jewish school in Malat Shtetl, Lithuania 1931. A Shtetl was the name given to small towns in East-Central Europe largely inhabited by Jews

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**Joseph Roth – an Austrian-Jewish journalist and novelist speaking about the multinational city Lviv in western Ukraine, a few years after the 1918 pogrom:**

*'Today [in Lviv] one speaks Polish, German, Ruthenian [...] Yiddish. That's how we always spoke in this region. People probably will not speak differently [...] Young and small nationalities are sensitive. Big ones, too, sometimes. National and linguistic homogeneity can be a force, national and linguistic diversity is always a strength. In this sense, Lviv enriches the Polish state. It is a colourful spot in the east of Europe, where for a long time there were no colours. The city is a colourful spot: white-red, yellow-blue and a little yellow-black. I do not know whom it could harm.'*<sup>15</sup>



Photo from: Łaski Diffusion/East News

Three friends: Roman Ostapiak – a Ukrainian; Eustachy Schneider – a German; Dawid (Emil) Schechter – a Jew. Lviv, late 1920s

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**Eyewitness accounts from the pogrom of Proskurov in 1919, where around 2 000 Jews were killed:**

'The Cossacks [...] entered the houses, took their sabres, and began to cut down all the Jews in the houses, without distinction of age or sex. [...] At the house of Korchak [...] eight men arrived and first of all smashed the windows to bits. [...] [They] seized old Korchak by the beard and dragged him to the kitchen window, from which they threw him out to those who were standing in the street. These killed him. Then the men inside killed the aged mother and two daughters. A young woman visitor they dragged by the hair into another room, then threw her out into the street, where she was killed barbarously. Then they returned into the house and inflicted several serious wounds on a thirteen-year-old boy, who afterwards became totally deaf.'<sup>16</sup>



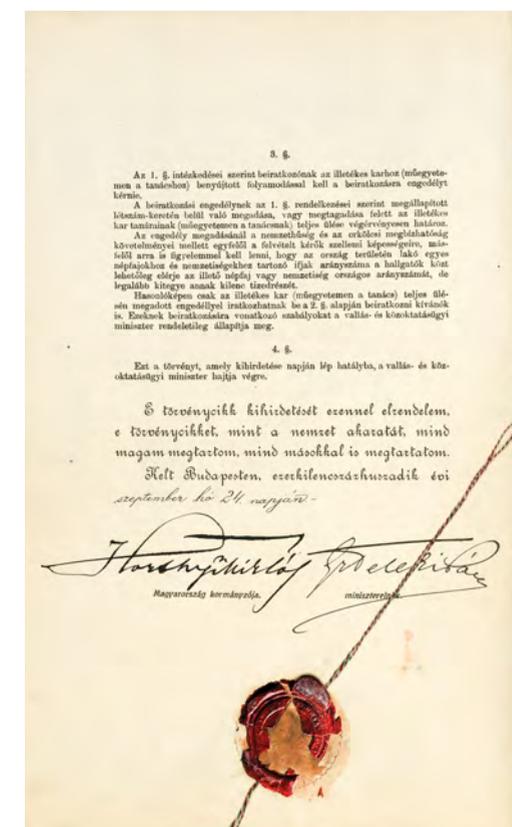
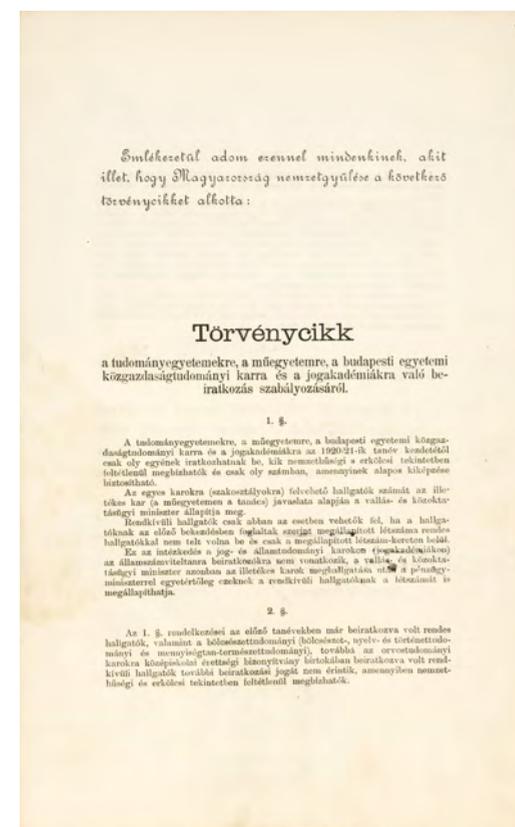
Photo from: Lecache, 2010

Jews wounded in the pogrom in Proskurov (today Khmelnytskyi), Ukraine 1919

Photo from: MNI. OI L45 – Lod. H. – Ser. A. – Fasc. 3. – 1920:XXV. tc. // Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary

## ANTI-SEMITISM

Anti-Semitism had already been a widespread problem across Europe before the war. However, deteriorating living conditions during the war and accusations against Jewish traditionalists that they lacked enthusiasm for the newly-established states, combined with the exaggeration of the support of progressive Jewish milieus for Bolshevism, resulted in worsened relations between the Jewish minority and majority societies in a number of East-Central European countries. In the wars and internal conflicts of 1918 to 1923, Jews were often victims of excesses, or even pogroms, perpetrated by the military.



Bill introducing *numerus clausus* in Hungary in 1920, which limited the number of university students from ethnic minorities, in practice mainly of Jewish origin

# MEMORY OF VICTORY AND DEFEAT

Commemoration of the war dead had begun well before the conflict ended. Monuments and cemeteries were erected at state and local levels. In East-Central Europe it was also the fallen of the wars of independence after 1918 who were honoured. For some nations these commemorations were connected with a feeling of national liberation, for others with the bitter experience of defeat. Hence some leaders were hailed as victors, and some labelled as traitors.

A monument to soldiers fallen in the  
defence of Belgrade, Serbia, 1931

Photo from: Vladimir Dordević/National Library of Serbia



## TOMBS SHAPING MEMORY

Given the unprecedented scale of the use of artillery and machine guns, corpses of hundreds of thousands of soldiers who fell in the First World War could not be identified or even found. As a consequence, Tombs of the Unknown Soldier and mausoleums sprang up in many countries in the interwar period. They served as central sites of official memory and helped shape national identity.



Photo from: National Library of France, Prints and Photographs Department, EH-13 (2818)

Ceremony of transferring ashes of the remains of around 130 000 unidentified French and German soldiers from Verdun to the Douaumont ossuary in 1927 at the Douaumont fort, France, a pivotal site of the battle of Verdun



Photo from: Muzeum Niepodległości / EastNews

Inauguration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw, Poland, in 1925



Photo from: Photo12/UiG/Getty Images

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Budapest, Hungary, erected in 1929, celebrations of St. Emeric in 1930



Photo from: BU.F.01.073-1.428.03, Arhivele Naționale ale României

A mausoleum with more than 5 000 Romanian soldiers who fell in the battle of Mărășești in Romania, which was a landmark of official Romanian memory, inaugurated in 1938



Photo from: Imagno/Getty Images

Monument of the Heroes of the First World War in Vienna, 1934

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**Memoirs of Amilcar Săndulescu – In 1923, this 12-year old orphan from Romania was chosen to pick the coffin of a fallen soldier, who could have been his father, for it to be later transported to Bucharest and placed in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.**

*'I went in front of the ten coffins shivering and I doubted where to place my hand. But suddenly, I went to the fourth coffin. Prompted by some awareness, I put my hand on it. At that moment, a great thrill swept through my soul, and the words came to my lips: "This is my father". By kneeling, I prayed, "Lord, my God, you have all the heroes of the nation, you have my father"'.<sup>17</sup>*



Photo from: National Library of Romania, Special Collections, Photographs Cabinet, F55359

Amilcar Săndulescu, photograph taken in the photography studio 'Julietta' in Bucharest, 14 May 1923

## (NOT) REMEMBERING FIRST WORLD WAR SOLDIERS

In East-Central Europe, official memory focused more on the period of postwar state-building and subsequent conflicts than on the Great War itself. Therefore official remembrance mainly embraced heroes of the struggles for independence. However, most victims were soldiers of the imperial armies who died before 1918. In the Balkans, those who fell in the Great War were also seen as martyrs for liberation. Commemorating those who died in the independence wars served as a founding myth of statehood creation in the New Europe.



Photo from: Eduard Schulz, Riga atelier of Carl Anton Schulz. Image courtesy of LATVIANS.COM

Museum dedicated to the Latvian Rifleman Regiment fighting for independence, established in 1916 in Riga



Monument 'Prague to its Victorious Sons' honouring the Czechoslovak Legions at Palacký Square, 1936, Prague

Photo from: PAP/CTK



A mausoleum of Legionaries fighting for Poland's independence, erected in 1932 in Kalisz

Photo from: National Digital Archive

## TRAUMA AND ARTS

The war also gave rise to critical voices, long before the end of hostilities. They highlighted wartime cruelty, the war's evil character and reflected wartime traumas. Artists sought to express the innermost state of the societies where they lived and created. The aftermath of the war, too, saw the creation of a number of pacifist works of art.



Photo from: Weronika Kann/ENRS

'Field of corpses', picture by Austrian painter Albin Egger-Lienz, 1918



Photo from: Album/East News

A scene from the American film version of the anti-war novel 'All Quiet on the Western Front' by the German veteran of the First World War, Erich Maria Remarque, directed by Lewis Milestone, 1930



Photo from: Weronika Kann/ENRS

'Wounded Man (Autumn 1916, Bapaume)' from 'The War' series, by German artist Otto Dix, 1924

## REMEMBERING MILITARY AND POLITICAL LEADERS

A striking development of the collective memory in various countries was the cult of political leaders, who had often previously been victorious wartime commanders. Today, the assessment of their legacy is mixed, as many were not only co-founders of new states but also introduced authoritarian rule.

Marshal Alexandru Averescu, Commander of the Romanian army during the First World War. After the war, he was three-time Prime Minister of Romania and a political party leader



Photo from: Romanian Ministry of National Defence

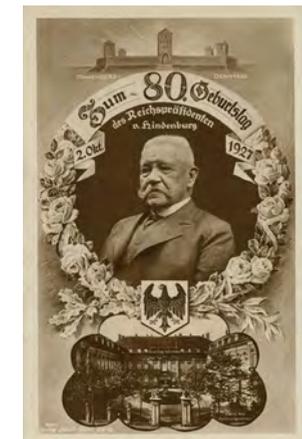


Photo from: AKG/East News

Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg. After the First World War the German people honoured him as the victorious commander who in 1914 stopped the Russian invasion in East Prussia, near Tannenberg, whereas his responsibility for the German defeat in 1916–1918 was often ignored. Elected German president in 1925, he nominated Adolf Hitler Chancellor of the German Reich in 1933 and helped to bolster the conservative elite's acceptance of the Nazi government. This is why in today's Germany his legacy is highly controversial



'Labour, honesty, legality' – medal of the People's Party led by Marshal Alexandru Averescu with his bust, 1920s–1930s



A postcard showing the Tannenberg national memorial (above), a portrait of Paul von Hindenburg and the presidential palace in Berlin (below), 1927



Photo from: East News

Admiral Miklós Horthy, in the absence of a king, ruled the Kingdom of Hungary as a regent from 1920 to 1944.

He established an authoritarian political system combined with elements of parliamentarism. Under his leadership

Hungary joined the Axis powers

in November 1940 and entered the Second World War on the side of Germany on 26 June 1941



Photo from: Wikipedia

A Hungarian five-pengő coin featuring a portrait of Admiral Miklós Horthy, 1930



Photo from: Wikipedia

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ('Father of the Turks') – the founder of the Republic of Turkey and its President from 1923 to 1938.

He is considered the architect of a modern Turkish state, although he repeatedly violated democratic rights, which in his opinion could not be reconciled with his rigorous programme of radical modernisation



Turkish 500 Lira banknote with the portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1927

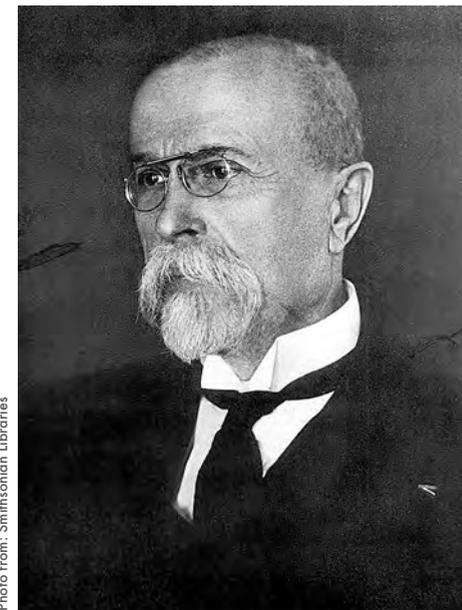


Photo from: Smithsonian Libraries

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia from 1918 until 1935.

He is regarded as the founding father of Czechoslovakia and a symbol of democracy



Photo from: PAP/Alamy

'Liberators of the Czechoslovak nation' – a commemorative postcard with the first president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the US president Woodrow Wilson

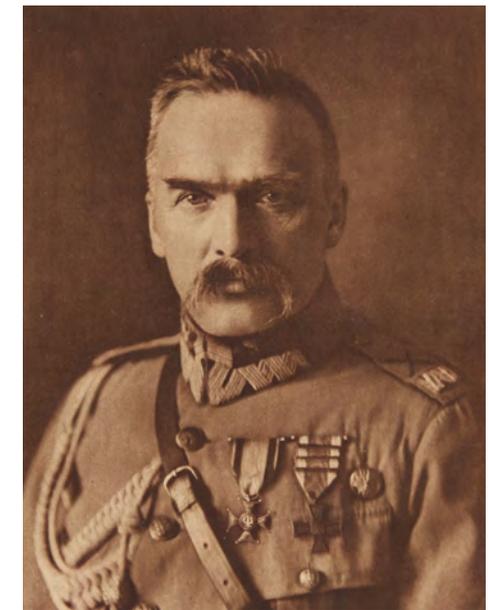


Photo from: Muzeum Narodowe w Kielcach

Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the most important Commander of the Polish legions fighting in the First World War for Poland's independence, was head of state after the war, and in 1926 staged a *coup d'état*, which ultimately led to a form of authoritarian rule. In spite of this he is seen as one of the founding fathers of Polish independence and honoured to this day



Photo from: ENRS

'Płomyczek, Weekly for younger children'. Issue published in 1932, on the occasion of Marshal Józef Piłsudski's name day (19 March), which was an unofficial national day in the interwar Poland

## REMEMBERING VICTORY, REMEMBERING DEFEAT

For some nations, remembering the Great War and its aftermath was inseparable from the trauma of the defeat and a sense of injustice. For others, the end of the war and the first postwar years carried positive associations as a moment when independence was regained and defended.

Photo from: Department of History, University of California



An illustration from 1919 showing the popular 'stab-in-the-back' myth, according to which the invincible German army was forced to surrender by socialists, democrats and Jews, who allegedly secured peace on terms that hurt Germany



Photo from: AP/East News

The first President of Lithuania Antanas Smetona (ruled 1919–1920, 1926–1940). In 1926 he staged a *coup d'état*, which eventually enabled him to create an authoritarian regime in which he ruled partly without parliament



Photo from: Wikipedia

A stamp from 1938 commemorating the regaining of independence by Lithuania and the country's reconstruction, here featuring an image of President Antanas Smetona



Photo from: AFP/East News

Disfigured guardian of the site of Rethondes in the Compiègne Forest, where the Armistice was signed in 1918, France, 11 November 1927

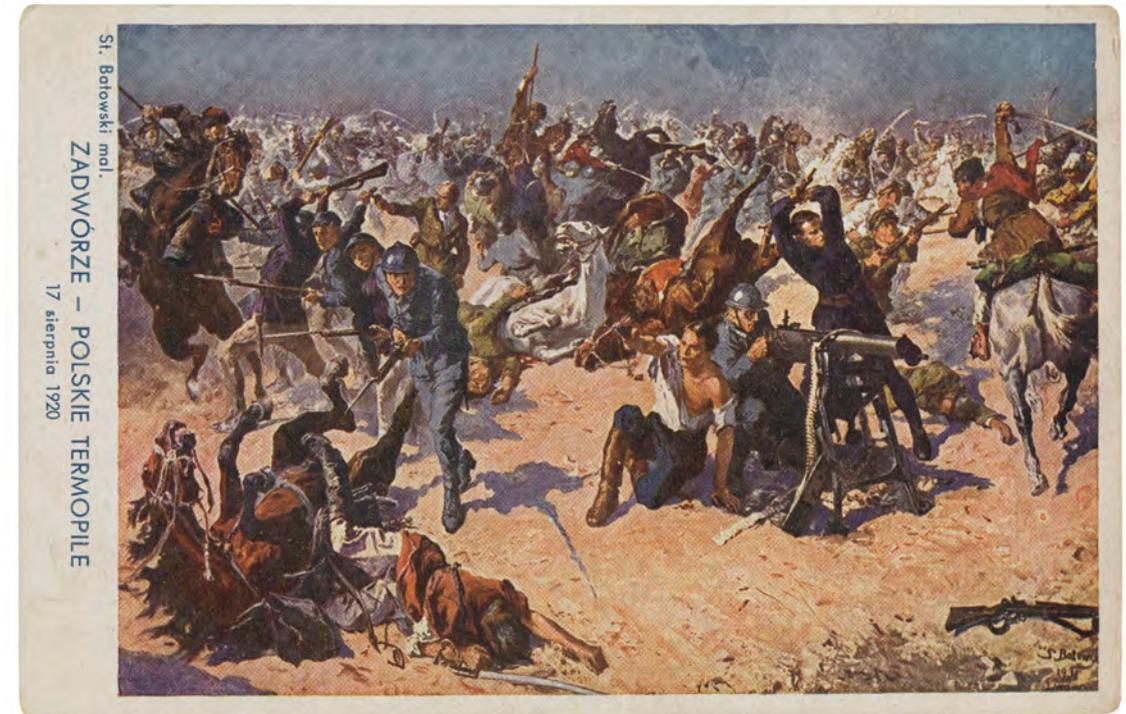


Photo from: The National Library

Postcard with a heroic-scene painting by the Polish artist Stanisław Batowski-Kaczor entitled 'Battle of Zadwórze' (1929). It depicts a battle between Polish defenders of Lwów and regiments of the Red Army in August 1920. Nearly all the Polish soldiers died in this exceptionally bloody encounter, which is why it is often called the 'Polish Thermopylae'. This battle was fought during the Polish-Soviet War, which was commemorated during the interwar period in Poland as one of the most important victories of the Polish army

# NEW EUROPE ERODED

The foundations of New Europe were fragile. A number of new countries took shape within a very short period of time on territories where many nationalities co-existed and which had been ravaged during the Great War. Although it was not inevitable that after the Great War another world war would follow, a number of problems such as revisionism, economic crisis and the rise of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes all undermined the stability of the new order and contributed to the eventual outbreak of the Second World War.

**President Woodrow Wilson's radio speech on 10 November 1923 commemorating Armistice Day, about not joining the League of Nations by the USA:**

'[...] those early days of that never-to-be forgotten November which lifted the nations of the world to the high levels of visions and achievement upon which the great war for democracy and right was fought and won; although stimulating memories of that happy time of triumph are forever marred and embittered for us by the shameful fact that when victory was won, be it remembered – chiefly by the indomitable spirit and ungrounding sacrifices of our own incomparable soldiers – we turned our backs upon our associates and refused to bear any responsible part in the administration of peace, or the firm and permanent establishment of the results of the war – won at so terrible a cost of life and treasure – and withdrew into a sullen and selfish isolation [...].'<sup>18</sup>

**'Down with Trianon treaty, the murderer of the nation'.  
Protest against ratification of the Treaty of Trianon  
in front of the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, June 1920**

Photo from: Hungarian National Museum



## SATISFACTION AND FRUSTRATION OVER THE NEW REALITY

Attitudes towards the aftermath of the war varied from nation to nation. In part, they evolved naturally, but they were also influenced by the remembrance policies pursued by individual states. Living in the shadow of failure and smarting from the feeling of injustice, the defeated nations found it hard to come to terms with the new reality. The victorious ones, in turn, embarked on building this reality despite the heavy price they had paid for victory.



Photo from: Wikipedia

A propaganda poster mobilising Hungarians against the division of Hungary, used since 1918, with a slogan expressing opposition to the loss of around two-thirds of the country's territory (including Transylvania): 'Nem, nem, soha!' [No, no, never!] 1918



A Romanian postcard issued in 1919 to celebrate the Union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

**Carl von Ossietzky – German pacifist, who received the Nobel Peace Prize for exposing secret German armaments, illegal according to the Versailles Treaty, speaks about how the Peace Treaty was perceived in Germany:**

*'There is much talk [...] of the fact that the rehabilitation of Germany is currently the main thing. Only concerning the way to achieve it do opinions differ. Some emphasize that only an unconditional confession of guilt can regain the sympathy of the world, while the others crown themselves with oak leaves. [...] Just do not admit anything! Clench your teeth and pose! That impresses. The third category is made up of those who mix everything together in a jar and then announce in a friendly smile that everyone shared war guilt and that we Germans must wait until the others have come to the same conclusion.'*<sup>19</sup>



Photo from: AKG Images/EastNews

Portrait of Carl von Ossietzky (1889–1938) – German writer and journalist

## 'TRAITORS'?

The victorious nations revered politicians who had contributed to the triumph of the struggle for independence. However, some aggrieved groups in the defeated countries passed harsh judgements on those accused, rightly or wrongly, of being responsible for the failure of the war effort and for the humiliation of the peace treaties. There were a number of political assassinations of those blamed for the defeat and for the peace settlements, and this violence further destabilised the postwar order.



Photo from: AKG/EastNews

Matthias Erzberger, German Roman Catholic politician who in 1918 headed the German delegation and signed the armistice, assassinated in 1921 by members of the extreme-right terrorist group Organisation Consul



Photo from: AKG/EastNews

István Tisza, Hungarian Prime Minister (1903–1905 and 1913–1917). Initially he was against going to war. Accused of responsibility for Hungary's defeat, he was murdered by soldiers on 31 October 1918



Photo from: Central State Archive, Sofia

Vasil Radoslavov, Bulgarian Prime Minister during the First World War, after the war in exile, sentenced to death for Bulgaria's wartime defeat

## TERRITORIAL REVISIONISM

In the political sphere of the defeated countries, many on both the political left and the political right denounced the terms of the peace settlements, seeing them as a 'diktat' and seeking their revision, thus undermining the postwar order and arguing for the need to recapture territories lost at the end of the war.

Headquarters of the German Sudeten Party in the Czechoslovak town of Teplice – it aimed to gain far-reaching territorial autonomy for the German-speaking population of Bohemia and Moravo-Silesia. In 1935, it became the most popular party of the German minority, strongly opposed first of all by the German Social Democrats of Czechoslovakia. From 1937 onward, party leader Konrad Henlein secretly followed directives from Adolf Hitler

## NATIONAL MINORITIES – PARTIES AND ACTIVISTS

Some national minorities did not identify with the national projects of the majority around them and saw the new states as burdening them with restrictive policies. Activists of these minorities agitated for border revisions enabling them to re-unite with their brothers on the other side, or at least to gain autonomy rights.

Photo from: PAP/CTK



## GROWING ANTI-SEMITISM

Nationalism was a common tendency in many European countries during the 1920s. It was often related to unresolved political, social and economic issues. In this context older xenophobic and racist feelings reemerged in various societies. Jews were a popular target. This became most virulent in Germany, where after Adolf Hitler's take-over in 1933, Jews experienced a gradual radicalisation of anti-Semitic policies. The German national-socialist policies varied from intimidation and exclusion to physical violence, eventually culminating in the unprecedented systematic mass-murder of approximately six million Jews in Europe during the Second World War (Holocaust).



One of many Jewish shops destroyed during the so-called Crystal Night in Germany, November 1938

Photo from: AKG/East News

## INEFFECTIVE PREVENTIVE INSTRUMENTS

The instruments devised at the peace conference with the aim of safeguarding the postwar order did not work well. One problem was that the USA did not join the League of Nations, the establishment of which it had itself championed. That weakened the organisation, which could not prevent the rise of authoritarian regimes.

'The gap in the bridge'.  
A caricature from 1919, critical of American passivity in the formation of the League of Nations



Photo from: Leonard Raven-Hill/Punch Magazine 10 December 1919

## GREAT DEPRESSION

The political stability of Central and Eastern Europe was shattered by the world economic crisis of 1929–1935. Those who had lived through harsh times during the war and its aftermath were devastated by the failure of banks and the rise of mass unemployment to unprecedented levels. Extremists on the political left and right took advantage of this situation to demand radical change.

'Unemployed, married, clerk, perfect bookkeeper [...] with international experience asks for job' – in Budapest during the Great Depression



Photo from: Hungarian National Museum

## FRAGILE DEMOCRACY

Most 'New European' states decided to introduce modern parliamentary democracies. However, neither the political parties nor the public were ready to embrace a system that relied on compromise and cooperation. Consequently, authoritarian rule became the norm in almost all countries of the region excluding Czechoslovakia and Finland.



Photo from: RogerViolette/East News

As early as 1922, democracy fell in Italy, where power was taken over by fascists headed by Benito Mussolini (centre) who established a dictatorship

## NAZISM AND COMMUNISM

A number of problems affected the Versailles order. Probably the most dangerous were the growing totalitarian tendencies, which came in very different forms – above all as Soviet communism and German national socialism (Nazism). In spite of their numerous differences both were highly oppressive towards their real and imagined opponents. Both totalitarianisms cooperated in their aggression against Poland in 1939 and in dividing East-Central Europe, thus beginning Second World War. Territories of the New Europe became their battleground, with the inhabitants being subjected to monstrous crimes.

– 'The scum of the Earth, I believe?'  
– 'The bloody assassin of the workers, I presume?'



Photo from: TopFoto/FORUM

A British caricature from 1939, showing Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, who by signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty in August 1939 agreed secretly to destroy and divide Poland, the Baltic states and Finland. That came about rapidly in September 1939, launching the Second World War

# MULTIPLE MEMORIES OF 1918–1923

Europe has no common memory of the Great War and its outcome. In West European countries a remembrance persists of the vast losses sustained during that war. In many countries of East-Central Europe the memory of the First World War was overshadowed by the emergence of the new order after 1918 and the Second World War. Over the last decades, that memory has also evolved.

Recording of a series  
'The Great War Report',  
devoted to the Czech experience  
of the First World War, 2014

Photo from: Petr Zaruha / Czech Television



## MEMORY IN WESTERN EUROPE

### SELECTIVE MEMORY OF THE LOSSES IN WESTERN EUROPE

One symbol of the wartime catastrophe which is frequently invoked in the West are the poppies that grew on battlefields, particularly in Flanders. They represent the massive losses that these nations experienced and which are the key element of the memory of the war in the West. On the other hand, although the 'Spanish flu' claimed more lives than the First World War, it was later forgotten by the societies affected, since civilians were not perceived as war heroes.



Photo from: Rex Features/East News

Paul Cummins, Tom Piper, Installation at the Tower of London entitled 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', 2014

## FRENCH-GERMAN RECONCILIATION



Photo from: © Régis Bossu/Sygma via Getty Images

The wounds sustained during the Great War took a long time to heal. It was only in 1984 that the leaders of France and Germany performed a symbolic reconciliation act on the site of the battle of Verdun. There the President and Chancellor held hands in a solemn commitment that such a bloodbath would never happen again.

French President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl at Verdun on 22 September 1984

## MEMORY IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

### MEMORY OF SUCCESS

#### POLAND

##### REMEMBERING 11 NOVEMBER IN POLAND

In Poland, the key event rooted in the memory linked to those years is 11 November. The date was chosen as a symbolic moment when independence was regained. Formally, it became a national holiday only in 1937. After the Second World War the celebrating of 11 November was banned by the new communist authorities as one of the symbols connected with non-communist Polish independence in the interwar period. After the fall of communism, it became Independence Day again, reverting to the memory of the interwar period and becoming one of the most important Polish state holidays.



Photo from: Weronika Kamy/ENRS

A Polish 20 PLN coin minted on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the regaining of independence in 1918

##### 1920 BATTLE OF WARSAW IN POLISH MEMORY



Photo from: Jacek Kwiatkowski/Goodpress

Contemporary re-enactment of the 1920 Battle of Warsaw, Ossów 2016

In 1945–1989, when communist authorities in Poland depended on the USSR, any celebration of the 1920 victory over the Red Army was prohibited, and monuments and memorial plaques were destroyed. A symbol of sacrifice and courage, the battle was unearthed from oblivion in post-1989 democratic Poland. Since then the day of 15 August, when the Red Army's offensive was broken, is celebrated as the Feast of the Polish Armed Forces and is one of the most important dates in Polish collective memory.

### MEMORY OF SUCCESS

#### ROMANIA

During the interwar period, anniversary activities commemorating what was termed the Great Union between the Old Kingdom of Romania with Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania were organised in Romania for all three regions of the new Romanian state. The cult of heroes flourished and many memorials were built. During the first two decades of the communist period, references to the unification of the territories inhabited mostly by Romanians were neglected, or indeed forbidden. In 1968, a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Union of Transylvania and the Old Kingdom (1 December 1918) was organised. However the unification of Bessarabia and Bukovina remained a taboo subject for the communist state, since after the Second World War they became part of the Soviet Union. After the fall of communism, the day of the Union of Transylvania (1 December) became the national holiday of Romania.

Annual military parade on Constitutional Square in Bucharest, Romania, commemorating the unification of Romanian provinces, 1 December 2010



Photo from: Radu Sigheti/Reuters/FORUM

## MEMORY OF DEFEAT

### BULGARIA

The key phrase describing the memory of the Great War and its aftermath in Bulgaria is ‘the second national catastrophe’ – a moment of crushed ‘national dignity’ and a national trauma. In the 1950s and 1960s, during communist rule, the Great War was deemed to have been an imperialistic and rapacious war of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. Later in its national-communist re-interpretation of the late 1970s and 1980s, it came to feature as a ‘war for national unification’ (after the lost second Balkan War in 1913). This description dominates its present-day understanding, which rejects critical readings of Bulgarian participation in the war and harks back to attitudes dominant during the interwar period.



Unveiling of a monument to the Bulgarian First World War hero, Colonel Boris Drangov, at the Georgi Rakovski Military Academy, Sofia, 2 March 2018

## MEMORY OF DEFEAT

### HUNGARY

Hungarian historical consciousness has been deeply affected by the dissolution of the pre-1918 multi-ethnic country and the fate of approximately three million ethnic Hungarians who became minorities in the successor states. Interwar Hungarian foreign policy became focused on achieving the revision of the Trianon borders, and Hungarian public opinion came under the sway of this revisionist ideology. The memory of the lost territories, as well as the dilemmas concerning the Hungarian minorities in East-Central Europe, were suppressed by the communist party state after the Second World War. In public education, the Versailles peace system was discussed simply as an imperialist peace accord. Although the Trianon borders are still remembered as traumatic and unjust, they were once more acknowledged by Hungarian governments after 1989. Hungarian foreign policy, however, has claimed the right to work closely with the Hungarian minorities in cooperation with partner governments. The anniversary of the Trianon Peace Treaty (4 June 1920) has been officially commemorated as the day of national unity since 2010. The old borders are still remembered, as can be seen in monuments or in popular culture.



Car sticker with a map of the Hungarian borders before the Trianon Peace Treaty

## MIXED MEMORY

### LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, 16 February, known as Restoration of the State Day, became a national holiday in 1919 and turned into a cornerstone of national mythology as the birthday of modern Lithuania. Under Soviet rule (1945–1989), celebrations of 16 February, along with the Lithuanian flag and coat of arms, were banned. Non-official public commemorations of that day became a central aspect of the National Rebirth Movement in 1987. It became an official national holiday again in 1990.



Photo from: Bertosz Frejczak

Centenary of the independence of Lithuania, Vilnius 2018

This positive memory is however tempered by the memory of the loss of Lithuania's historical capital, Vilnius, to Poland in 1920. The loss of this city was a collective trauma that deeply affected Lithuanian identity. In the Lithuanian constitution, Vilnius remained the capital of Lithuania. The Vilnius region was returned to Lithuania at the beginning of the Second World War by the Soviet Union in exchange for the stationing of Soviet troops in that country.

## MIXED MEMORY

### GERMANY

Today's Germany unites the different collective memories of a nation that was divided for over 40 years after the Second World War into the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). While the memory of the democratic revolution in November 1918 and the founding of the communist party in 1918 were cultivated in the GDR, in the FRG the focus was on the emergence of the Weimar Republic, though also on the reasons for its failure. Contemporary narratives about the period 1918–1923 in Germany are mixed. On the one hand the defeat in war is recalled and on the other the new political order after 1918, the revolution in November 1918 and the emergence of the Weimar Republic as the first German democratic state are cherished. Moreover, there is an awareness of how the Weimar Constitution provided fundamental social and political rights for the German people. Particular attention is paid to the introduction of women's suffrage in 1919, and to the role of women in the early years of the Weimar Republic.



Photo from: Lutz Menze Design

German postage stamp from 2014, printed for the centenary of the beginning of the First World War with an etching by German artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) 'Never again war'

## MEMORY OF SHORT INDEPENDENT STATEHOOD AFTER 1918

### UKRAINE

In today's Ukraine, the period 1917–1920, known as the Ukrainian Revolution, is widely commemorated as the first attempt to create an independent Ukrainian state in the 20th century. Yet it tends to be overshadowed by the Second World War, which occupies a central place in Ukrainian collective memory and in official memory politics. However, the ongoing military conflict with Russia has turned the 2018 commemoration of the Ukrainian Revolution into a powerful narrative of the Ukrainian struggle against Russian aggression. Thus, the centennial of the Battle of Kruty became a Ukrainian version of the classic tale of the bravery of the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae. Today this tale forms the way in which Ukrainians recall the courage of Ukrainian youth units that fought the Russian Bolshevik army between 28 and 30 January 1918. This episode inspired a series of commemorative events that celebrated and mourned the fallen Kruty soldiers.



Photo from: Weronika Kann/ENRS

Ukrainian two Hryvnia coin minted in 1998 for the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Kruty

## MEMORY OF SHORT INDEPENDENT STATEHOOD AFTER 1918

### BELARUS

During the Soviet era, the memory of the Belarusian People's Republic (BNR) was suppressed by censorship. In the late 1980s, as the national democratic movement grew in strength, the BNR began to be rediscovered and remembered in Belarus, helping to justify the demands for full independence from the Soviet Union. The national symbols of the BNR: white-red-white flag and the 'Pahonia' coat of arms – were adopted after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since the early 1990s, Freedom Day, an unofficial holiday to commemorate the creation of the Belarusian People's Republic in 1918, has been celebrated on 25 March. After Alexander Lukashenko was elected President of Belarus in 1994, the national symbols of the BNR were proscribed again and replaced by Soviet-era symbols. Celebrations of Freedom Day turned into anti-government protests. Once again, celebrations of national identity and memory politics turned to the brief moment of freedom in the early 20th century. The authorities have begun to highlight the BNR's legacy, allowing, in 2018, a celebration of the centenary of the proclamation of independence.



Photo from: AP Images/East News

People wave historical Belarusian Republic flags during a rally commemorating the 1918 declaration of independence from Russia in Minsk on 25 March 2018



Photo from: Independence Park Library & Archive; photo by B. Wallace

People watching map with changing borders in Europe,  
Philadelphia, USA, 26 October 1918

# AFTERWORD

**'World War strengthened national consciousness, and one of the chief consequences of the War was the emancipation of the smaller European peoples that were oppressed by the old regime.'** <sup>20</sup>

**TOMÁŠ GARRIGUE MASARYK, CZECHOSLOVAK PRESIDENT**

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**'When the sound of victorious guns burst over London at 11 a.m. on November 11th, 1918, the men and women who looked incredulously into each other's faces did not cry jubilantly: We've won the war! They only said: The war is over.'** <sup>21</sup>

**VERA BRITAIN, BRITISH NURSE**

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**'Everyone knew that was the beginning of a new history.[...] There are experiences that enter people so deeply that they later persist in them beyond memory. [...] They build us, tie us to a place and lead us into the world.'** <sup>22</sup>

**KAZIMIERZ WIERZYŃSKI, POLISH POET**

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**'In the fluid world of 1919, it was possible to dream of great change, or have nightmares about the collapse of order.'** <sup>23</sup>

**MARGARET MACMILLAN, CANADIAN HISTORIAN**

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# PICTURES OF THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition 'After the Great War. A New Europe 1918–1923' in Prague,  
October–November 2018, photo by Dominik Tryba



Exhibition 'After the Great War. A New Europe 1918–1923' in Prague, October–November 2018, photo by Dominik Tryba



Exhibition 'After the Great War. A New Europe 1918–1923' in Sarajevo, November–December 2018, photo by Vanja Čerimagić

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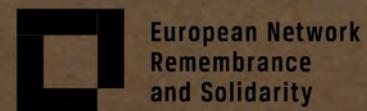
\* Non-English quotes translated by the authors of the exhibition.

The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity is an international initiative focusing on research, documentation and the dissemination of knowledge about Europe's 20th-century history and ways in which it is commemorated. Special focus is on periods of dictatorship, war and social opposition to captivity. Network members include Poland, Germany, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Advisory assemblies additionally involve representatives of Albania, Austria, the Czech Republic and Latvia. ENRS works with partners from throughout Europe when engaging in cultural and academic projects, conferences, seminars, workshops and publications.

FIND OUT MORE:  
[www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu)

The outdoor travelling exhibition "After the Great War. A New Europe 1918–1923" focuses on the turbulent first years after the First World War. Over 200 archive and multimedia materials – pictures, maps and original films from the 1920s together with individual stories of people who lived through these these times – present a complex yet coherent picture of the New Europe established in the East-Central part of the continent. The main goal of the project is to illustrate the scale of political changes and show its impact on current politics as well as to present different national memories. The exhibition takes the form of a white and silver pavilion in the shape of a cube.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EXHIBITION TOUR:  
[www.enrs.eu/afterthegreatwar](http://www.enrs.eu/afterthegreatwar)



*The story of the new Europe born out of the ruins of the 1914–18 war has never been told before. Here is a powerful visual and documentary account of the upheavals that created the world in which we live today.*

Prof. Jay Winter

MEMBER OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL OF THE EXHIBITION

*The exhibition tackles an important event a century later and makes the case for why it is important for understanding not only the Second World War but also East-Central Europe today.*

Prof. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

CONSULTANT OF THE EXHIBITION

*The exhibition's authors' biggest success is presenting the effects of the Great War in all possible aspects: material, economic, mental, social or cultural, including art and architecture. One of the strengths of the project is the comparative approach which allows us to see processes going on in one country or region as universal and to better understand what really happened back then.*

Prof. Andrzej Chwalba,

MEMBER OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL OF THE EXHIBITION