

# THE FIRST WORLD WAR



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 Somewhere before 1914 Europe went off its course. Europeans believed themselves to be heading for a kind of high plateau, full of a benign progress and more abundant civilization, in which the benefits of modern science and invention would be more widely diffused and even competitive struggle worked out somehow for the best. Instead, Europe stumbled in 1914 into disaster. It is not easy to see exactly where Europe went astray, at what point, that is, the First World War became inevitable, or (since the human mind does not know what is truly inevitable) so overwhelmingly probable that only the most Olympian statesmanship could have avoided it. But no such statesmanship appeared, and Europe fell into a deadly, grinding war that consumed much of its wealth, killed millions of its young men, and ultimately weakened or even destroyed much of its power and influence around the world.

## 85. THE INTERNATIONAL ANARCHY

After 1870 Europe lived in a repressed fear of itself. The great questions of the mid-century had been settled by force. The German Empire was only the strongest and most obvious of the new structures which armed power had reared. Never had the European states maintained such huge armies in peacetime as at the beginning of the twentieth century. One, two, or even three years of compulsory military service for all young men became the rule. In 1914 each of the Continental Great Powers had not only a huge standing army but millions

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*The inevitability of war?*

Chapter emblem: Soldier in the trenches near Passchendaele, Belgium, in 1917.

of trained reserves among the civilian population. Few people wanted war; all but a few sensational writers preferred peace in Europe, but many took it for granted that war would come someday. In the last years before 1914 the idea that war was bound to break out sooner or later probably made some statesmen, in some countries, more willing to unleash it.

### *Rival Alliances: Triple Alliance versus Triple Entente*

Political diagnosticians, from Richelieu to Metternich, had long thought that an effective union of Germany would revolutionize the relationships of Europe's peoples. After 1870 their anticipations were more than confirmed. Once united (or almost united), the Germans entered upon their industrial revolution. Manufacturing, finance, shipping, population grew phenomenally. By 1900, for example, Germany produced more steel than France and

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#### *A "place in the sun"*

Britain combined, though in 1865 the French alone had produced more than the Germans. People in Germany felt that they needed and deserved a "place in the sun," by which they vaguely meant some kind of acknowledged supremacy like that of the British. Neither the British nor the French, the leaders of modern Europe since the seventeenth century, could share wholeheartedly in such German aspirations. The French nursed the chronic grievance of Alsace and Lorraine, annexed to Germany in 1871. The British as the years passed saw German salesmen appear in their foreign markets, selling goods often at lower prices and by what seemed ungentlemanly methods; they saw Germans turn up as colonial rivals in Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East; and they watched other European states gravitate into the Berlin orbit, looking to the mighty German Empire as a friend and protector to secure or advance their interests.

Bismarck after 1871 feared that in another European war his new German Empire might be torn to pieces. He therefore followed, until his retirement in 1890, a policy of peace. We have seen him as the "honest broker" at the Berlin Congress of 1878, helping

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#### *The Triple Alliance*

to adjudicate the Eastern Question, and again offering the facilities of Berlin in 1885 to regulate African affairs. To isolate France, divert it from Europe, and keep it embroiled with Britain, he looked with satisfaction on French colonial expansion. He took no chances, however; in 1879 he formed a military alliance with Austria-Hungary, to which Italy was added in 1882. Thus was formed the Triple Alliance, which lasted until the First World War. Its terms were, briefly, that if any member became involved in war with two or more powers its allies should come to its aid by force of arms. To be on the safe side, Bismarck signed a "reinsurance" treaty with Russia also. Since Russia and Austria were enemies (because of the Balkans), to be allied to both at the same time took considerable diplomatic finesse. After Bismarck's retirement his system proved too intricate, or too lacking in candor, for his successors to manage. The Russo-German agreement lapsed. The French, faced by the Triple Alliance, soon seized the opportunity to form their own alliance with Russia, the Franco-Russian Alliance signed in 1894. In its time this was regarded as politically almost impossible. The French Republic stood for everything radical; the Russian empire, for everything reactionary and autocratic. But ideology was thrown to the winds, French capital poured into Russia, and the tsar bared his head to the *Marseillaise*.

The Continent was thus divided by 1894 into two opposed camps, the German-Austrian-Italian against the Franco-Russian. For a time it seemed that this rigid division might soften. Germany, France, and Russia cooperated in the Far Eastern crisis of 1895 to

stem the expanding power of Japan. All were anti-British at the time of Fashoda and the Boer War. The Kaiser, William II, outlined tempting pictures of a Continental league against the global hegemony of England and her empire.

Much depended on what the British would do. They had long prided themselves on a "splendid isolation," going their own way, disdaining the kind of dependency that alliance with others always brings. Fashoda and the Boer War came as a shock. British relations with France and Russia were very bad. Some in England, including Joseph Chamberlain, therefore thought that a better understanding with Germany was to be sought. Arguments of race, in this race-conscious age, made the English and Germans feel akin. But politically it was hard to cooperate. The Kaiser's Kruger Telegram of 1896, expressing support for the South African Boers in their conflict with Britain, was a studied insult. Then in 1898 the Germans decided to build a navy.

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"Splendid  
isolation"

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A new kind of race now entered the picture, the naval competition between Germany and Great Britain. British sea power for two centuries had been all too successful. The American Admiral Mahan, teaching at the Naval War College, and taking his examples largely from British history, argued that sea power had always been the foundation of Britain's greatness and that in the long run sea power must always choke off and ruin a power operating on land. Nowhere were Mahan's books read with more interest than in Germany. The German naval program, mounting rapidly after 1898, in a few years became a source of concern to the British, and by 1912 was felt as a positive menace. The Germans insisted that they must have a navy to protect their colonies, secure their foreign trade, and "for the general purposes of their greatness." The British held with equal resolution that England, as a densely populated industrial island, dependent even for food upon imports, must at all costs control the sea in both peace and war. They adhered stubbornly to their traditional policy of maintaining a navy as large as the next two combined. The naval race led both sides to enormous and increasing expenditures. In the British it produced a sense of profound insecurity, driving them as the years passed ever more inescapably into the arms of Russia and France.

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*Naval race*

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Slowly and cautiously the British emerged from their diplomatic isolation. In 1902 they formed a military alliance with Japan against their common enemy, Russia. The decisive break came in 1904, from which may be dated the immediate series of crises issuing 10 years later in the First World War.

In 1904 the British and French governments agreed to forget Fashoda and the accumulated bad feeling of the preceding 25 years. The French recognized the British occupation of Egypt, and the British recognized the French penetration of Morocco. They also cleared up a few lesser colonial differences and agreed to support each other against protests by third parties. There was no specific alliance; neither side said what it would do in the event of war; it was only a close understanding, an *entente cordiale*.

The French immediately tried to reconcile their new friend to their ally, Russia. After defeat by Japan the Russians proved amenable. The British, increasingly uncertain of German aims, proved likewise willing. In 1907 Britain and Russia, the inveterate adversaries, settled their differences in an Anglo-Russian Convention. In Persia, the British recognized a Russian sphere of influence in the north, while the Russians recognized a British sphere in the south and east. By 1907 England, France, and Russia were acting together. The older Triple Alliance faced a newer Triple Entente, the latter somewhat the looser, since the British refused to make any formal military commitments.

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*Triple Entente*

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### *The Crises in Morocco and the Balkans*

The Germans, who already felt encircled by the alliance of France and Russia, naturally watched with concern the drift of England into the Franco-Russian camp.

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#### *Testing the Entente*

The entente cordiale was barely concluded when the German government decided to test it, to find out how strong it really was or how far the British would go in support of France. The French, now enjoying British backing, were taking over more police powers, concessions, and loans in Morocco.

In March 1905 Kaiser William II disembarked from a German warship at Tangier, where he made a startling speech in favor of Moroccan independence. To diplomats everywhere this carefully staged performance was a signal: Germany was attempting not primarily to keep France out of Morocco, nor even to reserve Morocco for itself, but to break up the new understanding between France and England. The Germans demanded and obtained an international conference at Algeciras (at which the United States was represented), but the conference, which met in 1906, supported the French claims in Morocco, only Austria voting with Germany. The German government had thus created an incident and been rebuffed. The British, disturbed by German diplomatic tactics, stood by the French all the more firmly. French and British army and naval officers now began to discuss common plans. Distrust of Germany also inclined the British to bury the hatchet with Russia in the next year. The German attempt to break the Entente simply made it more solid.

In 1911 came a second Morocco crisis. A German gunboat, the *Panther*, arrived at Agadir "to protect German interests." It soon developed that the move was a holdup; the Germans offered to make no further trouble in Morocco if they could have the French Congo. The crisis passed, the Germans obtaining some trifling accessions in Africa. But a member of the British cabinet, David Lloyd George, made a rather inflammatory speech on the German menace.

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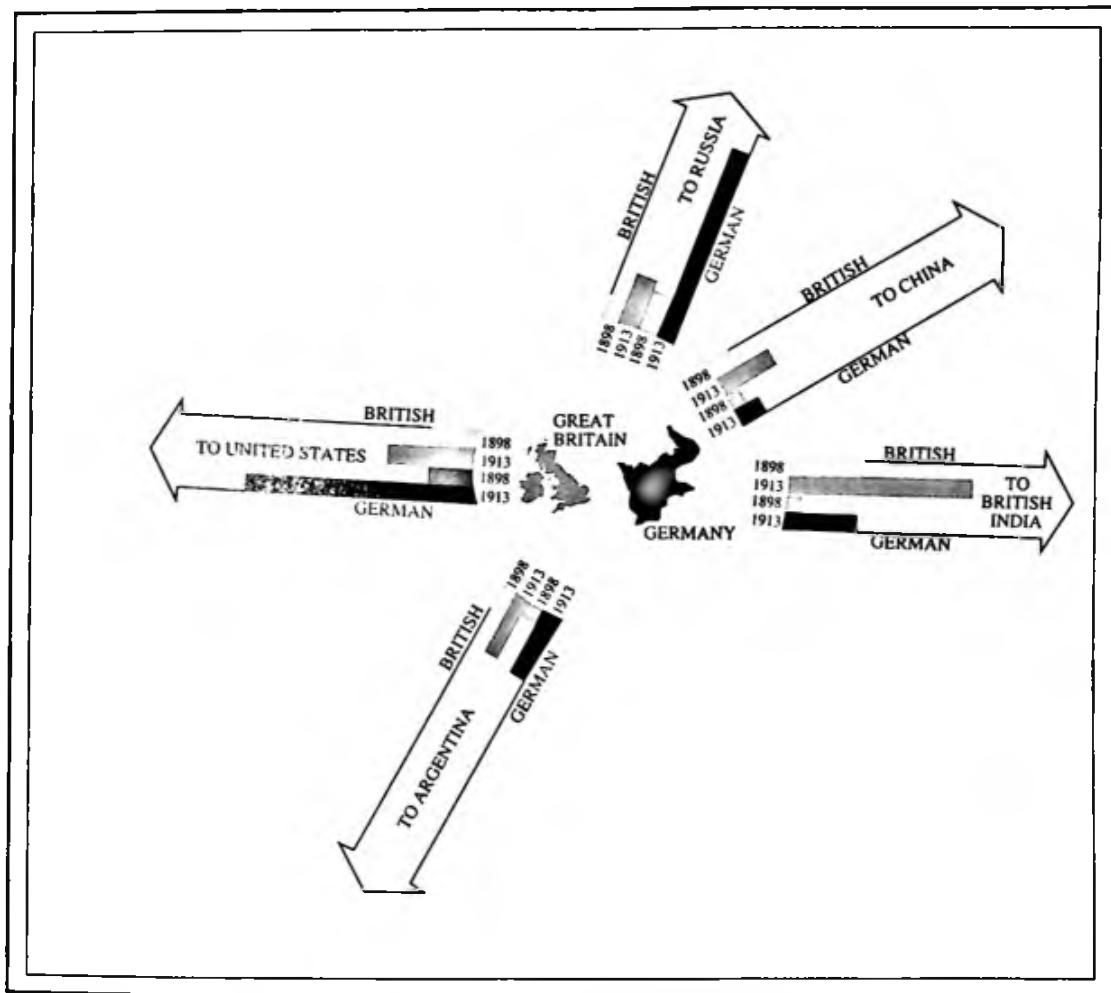
#### *Crises in the Balkans*

Meanwhile a series of crises rocked the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire, in an advanced state of dissolution, still held a band of territory from Constantinople westward to the Adriatic (see map, p. 665). South of this band lay an independent Greece. North of it, on the Black Sea side, lay an autonomous Bulgaria and an independent Romania. In the center and west of the peninsula, north of the Turkish belt, was the small, landlocked, independent kingdom of Serbia, adjoining by Bosnia-Herzegovina, which belonged legally to Turkey but had been "occupied and administered" by Austria since 1878. Within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, adjoining Bosnia on the north and west, lay Croatia and Slovenia.

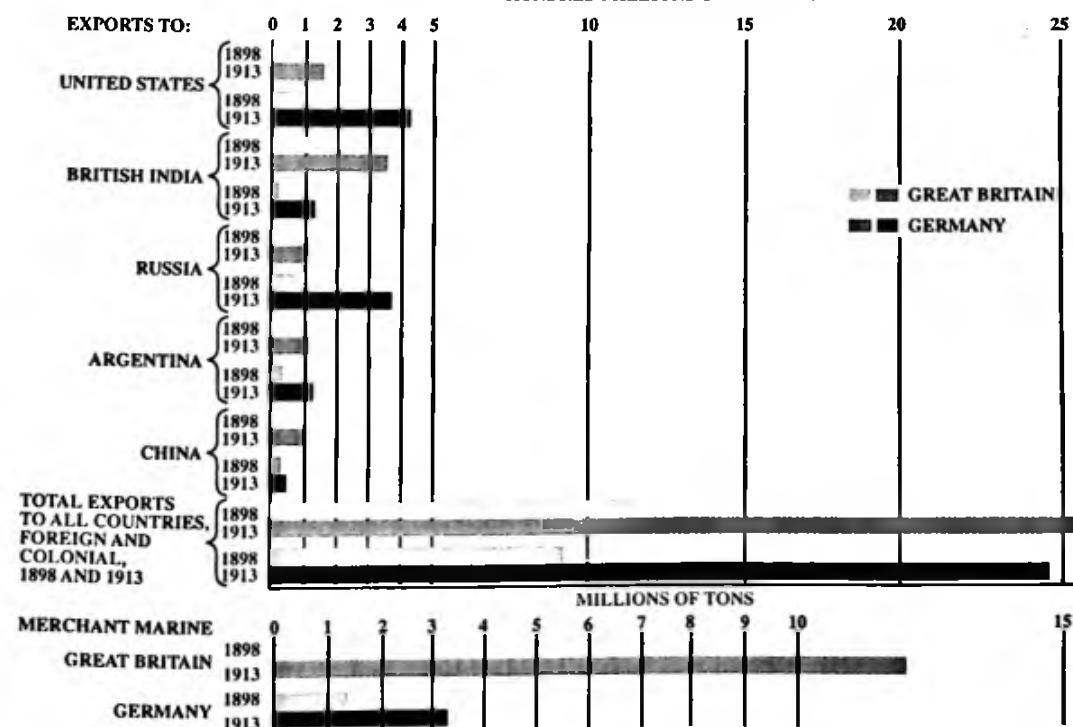
Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, and Slovenes all spoke basically the same language, Serbo-Croatian, the main difference being that Serbs and Bosnians wrote with the eastern or

### ANGLO-GERMAN INDUSTRIAL COMPETITION, 1898 AND 1913

This diagram shows the huge increase in world trade in the years before the First World War and also the fact that German exports grew in these years more rapidly than British exports. The exports of both countries together multiplied no less than threefold in these 15 years. The increase reflected a small rise in prices, but it was mainly due to a real increase in volume of business. In 1913, total German exports about equaled the British, but German exports to the United States and Russia greatly exceeded the British. Note how the Germans even gained exports in British India, where the liberalism of British trade policy freely admitted competitive goods. In merchant marine, though the Germans doubled their tonnage, the British continued to enjoy an overwhelming lead.



HUNDRED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS



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**Ethnic and religious divisions**

Cyrillic alphabet while the Croats and Slovenes wrote with the western or Roman alphabet. The difference reflected deep differences in religion. The Slovenes and Croats had long been Roman Catholic, and hence affiliated with Western Europe; the Serbs and many Bosnians were Eastern Orthodox and so closer to Russia; and there were also, especially in Bosnia, large numbers of Slavs who were Muslims, converted during the Ottoman domination. With the Slavic Revival, which emphasized language, many of these peoples came to feel that they were really one people, for which they took the name South Slavs, or Yugoslavs. After the Dual Monarchy was formed in 1867, as we have seen, the Slavs of the Habsburg empire were kept subordinate to the German Austrians and the Hungarian Magyars. By 1900 radical Slav nationalists within the empire had concluded that the Dual Monarchy would never grant them equal status, that it must be broken up, and that all South Slavs should form an independent state of their own. Concretely, this meant that an element of the Austro-Hungarian population, namely, the Croatian and Slovenian nationalists, wished to get out of the empire and join with Serbia across the border. Serbia became the center of South Slav agitation.

This brew was brought to a boil in 1908 by two events. First, the Young Turks, whose long agitation against Abdul Hamid has been noted, managed in that year to carry through a revolution. They obliged the sultan to restore the liberal parliamentary constitution of 1876. They showed, too, that they meant to stop the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire by taking steps to have delegates from Bulgaria and Bosnia sit in the new Ottoman parliament. Second, Russia, its foreign policy in the Far East ruined by the Japanese war, turned actively to the Balkan and Turkish scene. Russia, as always, wanted control at Constantinople. Austria wanted full annexation of Bosnia, the better to discourage Pan-Yugoslav ideas. But if the young Turks really modernized and strengthened the Ottoman Empire, Austria would never get Bosnia nor the Russians, Constantinople.

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**The first Balkan crisis**

The Russian and Austrian foreign ministers, Alexander Isvolsky and Alois von Aehrenthal, at a conference at Buchlau in 1908 came to a secret agreement. They would call an international conference, at which Russia would favor Austrian annexation of Bosnia, and Austria would support the opening of the Straits to Russian warships. Austria, without waiting for a conference, proclaimed the annexation of Bosnia without more ado. This infuriated the Serbs, who had marked Bosnia for their own. Meanwhile, that same year, the Bulgarians and the Cretans broke finally with the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria becoming fully independent, Crete uniting with Greece. Isvolsky was never able to realize his plans for Constantinople. His partners in the Triple Entente, Britain and France, refused to back him; the British in particular were evasive on plans for opening the Straits to the Russian fleet. The projected international conference was never called. In Russia itself public opinion knew nothing of Isvolsky's secret deal. The known fact in Russia was that the Serbs, the little Slav brothers of Russia, had their toes rudely stepped on by the Austrians by the annexation of Bosnia.

This "first Balkan crisis" presently passed. The Russians, weakened by the Japanese war and by the revolutionary turmoil of 1905, accepted the Austrian *fait accompli*. Austrian influence in the Balkans seemed to be growing. And South Slav nationalism was frustrated and inflamed.

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**Two Balkan wars**

In 1911 Italy declared war on Turkey, from which it soon conquered Tripoli and the Dodecanese Islands. With the Ottomans thus embarrassed, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece joined forces in their own war against Turkey, hoping to annex certain Balkan territories to which they believed they had a right. Turkey was soon defeated, but the Bulgarians claimed more of Macedonia than the Serbs would yield, so that the first Balkan war of 1912 was followed in 1913 by a second, in which Al-

bania also, a mountainous region on the Adriatic, mainly Muslim, was the subject of angry discord. The Serbs occupied part of it in the two Balkan wars, but Greeks also claimed a part, and it had also on several occasions been vaguely promised to Italy. Russia supported the Serbian claim. Austria was determined to shut off the Serbs from access to the sea, which they would obtain by annexation of Albanian territory. An agreement of the great powers, to keep the peace, conjured up an independent kingdom in Albania. This confirmed the Austrian policy, kept Serbia from the sea, and aroused vehement outcries in both Serbia and Russia. But Russia again backed down. Serbian expansionism was again frustrated and inflamed.

The third Balkan crisis proved to be the fatal one. It was fatal because two others had gone before it, leaving feelings of exasperation in Austria, desperation in Serbia, and humiliation in Russia.

### *The Sarajevo Crisis and the Outbreak of War*

On June 28, 1914, a young Bosnian revolutionary, a member of the Serbian secret society called "Union of Death" and commonly known as the Black Hand, acting with the knowledge of certain Serbian officials, assassinated the heir to the Habsburg empire, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, in the streets of Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital, in the Austrian Empire. The world was shocked at this terrorist outrage and at first sympathized with the protests of the Austrian government. Francis Ferdinand, who would soon have become emperor, was known to favor some kind of transformation of Austria-Hungary, in which a more equal place might be given to the Slavs; but the reformer who makes a system work is the most dangerous of all enemies to the implacable revolutionary, and it is perhaps for this reason that the archduke was killed by the Black Hand.

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*The assassinat-*  
*tion at Sarajevo*

The Austrian government was determined to end the South Slav separatism that was gnawing its empire to pieces. It decided to crush the independence of Serbia, the nucleus of South Slav agitation, though not to annex it, since there were now thought to be too many Slavs within the empire already. The Austrian government consulted the German to see how far it might go with the support of its ally. The Germans, issuing their famous "blank check," encouraged the Austrians to be firm. The Austrians, thus reassured, dispatched a drastic ultimatum to Serbia, demanding among other things that Austrian officials be permitted to collaborate in investigating and punishing the perpetrators of the assassination. The Serbs counted on Russian support, even to the point of war, judging that Russia could not yield in a Balkan crisis, for the third time in six years, without losing its influence in the Balkans altogether. The Russians in turn counted on France; and France, terrified at the possibility of being some day caught alone in a war with Germany and determined to keep Russia as an ally at any cost, in effect gave a blank check to Russia.

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*The German*  
*"blank check"*

The Serbs rejected the critical item in the Austrian ultimatum as an infringement on Serbian sovereignty, and Austria thereupon declared war upon Serbia. Russia prepared to defend Serbia and hence to fight Austria. Expecting that Austria would be joined by Germany, Russia rashly mobilized its army on the German as well as the Austrian frontier. Since the power which first mobilized had all the advantages of a rapid offensive, the German government demanded an end to the Russian mobilization on its border and, receiving no answer, declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914. Convinced that France would in any case enter the war on the side of Russia, Germany also declared war on France on August 3.

The German decisions were posited on a reckless hope that Great Britain might not enter the war at all. England was bound by no formal military alliance. Even the French



**Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria meets here with leaders of the Catholic church during his visit to Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. Shortly after this meeting, the Archduke (the tall man with a moustache) and his wife were assassinated by a Serbian nationalist. The ensuing diplomatic crisis mobilized all of the nations in the European alliance system and led to the First World War of 1914–1918.**

(Hulton Getty)

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#### *English isolation*

did not know for certain, as late as August 3, whether the British would join them in war. The British clung to scraps of their old proud isolation; they hesitated to make a final choice of sides; and as the foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey repeatedly explained, in England only parliament could declare war, so that the foreign office could make no binding promise of war in advance. It has often been said that had the German government known as a positive fact that England would fight, the war might not have come. Hence the evasiveness of British policy is made a contributing cause of the war. In reality, the probability that England would fight was so great that to underestimate it, as the Germans did, was an act of supreme folly. The British government was deeply committed to France, especially through naval agreements, but what swept the British public toward the French was the German invasion of Belgium. The German plan to crush France quickly was such that it could succeed only by crossing Belgium. When the Belgians protested, the Germans invaded anyway, violating the treaty of 1839 which had guaranteed Belgian neutrality. England declared war on Germany on August 4.

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#### *Causes of the First World War*

The mere narration of successive crises does not explain why the chief nations of Europe within a few days became locked in combat over the murder of an imperial personage. Among more obvious general causes, the alliance system may be singled out. Europe was divided into two camps.



### THE BALKANS, 1878 AND 1914

Austria and Russia had gradually pushed the Ottoman Empire out of Europe since 1699. The Congress of Berlin in 1878 attempted to stabilize the situation by recognizing Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro as independent monarchies, and northern Bulgaria as an autonomous principality within the Ottoman Empire. The ambitions and discontents of these new states, of Greece, and of non-Turkish people remaining within the Ottoman Empire culminated in the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. Albania then became independent, and Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece became contiguous. Austrian and Russian pressures meanwhile continued; in 1908 Austria annexed Bosnia, where the South Slav population, like the Serbs, was hostile to the Austrian annexation.

Every incident tended to become a test of strength between the two. A given incident, such as German intervention in Morocco, or the assassination of Francis Ferdinand, could not be settled on its own merits, merely by the parties concerned. However it was dealt with, one of the two camps was deemed to have lost or gained and hence to have lost or gained influence in other incidents, of perhaps greater purport, that would arise in the future. Each power felt that it must stand by its allies whatever the specific issue. This was because all lived in the fear of war, of some nameless future war in which allies would be necessary.

The Germans complained of being “encircled” by France and Russia. They dreaded the day when they might have to face a war on two fronts. Willing to accept even a Europeanwide war to break their threatened “encirclement” by the Entente powers, they were obliged to hold to their one ally, Austria-Hungary, which was in turn able to sell its support at its own price. The French dreaded a coming conflict with Germany, which in 40 years had far surpassed France in population and industrial strength; they were obliged to cling to their ally Russia, which therefore could oblige the French to yield to Russian wishes. As for Russia and Austria, they were both tottering empires. Especially after 1900, the tsarist regime suffered from endemic revolutionism; and the Habsburg empire, from chronic nationalistic agitation. Authorities in both empires became desperate.

Like the Serbs, they had little to lose and were therefore reckless. It was Russia that drew France and hence England into war in 1914, and Austria that drew Germany. Seen in this light, the tragedy of 1914 is that the most backward or politically bankrupt parts of Europe, through the alliance system, dragged the more advanced parts automatically into ruin.

The German Empire, too, faced an internal crisis. The Social Democrats became the largest party in the Reichstag in 1912. Their sentiments for the most part were antimilitarist and antiwar. But the German imperial government recognized no responsibility to a majority in the chamber. Policy was determined by men of the old unreconstructed upper class, in which army and navy interests, now reinforced by new business interests, were very strong; and even moderates and liberals shared in the ambition to make Germany a world power, the equal of any. The perplexities the ruling groups faced at home, the feeling that their position was being undermined by the Social Democrats, may have made them more willing to view war as a way out. And while it is not true that Germany started the war, as its enemies in 1914 popularly believed, it must be granted that its policies had for some years been rather peremptory, arrogant, devious, and obstinate. In a broad sense, the emergence of a consolidated industrial Germany after 1870, making its bid for world-power status relatively late, was a distant and basic cause of war.

The alliance system was only a symptom of deeper trouble. In a word, the world had an international economy but a national polity. Economically, each European people now required habitual contact with the world as a whole. Each people was to that extent dependent and insecure. Industrial countries were especially vulnerable, relying as they did on import of raw materials and food and on export of goods, services, or capital in return. There was, however, no world state to police the worldwide system, assuring participation in the world economy to all nations under all conditions. Each nation had to take care of itself. Hence came much of the drive for imperialism, in which each Great Power tried to stake out part of the world system for itself. And hence also came the quest for allies and for binding alliances. The alliances, in a world that was in the strict sense anarchic (and seemed likely to remain so), were a means by which each nation attempted to bolster up its security; to assure that it would not be cut off, conquered, or subjected to another's will; to obtain some hope of economic success in the competitive struggle for use of the world's goods.



## 86. THE ARMED STALEMATE

The First World War lasted over four years, from 1914 to the end of 1918, the United States entering with effective result in the last year. Germany and its allies were called the Central Powers, while the Entente governments were termed the Allies. The war was appalling in its human costs; on the western front, more men were used and killed in the First World War than in the Second.

At first a short war, as in 1870, was universally expected. The German General Staff had its plans ready for a two-front struggle against France and Russia.

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*The Schlieffen Plan*

The disadvantage of fighting on two fronts was offset by the possession of good rail lines, which allowed the rapid shuttling of troops from one front to the other. The German war plan, known as the Schlieffen Plan, rested upon this fact. The idea was first to defeat France by the rapid wheeling motion of a tremendous army through Belgium and then to turn at more leisure against Russia, whose great size and less developed railways would make its deployment much slower.



## THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Land fighting in the First World War was mainly confined to the areas shown by the darker horizontal shading. The huge battles on the western front, which produced more casualties than all of the battles in the West during the Second World War, swayed back and forth over an area less than 100 miles wide.

### *The War on Land, 1914–1916*

On August 3, 1914, the Germans launched 78 infantry divisions in the West. They were opposed by 72 French divisions, 5 British, and 6 Belgian. The Germans swept irresistibly forward. The Schlieffen Plan seemed to be moving like clockwork. The civilian authorities made plans for the conquest and annexation of large parts of Europe. Then a



Almost everyone in 1914 expected a short war and a quick resolution of the international crisis. These German soldiers at the Berlin railway station were preparing to board trains that would take them to the front. Accompanied by their wives or girlfriends and carrying flowers, they departed Berlin amid the optimistic fanfare that spread across all Europe in the early days of the war.

(AKG London)

hitch occurred: the Russians were fulfilling the terms of their alliance; the 10 billion francs invested by the French in Russia now paid their most significant dividend. The Russians pushed two armies into Germany, penetrating into East Prussia. Moltke withdrew forces from the German right wing in France, on August 26, for service in the East. The Germans moved on, but their striking arm was weakened and their lines of communication were already overextended. Joffre, the French commander, regrouping his forces, with strong support from the relatively small British contingent and at exactly the right moment, ordered a counterattack.

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*The battle  
of the Marne*

The ensuing battle of the Marne, fought from September 5 to 12, changed the whole character of the war. The Germans were obliged to retreat. The hope of felling France at a single blow was ended. Each side now tried to outflank and destroy the other until the battle lines extended to the sea. The Germans failed to win control of the Channel ports; French and British communications remained uninterrupted. For these reverses the great victories meanwhile won by the Germans on the eastern front, though of gigantic proportions (the battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, at which 225,000 Russians were captured), were in the long run small consolation.

In the West the war of movement now settled into a war of position. The armies on the western front became almost immobile. The units of horse cavalry—the uhlans, hussars, and lancers that had pranced off to war in high spirits—disappeared from the field. Since aviation was barely beginning, and motor transport was still new (the armies had trucks, but no self-propelled guns, and no tanks until very late in the war), the basic soldier more than ever was the man on foot. The most deadly new weapon was the machine gun, which made it impossible for foot soldiers to advance across open fields without overwhelming artillery preparation. The result was a long stalemate of war in the trenches in which the indispensable infantry sought protection.

In 1915 the Germans and Austro-Hungarians put their main effort into an attempt to knock out Russia. They pressed far into the tsarist empire. The Russian losses were enormous—2 million killed, wounded, or captured in 1915 alone. But at the end of the year the Russian army was still fighting. Meanwhile the British and French, hoping to open up communications with Russia, launched a naval attack on Turkey, aiming at Constantinople by way of the Dardanelles. They poured 450,000 men into the narrow peninsula of Gallipoli, of whom 145,000 were killed or wounded. After almost a year the enterprise was given up as a failure.

In 1916 both sides turned again to northern France in an attempt to break the deadlock. The Allies planned a great offensive along the river Somme, while the Germans prepared one in the neighborhood of Verdun. The Germans attacked Verdun in February. The French commander Joffre put in General Pétain to defend it but resisted committing his main reserves, holding them for the coming offensive on the Somme. Pétain and his troops, held to minimum numbers, thus had to take the full weight of the German army. The battle of Verdun lasted six months, it drew the horrified admiration of the world, and it became a legend of determined resistance ("they shall not pass"), until the Germans finally abandoned the attack because they sustained almost as many casualties as the French—330,000 to 350,000.

While the inferno still raged at Verdun the Allies opened their offensive on the Somme in July. They brought up unheard of amounts of artillery, and the newly raised British army was present in force. The idea was to break through the German line simply by stupendous pressure; on both sides, Allied and German, the art of generalship had sunk to an all-time low. Despite a weeklong artillery bombardment the British lost 60,000 men on the first day of the attack. In a week they had advanced only one mile along a six-mile front. In a month they had advanced only 2½ miles. The battle of the Somme, lasting from July to October, cost the Germans about 500,000 men, the British 400,000, and the French 200,000. Nothing of any value had been gained. It was, indeed, at the Somme that the British first used the tank, an armored vehicle with caterpillar tracks that could crash through barbed wire, lunge over trenches, and smash into machine gun nests; but the tanks were introduced in such small numbers, and with such skepticism on the part of many commanders, that they had no effect on the battle.

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*War in the  
trenches*

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*The battle  
of Verdun*

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*The battle  
of the Somme*

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The miseries and dangers of the muddy trenches on the western front are conveyed in this photograph of soldiers in the battle of Passchendaele in 1917. Human life in such conditions became a raw struggle for survival; most soldiers reported that the grinding, daily experience on a battlefield seemed very far removed from the nationalism or political concerns of civilians and government leaders.

(Imperial War Museum, London)

### *The War at Sea*

With land armies thus helpless, both sides looked to the sea. The long preponderance of British sea power, and the more recent Anglo-German naval race, would now be tested.

#### *Naval blockade*

The British, with French aid, imposed a strict naval blockade. International law at the time placed goods headed for a country at war into two classes. One class was called contraband; it included munitions and certain specified raw materials which might be used in the manufacture of military equipment. The other class, including foodstuffs and raw cotton, was defined as noncontraband. A country was supposed, by international law, to be able to import noncontraband goods even in wartime. These terms of wartime law had been set forth as recently as 1909 at an international conference held in London. The purpose was to make it impossible for a sea power (that is, the British) to starve out an enemy in wartime or even to interfere with normal civilian production. The jealousy of Continental Europe for British sea power was an old story.

Such law, if observed, would make the blockade of Germany entirely ineffective, and the Allies did not observe it. To starve out the enemy and ruin his economy was precisely their purpose. Economic warfare took its place alongside armed attack as a military weapon, as in the days of Napoleon. The Allies announced a new international law. The distinction between contraband and noncontraband was gradually abolished. The British navy (aided by the French) proceeded to stop all goods of whatever character destined for

Germany or its allies. Neutrals, among whom the Americans, Dutch, and Scandinavians were the ones mainly affected, were not allowed to make for German ports at all.

The United States protested vehemently against these regulations. It defended the rights of neutrals. It reasserted the distinction between contraband and noncontraband, claimed the right to trade with other neutrals, and upheld the "freedom of the seas." Much mutual bad feeling resulted between the American and British governments in 1915 and 1916. But when the United States entered the war it adopted the Allied position, and its navy joined in enforcing exactly the same regulations. International law was in fact changed. In the Second World War the very words "contraband" and "freedom of the seas" were never heard.

The Germans countered with an attempt to blockade England. A few isolated German cruisers were able for some time to destroy British shipping in the several oceans of the world. But the Germans relied mainly on the submarine, against which the British naval power at first seemed helpless. The submarine was an unrefined weapon; a submarine commander could not always tell what kind of ship he was attacking, nor could he remove passengers, confiscate cargo, escort the vessel, or indeed do much except sink it. Citing British abuses of international law in justification, the German government in February 1915 declared the waters surrounding the British Isles to be a war zone, in which Allied vessels would be torpedoed and neutral vessels would be in grave danger.

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#### Submarine warfare

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Three months later the liner *Lusitania* was torpedoed off the Irish coast. About 1,200 persons were drowned, of whom 118 were American citizens. The *Lusitania* was a British ship; it carried munitions of war manufactured in the United States for Allied use; and the Germans had published ominous warnings in the New York papers that Americans should not take passage on it. Americans then believed that they should be able to sail safely, on peaceable errands, on the ship of a belligerent power in wartime. The loss of life shocked the country. President Wilson informed the Germans that another such act would be considered "deliberately unfriendly." The Germans, to avoid trouble, refrained for two years from making full use of their submarines. For two years the Allied use of the sea was only partly impeded.

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#### The Lusitania

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Allied access to the sea was confirmed by the one great naval engagement of the war, the battle of Jutland. The German admirals became restless at seeing their newly built navy skulking behind minefields on the German shores, yet they could not presume to challenge the superior British Grand Fleet, posted watchfully at Scapa Flow. They hoped, however, to decoy smaller formations of British ships, destroy them one by one, and perhaps eventually obtain enough of a naval balance in the North Sea to loosen the British blockade, by which Germany was slowly being strangled. They were themselves, however, trapped into a major engagement in which the British Grand Fleet of 151 ships took them by surprise. After a few hours of furious combat the Germans were able to withdraw into mined waters. They had lost less tonnage and fewer men than the British. They had proved themselves to be dangerously proficient in naval combat. But they had failed to undermine the British preponderance at sea.

### *Diplomatic Maneuvers and Secret Agreements*

With no military solution in sight, both sides looked about for new allies. The Ottoman Empire, fearing Russia, had joined Germany and Austria-Hungary as early as October 1914. Bulgaria, being anti-Serb, had done the same in 1915.

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*Italy joins  
the Allies*

The leading new prospect was Italy, which, though formally a member of the Triple Alliance, had long ago drifted away from it. Both sides solicited the Italian government, which bargained imperturbably with both.

The Italian public was divided. Both Catholic and socialist leaders recommended staying at peace, but extreme nationalists saw a chance to obtain their *irredenta*, the border regions in which Italians lived but which had not been incorporated at the time of national unification. The Italian government cast its lot with the Allies in the secret treaty of London of 1915. It was agreed that if the Allies won the war Italy would receive (from Austria) the Trentino, the south Tyrol, Istria and the city of Trieste, and some of the Dalmatian Islands. If Britain and France took over Germany's African colonies, Italy should receive territorial increases in Libya and Somaliland. The treaty of London, in short, carried on the most brazen prewar practices of territorial expansionism. It must be remembered that the Allies were desperate. Italy, thus bought, and probably against the will of most Italians, opened up a front against Austria-Hungary in May 1915.

The Allies likewise made plans for a final partition of the Ottoman Empire, which still reached from Constantinople through the Middle East into Arabia and into Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). By a secret treaty they agreed that, upon an Allied victory, Mesopotamia was to go to Britain, Syria and southeastern Asia Minor to France, small portions to Italy, and Kurdistan and Armenia to Russia.

Each side tampered with minorities and discontented groups living within the domains of the other. The Germans promised an independent Poland, to embarrass Russia. They stirred up local nationalism in the Ukraine. They raised up a pro-German Flemish movement in Belgium. They persuaded the Ottoman sultan, as caliph, to proclaim a holy war in North Africa, hoping that irate Muslims would drive the British from Egypt and the French from Algeria. This had no success. German agents worked in Ireland and one Irish nationalist, Sir Roger Casement, landed in Ireland from a German submarine, precipitating the Easter Rebellion of 1916, which was suppressed by the British.

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*The Zimmermann telegram*

To Americans the most amazing of similar activities was the Zimmermann telegram. In 1916 an American military force had crossed the Mexican border in pursuit of bandits, against protests by the Mexican government. Relations between the United States and Germany were also deteriorating. In January 1917 the German state secretary for foreign affairs, Arthur Zimmermann, dispatched a telegram to the German minister at Mexico City, telling him what to say to the Mexican president. He was to say that if the United States went to war with Germany, Germany would form an alliance with Mexico and if possible Japan, enabling Mexico to get back its "lost territories." These latter referred to the region conquered by the United States from Mexico in the 1840s—Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona (California was not mentioned by Zimmermann, who was no doubt somewhat vague on the exact history and location of these Alsace-Lorraines of America). Zimmermann's telegram was intercepted and decoded by the British, and passed on to them to Washington. Printed in the newspapers, it shocked public opinion in the United States.

The Allies were more successful in appealing to nationalist discontent, for the obvious reason that the most active national minorities were within the lands of their enemies. They were able to promise restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France without difficulty. They promised independence to the Poles, though anticipating some difficulty as long as the Russian monarchy stood. It was easier for them to favor national independence for Czechs, Slovaks, and South Slavs, since an Allied victory would dissolve the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Within the Ottoman Empire the British aroused Arab hopes for independence. The British Colonel T. E. Lawrence led an insurrection in the Hejaz against the Turks; and the emir Hussein of Hejaz, with British support, in 1916 took the title of king of the Arabs, with a kingdom reaching from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf.

Zionists saw in the impending Ottoman collapse the opportunity to realize their dream for a Jewish state in Palestine. Since Palestine was peopled by Arabs (and had been for over 1,000 years) the Zionist program conflicted with British plans to sponsor Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, in the Balfour note of 1917, the British government promised support for the idea of a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine. For the Armenians these years were especially disastrous. They were a Christian people living in the eastern part of the Anatolian peninsula where it abuts on Russia, and like other peoples in the Ottoman Empire, including the Turks themselves, they had developed aspirations for a national state of their own, which conflicted with the plans of Turkish reformers to Turkify the empire. It was only 20 years since such clashes had produced the Armenian massacres of 1894 which had horrified Europe. Now in 1915 the Turkish government, as the Russian army threatened its eastern frontier, ordered the deportation of Armenians from the war zone as potential sympathizers with Russia and the Western Allies. Supposedly they were to be resettled in Syria and Palestine. In fact, in the atmosphere of military crisis, political hatred, bureaucratic contempt, and wartime scarcities hundreds of thousands of Armenians perished in what many in later years defined as a genocidal massacre. Virtually no Armenians remained within what became the Turkish republic a few years later. The surviving Armenians became another of the world's scattered peoples with no state of their own except for a small Armenian republic, briefly independent after 1918, then part of the Soviet Union for 70 years, and finally independent again after 1991.

Meanwhile during the war the British and French easily moved into the German colonies in Africa. The British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, revealed to Colonel House, President Wilson's personal emissary, that the Allies did not intend that Germany should ever get its colonies back.

In China, too, the third important area of imperialist competition, the war accelerated the tendencies of preceding years. The Japanese saw their own opportunity in the self-slaughter of the Europeans. Japan had also been allied to Britain since 1902. In August 1914 Japan declared war on Germany. It soon overran the German concessions in China and the German islands in the Pacific, the Marshalls and Carolines. In January 1915 Japan presented its Twenty-One Demands on China, a secret ultimatum for further concessions, most of which the Chinese were obliged to accept. Japan thereby proceeded to turn Manchuria and north China into an exclusive protectorate.

As for the Germans, their war aims were even more expansionist and more menacing to existing boundaries in Europe itself. Early in September 1914, when a quick victory seemed within their grasp, Bethmann-Hollweg, who remained chancellor until the summer of 1917, drew up a list of German war aims which stayed unaltered until the end of hostilities. The plans called for an enlarged German Empire dominating all central Europe and annexations or satellites in both western and eastern Europe. In the east, Lithuania and other parts of the Baltic coast were to become German dependencies, large sections of Poland were to be directly annexed, and the remainder was to be joined with Austrian Galicia to form a German-dominated Polish state. In the west, Belgium was to become a German dependency to provide more direct

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*Disruption in the Ottoman Empire*

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*Japan in China*

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*German expansionism*

access to the Atlantic, and French Lorraine with its rich iron ore was to be added to the already German parts of Alsace-Lorraine. Colonial adjustments, including the acquisition of most of central Africa from coast to coast, were also projected. The political map of Europe and of colonial Africa would thus be transformed.

All these developments, especially the Allied negotiations, whether accomplished facts or secret agreements, affecting Europe, Asia, or Africa, became very troublesome later at the peace conference. They continued some of the most unsettling tendencies of European politics before the war. It does not appear that the Allies, until driven by Woodrow Wilson, gave any thought to means of controlling anarchic nationalism or of preventing war in the future. As president of the United States, Wilson for a long time could see little to choose between the warring alliances, though his personal sympathies were with England and France. In 1916 he attempted to mediate, entering into confidential discussions with both sides; but both still hoped to win on their own terms, so

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*A "peace without victory"*

that negotiation was fruitless. Wilson judged that most Americans wished to remain uninvolved, and in November 1916 he was reelected to a second term, on the popular cry, "he kept us out of war." Wilson urged a true neutrality of thought and feeling, or a settlement, as he said, that should be a "peace without victory."

As of the end of 1916, it is hard to see how the First World War would have turned out, had not two new sets of forces been brought in.



## 87. THE COLLAPSE OF RUSSIA AND THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNITED STATES

### *The Withdrawal of Russia: Revolution and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk*

The first victim of the First World War, among governments, was the Russian empire. As the Russo-Japanese War had led to the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, so the more ruinous conflict in Europe led to the far greater Revolution of 1917. The story of the Russian Revolution is told in the following chapter. It is enough to say here that war offered a test that the tsarist government could not meet. Bungling, dishonest, and secretive, incapable of supplying the materiel required for modern fighting, driving hordes of peasants into battle in some cases even without rifles, losing men by the millions yet offering no goal to inspire sacrifice, the tsarist regime lost the loyalty of all elements of its people.

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*The Provisional Government*

In March 1917 the troops in St. Petersburg mutinied, while strikes and riots desolated the city. The Duma, or Russian parliament, used the occasion to press its demands for reform. On March 15 Nicholas II abdicated. A Provisional Government took over, made up of liberal noblemen and middle-class leaders, generally democrats and constitutionalists, with at first only one socialist. The Provisional Government remained in office from March to November 1917. Its members, who shared in the liberalism of western Europe, believed that a liberal and parliamentary regime could not succeed in Russia unless the German Empire were defeated. They took steps, therefore, to prosecute the war with a new vigor. In July 1917 an offensive was opened in Galicia, but the demoralized Russian armies again collapsed.

The mass of the Russian people were wearied of a war in which they were asked to suffer so much for so little. Nor did Russian peasants or workers feel any enthusiasm for

the westernized intellectuals and professional men who headed the Provisional Government. Ordinary Russians, so far as they had any politics, were drawn to one or another of numerous forms of socialism, Marxist and non-Marxist. The Russian Marxist party, the Social Democrats, was divided between Menshevik and Bolshevik factions, the latter being the more extreme. The Bolshevik leaders had for some time lived as exiles in western Europe. Their principal spokesman, V. I. Lenin, with a few others, had spent the war years in Switzerland. In April 1917 the German government offered safe passage to Lenin through Germany to Russia. A railway car full of Bolsheviks, carefully "sealed" to prevent infection of Germany, was thus hauled by a German train to the frontier, whence it passed on to St. Petersburg, or Petrograd, as the city was renamed during the war. The aim of the Germans in this affair, as in the sending of Roger Casement to Ireland in a submarine, was of course to use a kind of psychological warfare against the enemy's home front. It was to promote rebellion against the Provisional Government and thus at last to eliminate Russia.

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*The Bolsheviks  
return from exile*

The position of the Provisional Government became rapidly more untenable, from many causes, until by November 1917 the situation was so confused that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were able to seize power. The Bolsheviks stood for peace with Germany, partly to win popular favor in Russia and partly because they regarded the war impartially, as a struggle between capitalist and imperialist powers which should be left to exhaust and destroy each other for the benefit of socialism. On December 3, 1917, a peace conference opened between the Bolsheviks and the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. Meanwhile the peoples within the western border of the old Russia—Poles, Ukrainians, Bessarabians, Estonians, Latvians, Finns—with German backing, proclaimed their national independence. The Bolsheviks, since they would not or could not fight, were obliged to sign with Germany a treaty to which they vehemently objected, the treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 3, 1918. By this treaty they acknowledged the "independence," or at least the loss to Russia, of Poland, the Ukraine, Finland, and the Baltic provinces.

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*The treaty  
of Brest-Litovsk*

For the Germans the treaty of Brest-Litovsk represented their maximum success during the First World War; it accomplished some of the war aims formulated at the beginning of hostilities. Not only had they neutralized Russia, but they also now dominated eastern Europe through puppets placed at the head of the new independent states. They relieved the effects of the naval blockade by drawing considerable quantities of foodstuffs from the Ukraine, though less than they expected. A certain number of German troops remained in the East to preserve the new arrangements. But it was no longer a two-front war. Masses of the German army were shifted from east to west. The High Command, under Hindenburg and Ludendorff since August 1916, prepared to concentrate for a last blow in France to end the war in 1918.

The year 1918 was essentially a race to see whether American aid could reach Europe soon enough, in sufficient amount, to offset the added strength which Germany drew from the collapse of Russia. In March of that year the Germans, beginning with gas attacks and a bombardment by 6,000 artillery pieces, opened a formidable offensive before which the French and British both recoiled. On May 30, 1918, the Germans again stood at the Marne, 37 miles from Paris. At this time there were only two American divisions in action, though the United States had been at war for over a year. At this point in the story there are therefore two open questions: how the United States entered the war, and the length of time required for the buildup of its forces overseas.

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*American  
intervention*

## The United States and the War

### *America divided*

We have seen how President Wilson clung persistently to neutrality. The American people were divided. Many had been born in Europe or were the children of immigrants. Those of Irish origin were anti-British; those of German origin were often sympathetic to Germany. On the other hand, since the time of the Spanish-American and Boer wars, a noticeable current of friendliness to the English had been running, more than ever before in American history. The sale of war materiel to the Allies, and the purchase of the bonds of Allied governments, had given certain limited though influential circles a material interest in an Allied victory. The idealism of the country was on the side of England and France, so far as it was not isolationist. An Allied victory would clearly advance the cause of democracy, freedom, and progress far more than a victory of the German Empire. On the other hand, England and France were suspected of somewhat impure motives, and they were allied with the Russian autocracy, the reactionary and brutal tsardom.

The fall of tsarism made a great impression. Democrats and progressives now came forward even in Russia. No one had ever heard of Lenin or foresaw the Bolshevik Revolution. It seemed in the spring of 1917 that Russia was struggling along the path that England, France, and America had already taken. An ideological barrier had dropped away, and the demand for American intervention to safeguard democracy became more insistent.

The Germans gave up the attempt to keep the United States out. Constricted ever more tightly by the blockade, and failing to get a decision on land, the German government and High Command listened more readily to the submarine experts, who declared that if given a free hand they could force British surrender in six months. It was the chief example in the First World War of the claim that one branch of the service could win the war alone. Civilian and diplomatic members of the government objected, fearing the consequences of war with the United States. They were overruled; it was a good example of the way in which,

### *Unrestricted submarine warfare*

United States entered a European war and the time when it could take part with its own army about a year must intervene. Meanwhile, the planners said, in six months they could force Britain to accept defeat.

### *"To make the world safe for democracy"*

On January 31, 1917, the Germans notified Wilson of the resumption of unrestricted submarine attacks. They announced that they would sink on sight all merchant vessels found in a zone around the British Isles or in the Mediterranean. Wilson broke off diplomatic relations and ordered the arming of American freighters. Meanwhile, the publication of the Zimmermann telegram convinced many Americans of German aggressiveness. German secret agents also had been at work in America, fomenting strikes and causing explosions in factories engaged in the manufacture of munitions for the Allies. In February and March several American ships were sunk. Americans regarded all these activities as an interference with their rights as neutrals. Wilson at last concluded that Germany was a menace. Having made his decision, Wilson saw a clear-cut issue between right and wrong, and he obtained a rousing declaration of war from Congress, on April 6, 1917. The United States went to war "to make the world safe for democracy."

At first the German campaign realized and even exceeded the predictions of its sponsors. In February 1917 the Germans sank 540,000 tons of shipping, in March 578,000 tons, in April, as the days grew longer, 874,000 tons. Something akin to terror, with difficulty concealed from the public, seized on the government in London. Britain was reduced to a mere six-week reserve of food. Gradually countermeasures were developed—mine barges, hydrophones, depth charges, airplane reconnaissance, and most of all the convoy. It was found that a hundred or more freighters together, though all had to steam at the pace of the slowest, could be protected by a sufficient concentration of warships to keep submarines away. The United States navy, which, unlike the army, was of considerable size and ready for combat, supplied enough additional force to the Allies to make convoying and other antisubmarine measures highly effective. By the end of 1917 the submarine was no more than a nuisance. For the Germans the great plan produced the anticipated penalty without the reward—its net result was only to add America to their enemies.

On the western front in 1917, while the Americans desperately got themselves ready for the war they had entered, the French and British continued to hold the line. The French, finding in General Nivelle a commander who still believed in the breakthrough, launched an offensive so unsuccessful and so bloody that mutiny spread through the French army. Pétain then replaced Nivelle and restored discipline to the exhausted and disillusioned soldiers, but he had no thought of further attack. "I am waiting for the Americans and the tanks," he said. The British then assumed the main burden. For three months late in 1917 they fought the dismal battle of Passchendaele. They advanced five miles, near Ypres, at a cost of 400,000 men. At the very end of 1917 the British surprised the Germans with a raid by 380 tanks, which penetrated deep into the German lines, but were obliged to withdraw, since no reserve of fresh infantry was at hand to exploit their success.

Meanwhile the Austro-Hungarians, strongly reinforced by German troops, overwhelmed the Italians at the disastrous battle of Caporetto. The Central Powers streamed into northern Italy, but the Italians, with British and French reinforcements, were able to hold the line. The net effect of the campaigns of 1917, and of the repulse of the submarine at the same time, was to reemphasize the stalemate in Europe, incline the weary Allies to await the Americans, and give the Americans what they most needed—time.

The Americans made good use of the time given them. Conscription, democratically entitled selective service, was adopted immediately after the declaration of war. The United States army, whose professionals in 1916 numbered only 130,000, performed the mammoth feat of turning over 3.5 million civilians into soldiers. With the navy, the United States came to have over 4 million in its armed services (which may be compared with over 12 million in the Second World War). Aid flowed to the Allies. To the loans already made through private bankers were added some \$10 billion lent by the American government itself. The Allies used the money mainly to buy food and munitions in the United States. American farms and factories, which had already prospered by selling to the Allies during the period of neutrality, now broke all records for production. Civilian industry was converted to war uses; radiator factories turned out guns, and piano factories manufactured airplane wings. Every possible means was employed to build up ocean shipping, without which neither American supplies nor American armies could reach the theater of war. Available shipping was increased from 1 million to 10 million tons.

Civilian consumption was drastically cut. Eight thousand tons of steel were saved in the manufacture of women's corsets and 75,000 tons of tin were spared in the making of

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*The French  
and British hold  
the line*

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*America mobi-  
lizes for war*

children's toy wagons. Every week people observed meatless Tuesday, and sugar was rationed. Daylight-saving time, invented in Europe during the war, was introduced to save coal. By such means the United States made enormous stocks available for its Allies as well as itself, though for some items, notably airplanes and artillery ammunition, the American armies, when they reached France, drew heavily on British and French manufacturers.

### *The Final Phase of the War*

The Germans, as we have seen, victorious in the east, opened a great final offensive in the west in the spring of 1918, hoping to force a decision before American participation turned the balance forever. To oppose it, a unity of command was achieved for the first time when a French general, Ferdinand Foch, was made commander in chief of all Allied forces in France, with the national commanders subordinate to him, including Pershing for the Americans. In June the Germans first made contact with American troops in significant force, meeting the Second Division at Château-Thierry. The German position was so favorable that civilians in the German government thought it opportune to make a last effort at a compromise peace. The military, headed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, successfully blocked any such attempts; they preferred to gamble on one final throw. The German armies reached their farthest advance on July 15 along the Marne.

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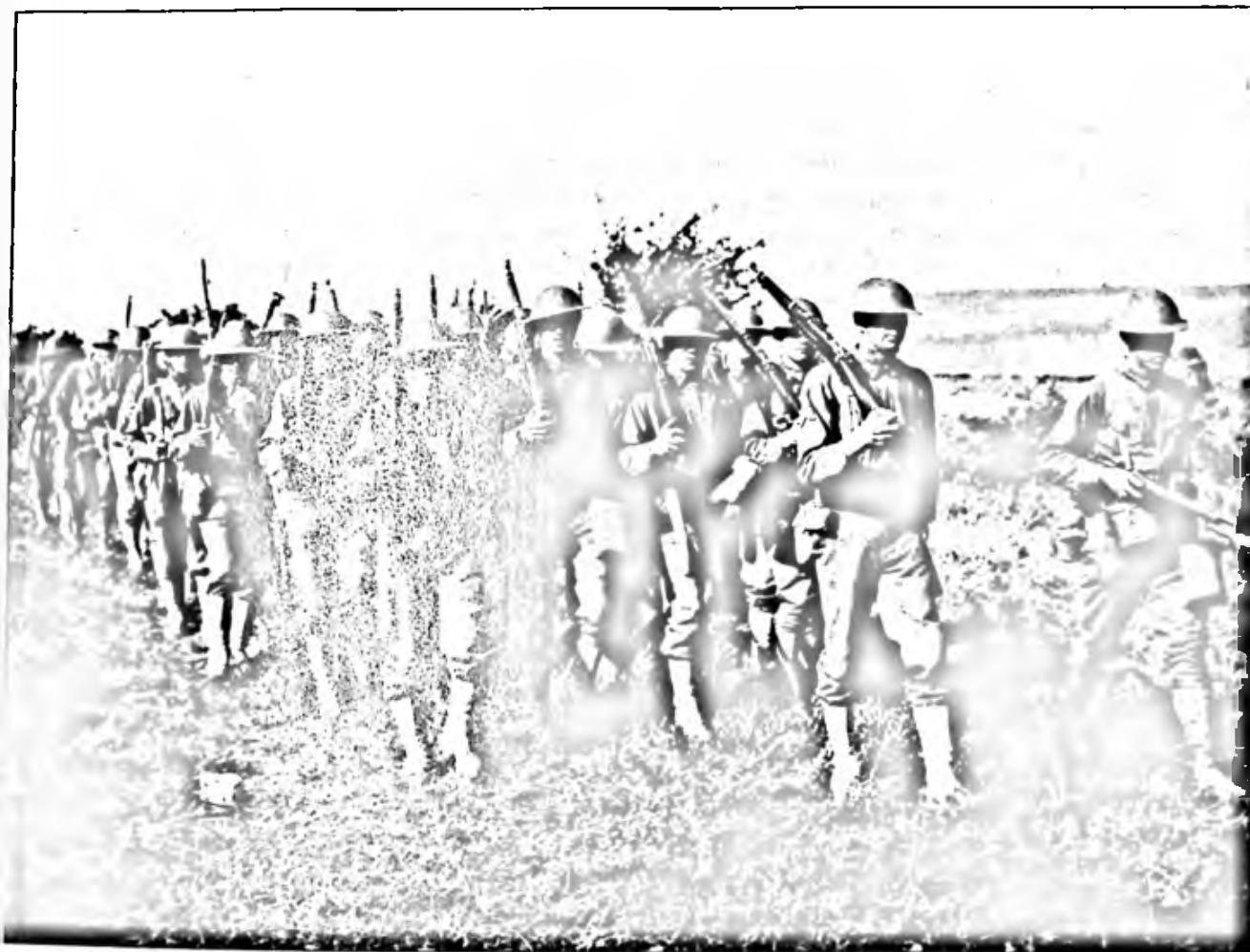
#### *The armistice*

There were now nine American divisions in the Allied line. Foch used them to spearhead his counterattack on July 18. The badly overstrained Germans began to falter. Over 250,000 American troops were now landing in France every month. The final Allied offensive which opened in September, with American troops in the Argonne occupying an eastern sector, proved more than the Germans could withstand. The German High Command notified its government that it could not win the war. The German foreign office made peace overtures to President Wilson. An armistice was arranged, and on November 11, 1918, firing ceased on the western front.

Since Germany's allies had surrendered during the preceding weeks, the war, or at least the shooting war in western Europe, was now over. The horror it brought to individual lives cannot be told by statistics, which dryly report that almost 10 million men had been killed and 20 million had been wounded. Each of the European Great Powers (except Italy) lost from 1 million to 2 million in killed alone. The United States, with some 330,000 casualties of all types (of whom 115,000 died) lost in the entire war fewer men than the main combatants had lost in such a single battle as Verdun or Passchendaele.<sup>1</sup> American assistance was decisive in the defeat of Germany. But it came so late, when the others had been struggling for so long, that the mere beginnings of it were enough to turn the scale. On the date of the armistice there were 2 million American soldiers in France, and another 1 million were on the way. But the American army had really been in combat only four months. During the whole year 1918, out of every hundred artillery shells that were fired by the three armies, the French fired 51, the British fired 43, and the Americans fired only 6.

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<sup>1</sup>Of the 115,000 American deaths only 50,000 represented men killed in battle, the remainder representing mainly deaths by disease. The great influenza epidemic of 1918, which brought death to over 20 million people, civilians and military alike, in all parts of the world, probably accounted for 25,000 deaths in the American army.



These American soldiers were part of the divisions that began to arrive in France during 1917, but the American military presence did not become significant until the following year. The steady arrival of fresh troops from the United States enabled the Allied commanders to launch a decisive final offensive and forced the German high command to recognize that Germany could not win the war.

(Hulton Getty)



## 88. THE COLLAPSE OF THE AUSTRIAN AND GERMAN EMPIRES

The war proved fatal to the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, as to the Russian. The subject Habsburg nationalities, or the "national councils" representing them in the Western capitals, obtained recognition from the Allies, and in October 1918 declared their independence. The last Austrian emperor, Charles I, abdicated on November 12, and on the next day Austria was proclaimed a republic, as was Hungary in the following week. Before any peace conference could convene, the new states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, an enlarged Romania, a republican Hungary, and a miniature republican Austria were in existence by their own action.

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*Habsburg  
"national  
councils"*

The German Empire stood solid until the closing weeks. Liberals, democrats, and socialists had lately begun to press for peace and democratization. Yet it was the High Command itself that precipitated the debacle. In the last years of the war dictatorial powers had become concentrated in the hands of General Ludendorff, and in September 1918 only he and his closest military associates realized that the German cause was hopeless. On September 29, at supreme headquarters at Spa in Belgium, Ludendorff informed the Kaiser that Germany must ask for peace. He urged that a new government be formed in Berlin, reflecting the majority in the Reichstag, on democratic parliamentary principles.

In calling for immediate peace negotiations, he seems to have had two ideas in mind. First, he might win time to regroup his armies and prepare a new offensive. Or if collapse became unavoidable, then the civilian or democratic elements in Germany would be the ones to sue for peace.

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### *Democracy in Germany*

The liberal Prince Max of Baden was found to head a cabinet in which even socialists were included. In October various reforms were enacted, the Bismarckian system was ended, and Germany became a liberal constitutional monarchy. For Ludendorff the changes were not fast enough. What was happening was essentially simple. The German military caste, at the moment of Germany's crisis, was more eager to save the army than to save the empire. The army must never admit surrender; that was an affair for small men in business suits. Emperor, High Command, officers, and aristocrats were unloading frantically upon civilians.

President Wilson unwittingly played into their hands. Speaking now as the chief of the Allied coalition, the one to whom peace overtures were first made, he insisted that the German government must become more democratic. It may be recalled how Bismarck, after defeating France in 1871, demanded a general election in France before making peace. Wilson, unlike Bismarck, really believed in democracy; but in a practical way his position was the same. He wanted to be sure that he was dealing with the German people itself, not with a discredited elite. He wanted it to be the real Germany that applied for and accepted the Allied terms. In Germany, as realization of the military disaster spread, many people began to regard the Kaiser as an obstacle to peace. Or they felt that Germany would obtain better terms if it appeared before the Allies as a republic. Even the officer corps, to halt the fighting before the army disintegrated, began to talk of abdication. Sailors mutinied at Kiel on November 3, and councils of workers and soldiers were formed in various cities. The socialists threatened to withdraw from the newly formed cabinet (that is, go into opposition and end the representative nature of the new government) unless William II abdicated. A general strike, led by minority socialists and syndicalists, began on November 9. "Abdication," Prince Max told the emperor, "is a dreadful thing, but a government without the socialists would be a worse danger for the country." William II abdicated on November 9, and slipped across the frontier into Holland, where despite cries to try him as a "war criminal" he lived quietly until his death in 1941. Germany was proclaimed a republic on the day he abdicated. Two days later the war stopped.

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### *The Weimar Republic*

The fall of the empire in Germany, with the consequent adoption of the republic, did not arise from any basic discontent, deep revolutionary action, or change of sentiment in the German people. It was an episode of the war.

The republic (soon called the Weimar Republic) arose because the victorious enemy demanded it, because the German people craved peace, because they wished to avoid forcible revolution, and because the old German military class, to save its face and its future strength, wished at least temporarily to be excused. When the war ended, the German army was still in France, its discipline and organization still apparently unimpaired.

No hostile shot had been fired on German soil. It was said later, by some, that the army had not been defeated, that it had been "stabbed in the back" by a dissolving civilian home front. This was untrue; it was the panic-stricken Ludendorff who first cried for "democracy." But the circumstances in which the German republic originated made its later history, and hence all later history, very troubled.

## 89. THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE WAR

### *Effects on Capitalism: Government-Regulated Economies*

European society was forced by the First World War into many basic changes that were to prove more lasting than the war itself. First of all, the war profoundly affected capitalism as previously known. Essential to the older capitalism (or economic liberalism, or free private enterprise) had been the idea that government should leave business alone, or at the most regulate certain general conditions under which businesses went about their affairs. Before 1914 governments had increasingly entered the economic field. They had put up tariffs, protected national industries, sought for markets or raw materials by imperialist expansion, or passed protective social legislation to benefit the wage-earning classes. During the war all belligerent governments controlled the economic system far more minutely. Indeed, the idea of the "planned economy" was first applied in the First World War. For the first time (with such rare and archaic precedents as France's revolutionary dictatorship of 1793) the state attempted to direct all the wealth, resources, and moral purpose of society to a single end.

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*The "planned economy"*

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Since no one had expected a long war, no one had made any plans for industrial mobilization. Everything had to be improvised. By 1916 each government had set up a system of boards, bureaus, councils, and commissions to coordinate its war effort. The aim was to see that all labor was effectively utilized and that all natural resources within the country, and all that could possibly be imported, were employed where they would do the most good. In the stress of war free competition was found to be wasteful and undirected private enterprise was found to be too uncertain and too slow. The profit motive came into disrepute. Those who exploited shortages to make big profits were stigmatized as profiteers. Production for civilian use, or for mere luxury purposes, was cut to a minimum. Businesses were not allowed to set up or close down factories as they chose. It was impossible to start a new business without government approval, because the flotation of stocks and bonds was controlled and raw materials were made available only as the government wished. It was equally impossible to shut down a business engaged in war production; if a factory was inefficient or unprofitable the government kept it going anyway, making up the losses, so that in some cases management came to expect government support. Here too the tests of competition and profitability were abandoned.

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The new goal was coordination or "rationalization" of production in the interests of the country as a whole. Labor was discouraged from protesting against hours or wage rates, and the big unions generally agreed to refrain from strikes. For the upper and middle classes it became embarrassing to show their comforts too openly. It was patriotic to eat meagerly and to wear old clothes. War gave a new impetus even to the idea of economic equality, if only to enlist rich and poor alike in a common cause.

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*The "rationalization" of production*

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*The allocation of manpower*

Military conscription was the first step in the allocation of manpower. Draft boards told some men to report to the army, granting exemptions to others to work safely in war industries. Given the casualty rates at the front, state determination over individual life could hardly go farther. With the insatiable need for troops, drawing in men originally exempted or at first rejected as physically inadequate, great numbers of women poured into factories and offices, and in Britain even into newly organized women's branches of the armed forces. Women took over many jobs which it had been thought only men could do. Women did not remain in the labor force after the war in such large numbers, most making way for the returning veterans, but the wartime experience in this and the Second World War was part of the process by which the labor force in all countries was enlarged, women's place in modern society was revolutionized, and the lives and outlook of millions of individual women were turned more actively toward participation in national economies. The First World War thus contributed to the redefinition or reorganization of women's work—a social process that had begun in the early Industrial Revolution and that would be intensified during the Second World War and in the years that followed.

During the war governments did not directly force men or women to drop one job and take another. There was no systematic labor conscription except in Germany. But by influencing wage scales, granting draft exemptions, forcing some industries to expand and others to contract or stand still, and propagandizing the idea that work in an arms factory was patriotic, the state shifted vast numbers of workers to war production. Impressed or "slave" labor was not used in the First World War, nor were prisoners of war obliged to give labor service, though there were some abuses of these rules of international law by the Germans, who were possibly the least scrupulous and certainly the most hard-pressed.

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*Export controls*

Governments controlled all foreign trade. It was intolerable to let private citizens ship off the country's resources at their own whim. It was equally intolerable to let them use up foreign exchange by importing unneeded goods or to drive up prices of necessities by competing with one another. Foreign trade became a state monopoly, in which private firms operated under strict licenses and quotas. The greatest of the exporting countries was the United States, whose annual exports rose from \$2 billion to \$6 billion between 1914 and 1918. The endless demand for American farm and factory products naturally drove up prices, which, however, were fixed by law in 1917, for the most important items.

As for the European Allies, which even before the war had exported less than they imported and were now exporting as little as possible, they could make purchases in the United States only by enormous loans from the American government. British and French citizens, under pressure from their own governments, sold off their American stocks and bonds, which were bought up by Americans. The former owners received pounds sterling or francs from their own governments, which in return took and spent the dollars paid by the new American owners. In this way the United States ceased to be a debtor country (owing some \$4 billion to Europeans in 1914), and became the world's leading creditor country. By 1919 Europeans were in debt to the United States by about \$10 billion.

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The Allies controlled the sea, but they never had enough shipping to meet rising demands, especially with German submarines taking a steady though fluctuating toll. Each government set up a shipping board to expand shipbuilding at any cost and to assign available shipping space to whatever purposes—troop movements, rubber imports, foodstuffs—the government considered most urgent in view of overall plans. Control and allocation eventually be-

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*Shipping and imports*

came international under the Interallied Shipping Council, of which the United States was a member after entering the war. In England and France, where all manufactures depended on imports, government control of shipping and hence of imports was itself enough to give control over the whole economy.

Germany, denied access to the sea and also to Russia and western Europe, was obliged to adopt unprecedented measures of self-sufficiency. The oil of Romania and the grain of Ukraine, which became available late in the war, were poor substitutes for the world trade on which Germany had formerly depended. The Germans went with less food than other belligerents. Their government controls became more thorough and more efficient, producing what they called "war socialism." In Walter Rathenau they found a man with the necessary ideas. He was a Jewish industrialist, son of the head of the German electrical trust. One of the first to foresee a long war, he launched a program for the mobilization of raw materials. Early in the war it seemed that Germany might be soon defeated by lack of nitrogen, necessary to make explosives. Rathenau sweepingly requisitioned every conceivable natural source, including the very manure from the farmers' barnyards, until German chemists succeeded in extracting nitrogen from the air. The German chemical industry developed many other substitute products, such as synthetic rubber. German production was organized into war companies, one for each line of industry, with private business firms working under close government supervision.

The other belligerent governments also replaced competition between individual firms and factories with coordination. Consortiums of industrialists in France allocated raw

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*German "war socialism"*



**The need for workers during the First World War opened opportunities for women in jobs that were traditionally open only to men. These German women, who were working in an armaments factory in 1917, exemplified this trend in the workforce and also the general mobilization of an entire population to serve the demands of modern warfare.**

(AKG London)

materials and government orders within each industry. The War Industries Board did the same in the United States. In Britain, similar methods became so efficient that by 1918, for example, the country produced every two weeks as many shells as in the whole first year of the war and turned out 70 times as much heavy artillery.

### *Inflation, Industrial Changes, Control of Ideas*

No government, even by heavy taxes, could raise all the funds it needed except by printing paper money, selling huge bond issues, or obliging banks to grant it credit. The result, given heavy demand and acute shortages, was rapid inflation of prices. Prices and wages were regulated but were never again so low as before 1914. The hardest hit by this development were those whose money income could not easily be augmented—people living on supposedly safe investments, those drawing annual salaries, professional people, government employees. These classes had been one of the most stabilizing influences in Europe before the war. Everywhere the war threatened their status, prestige, and standard of

living. The huge national debts meant higher taxes for years to come. The debt was most serious when it was owed to a foreign country. During the war the Continental Allies borrowed from Britain, and they and the British both borrowed from the United States. They thereby mortgaged their future.

To pay the debt, they were bound for years to export more than they imported—or, roughly, to produce more than they consumed. It may be recalled that in 1914 every advanced European country habitually imported more than it exported. That fact, basic to the European standard of life, was now threatened with reversal.

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#### *Mortgaging the future*

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#### *Industry spreads*

Moreover, with Europe torn by war for four years, the rest of the world accelerated its own industrialization. The productive capacity of the United States increased immensely. The Japanese began to sell in China, in India, in South America the cotton textiles and other civilian goods which these countries for the time being could not obtain from Europe. Argentina and Brazil, unable to get locomotive parts or mining machinery from England, began to manufacture them themselves. In India the Tata family, a group of wealthy Parsees controlling \$250 million of native Indian capital, developed numerous manufacturing enterprises, one of which became the largest iron and steel works in the British Empire. With Germany entirely out of the world market, with Britain and France producing desperately for themselves, and with the world's shipping commandeered for war uses, the position of western Europe as the world's workshop was undermined. After the war Europe had new competitors. The economic foundations of the nineteenth century had slipped away. The age of European supremacy was in its twilight.

All the belligerent governments during the war attempted to control ideas as they did economic production. Freedom of thought, respected everywhere in Europe for half a century, was discarded. Propaganda and censorship became more effective than any government, however despotic, had ever been able to devise. No one was allowed to sow doubt by raising any basic questions.

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#### *Propaganda and public opinion*

It must be remembered that the facts of the prewar crises, as related above, were then largely unknown. People were trapped in a nightmare whose causes they could not comprehend. Each side wildly charged the other with having started the war from pure malevolence. The long attrition, the fruitless fighting, the unchanging battle lines, the appalling casualties were a severe ordeal to morale. Civilians, deprived of their usual liberties, working



Every nation in the First World War used propaganda posters to rally public support, recruit soldiers, and show the evil actions of the enemy. The picture on the left is an Austrian postcard with the typical image of a soldier defending the "Fatherland, Family, and Future." The child represents the nation's future. The poster on the right portrays the female symbol of the French Republic, Marianne, who is calling on the French to buy war bonds "for the flag and for victory." This money will support the soldiers who stand behind Marianne and defend the French nation.

(AKG London and Corbis)

harder, eating dull food, seeing no victory, had to be kept emotionally at a high pitch. Placards, posters, diplomatic white papers, schoolbooks, public lectures, solemn editorials, and slanted news reports conveyed the message. The new universal literacy, the mass press, the new motion pictures, proved to be ideal media for the direction of popular thinking. Intellectuals and professors advanced complicated reasons, usually historical, for loathing and crushing the enemy. In Allied countries the Kaiser was portrayed as a demon, with glaring eyes and abnormally bristling mustaches, bent on the mad project of conquest of the world. In Germany people were taught to dread the day when Cossacks and Senegalese should rape German women and to hate England as the inveterate enemy which inhumanly starved little children with its blockade. Each side convinced itself that all right was on its side and all wrong, wickedness, and barbarity were on the other. An inflamed opinion helped to sustain men and women in such a fearsome struggle. But when it came time to make peace the rooted convictions, fixed ideas, profound aversions, hates, and fears became an obstacle to political judgment.

### Cultural Pessimism

We have seen how many European intellectuals in the decades before 1914 began to question the theories of classical liberalism and to celebrate the social value of human struggle and violence. Such ideas, widely disseminated by popular writers and intellectuals, contributed to the public enthusiasm that accompanied each nation's entry into the Great War. Indeed, some of the best-known younger writers, including Charles Péguy in France and Rupert Brooke in England, went off to die in the early battles, leaving literary testaments about the spiritual nobility of sacrifices for the nation.

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#### War poets

But as the war dragged on through more than four murderous years, much of the early literary patriotism turned into cynicism, pessimism, and despair. By 1918, famous war poets such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen were condemning the horrors of a senseless war and mocking the propaganda that flowed from every national government. Irony and bitterness became pervasive themes in the creative works of post–World War I European culture.

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#### Freud and Spengler

The war's most widespread cultural consequence thus emerged in new forms of cultural pessimism. The psychological studies of Sigmund Freud, for example, increasingly emphasized the raw power of human aggression—what Freud began to call the death instinct—which could never be completely tamed in even the most advanced modern societies. His famous postwar book, *Civilization and its Discontents*, offered pessimistic descriptions of the endless struggle between humanity's deep irrational drives and civilized moral standards, a

**Wilfred Owen, pictured here in his army uniform, was one of the English war poets who described the horrors of the First World War. He was killed in France, one week before the armistice in November 1918.**

(Imperial War Museum, Q79045)



struggle in which the instincts of both individuals and whole social groups seemed constantly to overwhelm the precarious defenses of civilization. A different kind of pessimism appeared in the influential work of Oswald Spengler, the German philosopher-historian whose book *The Decline of the West* (1918) became a best-selling account of how Western civilization had fallen into crisis and decay. Drawing on cyclical theories of life and death, Spengler traced the history of the West from its energetic youth (the Renaissance) to a creative middle passage (the eighteenth century) to a declining old age (the twentieth century). Spengler's historical theories, so alien to the nineteenth-century liberal confidence in Western progress and expansion, attracted attention far beyond Germany because they offered explanations for events that seemed otherwise to be simply chaotic and absurd.

This sense of a crisis in Western culture spread also through new literary and artistic movements, most notably, perhaps, in the nonsensical productions of Dadaism. The Dada movement, developing in Switzerland after 1915 and promoted by the poet Tristan Tzara, rejected the structures of traditional literature and generated nihilistic criticisms of Western rationality, aesthetic ideals, and social conventions. After a brief moment of postwar popularity in Paris, Dadaism vanished from the scene, but its fascination with irrational impulses, "spontaneous" writing, and strange dreams passed into the more enduring ideas of Surrealism. Meanwhile, even the most sober-minded European authors believed that the war had exposed a sickness in the heart of European civilization. The great German writer Thomas Mann, for example, set his postwar novel *The Magic Mountain* within a Swiss sanatorium, where everyone is ill and where tubercular characters from all parts of Europe debate the flawed traditions of Western civilization. And the Irish poet W. B. Yeats, also seeing that something in Europe had gone terribly wrong, summarized the anxiety of a whole generation in his famous poem "The Second Coming" (1919):

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the World,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The Ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

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Tzara, Mann,  
Yeats

## 90. THE PEACE OF PARIS, 1919

The late ally, Russia, was in the hands of the Bolsheviks by 1919, ostracized like a leper colony, and taking no part in international relations. The late German and Austro-Hungarian empires were already defunct, and more or less revolutionary regimes struggled to replace them. New republics already existed along the Baltic coast, in Poland, and in the Danube basin but without effective governments or acknowledged frontiers. Europe east of France and Italy was in a state approaching chaos, with revolution on the Russian style threatening. Western Europe was wrenched out of all resemblance to its former self. The Allied blockade of Germany continued. In these circumstances the victors assembled in Paris, in the bleak winter of 1919, to reconstruct the world. During 1919 they signed five treaties, all named after Paris suburbs—St.-Germain with Austria, Trianon with Hungary, Neuilly with Bulgaria, Sèvres with Turkey (1920), and most especially, with Germany the Treaty of Versailles.

The world looked with awe and expectation to one man—the president of the United States. Wilson occupied a lone eminence, enjoyed a universal

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Woodrow Wilson

prestige. Victors, vanquished, and neutrals admitted that American intervention had decided the conflict. Everywhere people who had been long tried, confused, bereaved, were stirred by Wilson's thrilling language in favor of a higher cause, of a great concert of right in which peace would be forever secure and the world itself would be at last free. Wilson reached Europe in January 1919, visiting several Allied capitals. He was wildly acclaimed, and almost mobbed, greeted as the man who would lead civilization out of its wasteland.

### *The Fourteen Points and the Treaty of Versailles*

Wilson's views were well known. He had stated them in January 1918 in his Fourteen Points—principles upon which, after victory, peace was to be established. The Fourteen Points demanded an end to secret treaties and secret diplomacy (or in Wilsonian language, "open covenants openly arrived at"); freedom of the seas "alike in peace and in war"; removal of barriers and inequalities in international trade; reduction of armaments by all powers; colonial readjustments; evacuation of occupied territory; self-determination of nationalities and a redrawing of European boundaries along national lines; and, last but not least, an international political organization to prevent war. On the whole, Wilson stood for the fruition of the democratic, liberal, progressive, and nationalistic movements of the century past, for the ideals of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the revolutions of 1848. As Wilson saw it, and as many believed, the World War should end in a new type of treaty. There was thought to be something sinister about peace conferences of the past, for example, the Congress of

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#### A new era

Vienna of 1815. The old diplomacy was blamed for leading to war. Lenin in his own way and for his own purposes was saying this in Russia too. It was felt that treaties had too long been wrongly based on a politics of power or on unprincipled deals and bargains made without regard to the people concerned. Democracy having defeated the Central Powers, people hoped that a new settlement, made in a democratic age, might be reached by general agreement in an atmosphere of mutual confidence. There was a real sense of a new era.

Wilson had had some difficulty, however, in persuading the Allied governments to accept his Fourteen Points. The French demanded a guarantee of German payment for war damages. The British vetoed the freedom of the seas "in peace and war"; it was naval rivalry that had estranged them from Germany, and they had fought the war to preserve British command of the sea. But with these two reservations the Allies expressed their willingness to follow Wilson's lead. The Germans who asked for the armistice believed that peace would be made along the lines of the Fourteen Points with only the two modifications described. In addition, the socialists and democrats now trying to rule Germany thought that having overthrown the Kaiser and the war lords, they would be treated by the victors with moderation and that a new democratic Germany would reemerge to take its rightful place in the world.

Twenty-seven nations assembled at Paris in January 1919, but the full or plenary sessions were unimportant. Matters were decided by conferences among the Big Four—Wilson himself, Lloyd George for England, Clemenceau for France, Orlando for Italy. The conjunction of personalities was not a happy one. Wilson was stern and stubbornly righteous; Lloyd George, a fiery and changeable Welshman; Clemenceau, an aged patriot, the "tiger of France," who had been politically active since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870; Orlando, a passing phenomenon of Italian politics. None of them was especially equipped for the task in hand. Clemenceau was a pronounced nationalist, Lloyd George had always

been concerned with domestic reforms, Orlando was by training a professor like Wilson, and Wilson, a former college president, imbued with a sense of mission, lacked concrete knowledge or intimate feeling for peoples other than his own. However, they democratically represented the governments and peoples of their respective countries, and thus spoke with an authority denied to professional diplomats of the old school.

Wilson first fought a hard battle for a League of Nations, a permanent international body in which all nations, without sacrificing their sovereignty, should meet together to discuss and settle disputes, each promising not to resort to war. Few European statesmen had any confidence in such a League. But they yielded to Wilson, and the covenant of the League of Nations was written into the treaty with Germany. In return, Wilson had to make concessions to Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Orlando, and the Japanese. He was thus obliged to compromise the idealism of the Fourteen Points. Probably compromise and bargaining would have been necessary anyway, for such general principles as national self-determination and colonial readjustment invariably led to differences of opinion in concrete cases. Wilson allowed himself to believe that, if a League of Nations were established and operating, faults in the treaty could later be corrected at leisure by international discussion.

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*A League  
of Nations*

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A special kind of disagreement arose over the covenant of the League. Wilson wished to include a clause endorsing religious freedom. The Japanese insisted that it be broadened to condemn racial discrimination as well. The Americans and British were opposed for fear that an international authority might interfere with their immigration practices. In the end both proposals were abandoned.

The great demand of the French at the peace conference was for security against Germany. On this subject the French were almost rabid. The war in the West had been fought almost entirely on their soil. To trim Germany down more nearly to French size, they proposed that the part of Germany west of the Rhine be set up as an independent state under Allied auspices. Wilson and Lloyd George objected, sagely observing that the resulting German resentment would only lead to another war. The French yielded, but only on condition that they obtain their security in another way, namely, by a promise from both Britain and the United States to join them immediately if they were again attacked by the Germans. An Anglo-French-American guarantee treaty, with these provisions, was in fact signed at Paris. France obtained control over the Saar coal mines for 15 years; during that time, a League commission would administer the Saar territory and in 1935 a plebiscite would be held. Lorraine and Alsace were returned to France. German fortifications and troops were banned from a wide belt in the Rhineland. Allied troops would occupy the Rhineland for 15 years to ensure German compliance with the treaty.

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*Alsace and  
Lorraine*

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In eastern Europe the Allies wished to set up strong buffer states against Bolshevism in Russia. Sympathies with Poland ran high. Those parts of the former German Empire that were inhabited by Poles, or by mixed populations of Poles and Germans—Posen and West Prussia—were assigned to the new Polish state. This gave Poland a corridor to the sea, but at the same time cut off the bulk of Germany from East Prussia. Danzig, an old German town, became a free city, belonging to no country. Upper Silesia, a rich mining country, went to Poland after a disputed plebiscite. In Austria and among the Sudeten Germans of Bohemia, now that there was no longer a Habsburg empire (whose existence had blocked an all-German union in 1848 and also a few years later in the time of Bismarck), a feeling developed for annexation to the new German republic. But the feeling was unorganized, and in any case the Allies naturally refused to make Germany bigger

than it had been in 1914. Austria remained a dwarf republic; and Vienna, a former imperial capital cut off from its empire—a head severed from its body and scarcely more capable of sustaining life. The Bohemian Germans became disgruntled citizens of the new state of Czechoslovakia.

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*Germany loses its colonies*

Germany lost all its colonies. Wilson and the South African General Smuts, to preserve the principle of internationalism against any imputation of raw conquest, saw to it that the colonies were actually awarded to the League of Nations. The League, under "mandates," assigned them to various powers for administration. In this way France and Great Britain divided the best of the African colonies; the Belgian Congo was slightly enlarged; and the Union of South Africa took over German Southwest Africa. In the colonial world, Italy got nothing. Japan received the mandate for the German Pacific islands, north of the equator; Australia, for German New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; New Zealand, for German Samoa. The Japanese claimed rights over the German concessions in China. The Chinese at the Paris conference tried to get all special concessions and extraterritorial rights in China abolished. No one listened to such proposals. By a compromise, Japan received about half the former German rights. The Japanese were dissatisfied. The Chinese walked out of the conference.

The Allies took over the German fleet, but the German crews, rather than surrender it, solemnly scuttled it at Scapa Flow. The German army was limited to 100,000. Since the Allies forbade conscription, or the annual training of successive groups of young civilians, the army became exclusively professional, the officer class retained political influence in it, and the means used by the Allies to demilitarize Germany served if anything the contrary purpose. The treaty forbade Germany to have any heavy artillery, aviation, or submarines. Wilson saw his plan for universal disarmament applied to Germany alone.

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*War damages*

The French, even before the armistice, had stipulated that Germany must pay for war damages. The other Allies made the same demand. Wilson, at the conference, was stupefied at the size of the bills presented. The Belgians suggested, for their own share, a sum larger than the entire wealth of all Belgium according to officially published Belgian statistics. The French and British proposed to charge Germany with the entire expenses, including war pensions, incurred by them during the war. Wilson observed that "total" reparation, while not strictly unjust, was absolutely impossible, and even Clemenceau noted that "to ask for over a trillion francs would lead to nothing practical." The insistence on enormous reparations was in fact largely emotional. No one knew or considered how Germany would pay, though all dimly realized that such sums could only be made up by German exports, which would then compete with the Allies' own economic interests. The Germans, to avoid worse, even offered to repair physical damages in Belgium and France, but were brusquely refused on the ground that the Belgians and French would thereby lose jobs and business. No total at all was set for reparations in the treaty; it was made clear that the sum would be very large, but it was left for a future commission to determine. The Allies, maddened by the war and themselves loaded with fantastic debts to the United States, had no desire in the matter of reparations to listen to economic reason and regarded the reparations as simply another means of righting a wrong and of putting off the dangers of a German revival. As a first payment on the reparations account the treaty required Germany to surrender most of its merchant marine, make coal deliveries, and give up all property owned by German private citizens abroad. This last proviso ended Germany's prewar career as an exporter of capital.



These four men represented the leading Allied powers at the Versailles peace conference in 1918: (from left to right) Vittorio Emanuele Orlando of Italy, David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Georges Clemenceau of France, and Woodrow Wilson of the United States. Neither the Germans nor the Russians were represented at Versailles. The decisions of the peace conference, including a “war guilt” clause that blamed Germany for the recent war, produced deep resentments among the excluded peoples.

(Corbis)

It was with the specific purpose of justifying the reparations that the famous “war guilt” clause was written into the treaty. By this clause Germany explicitly “accepted the responsibility” for all loss and damage resulting from the war “imposed upon them (the Allies) by the aggression of Germany and her allies.” The Germans themselves felt no such responsibility as

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*The “war guilt” clause*

they were now obliged formally to accept. They considered their honor as a people to be impugned. The war guilt clause gave a ready opening to agitators in Germany and made even moderate Germans regard the treaty as something to be escaped from as a matter of self-respect.

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*The Treaty of Versailles*

The Treaty of Versailles was completed in three months. The absence of the Russians, the decision not to give the Germans a hearing, and the willingness of Wilson to make concessions in return for obtaining the

League of Nations, made it possible to dispose of intricate matters with considerable facility. The Germans, when presented with the completed document in May 1919, refused to sign. The Allies threatened a renewal of hostilities. A government crisis ensued in Berlin. No German wished to damn himself, his party, or his principles, in German eyes, by putting his name to a document which all Germans regarded as outrageous. A combination drawn from the Social Democratic and Catholic parties finally consented to shoulder the hateful burden. Two abashed and virtually unknown representatives appeared at the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles and signed the treaty for Germany in the presence of a large concourse of Allied dignitaries.

The other treaties drafted by the Paris conference, in conjunction with the Versailles treaty, laid out a new map for eastern Europe and registered the recession of the Russian, Austrian, and Turkish empires. Seven new independent states now existed: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Romania was enlarged by adding areas formerly Hungarian and Russian; Greece was enlarged at the expense of Turkey. Austria and Hungary were now small states, and there was no connection between them. The Ottoman Empire presently disappeared: Turkey emerged as a republic confined to Constantinople and Asia Minor; Syria and Lebanon went to France as mandates of the League of Nations; Palestine and Iraq went to Great Britain on the same basis. The belt of states from Finland to Romania was regarded as a *cordon sanitaire* (a quarantine zone) to prevent the infection of Europe by communism. The creation of Yugoslavia (or the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as it was called until 1929), although dominated by the Serbs and under the Serbian monarchy, seemed to fulfill the aims of the South Slav movement which had set off the fatal crisis of 1914. The fact, however, that Italy received Trieste and some of the Dalmatian Islands (in keeping with the secret treaty of 1915) left the more ambitious South Slavs discontented.

### *Significance of the Paris Peace Settlement*

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*National self-determination*

The most general principle of the Paris settlement was to recognize the right of national self-determination, at least in Europe. Each people or nation, as defined by language, was in principle set up with its own sovereign and independent national state. Czechoslovakia, a special case, had two national components, as its originally hyphenated name Czecho-Slovakia made clear. Nationalism triumphed in the belief that it went along naturally with liberalism and democracy. It must be added that the peacemakers at Paris had little choice in this matter, for the new states had already declared their independence. Since in eastern Europe the nationalities were in many places intermixed, and since the peacemakers did not contemplate the actual movement and exchange of populations to sort them out, each new state found alien minorities living within its borders or could claim that people of its own kind still lived in neighboring states under foreign rule. There were Hungarians and Germans in Czechoslovakia, Ruthenians in Poland, Poles in Lithuania, Bulgarians in

Romania—to cite only a few examples. Hence minority problems and irredentism troubled eastern Europe, as they had before 1914. Eventually it was the complaint of Germans in Czechoslovakia that they were an oppressed minority, together with the irredentist demand of Germany to join these outlying Germans to the fatherland, that produced the Munich crisis preceding the Second World War.

The Treaty of Versailles was designed to put an end to the German menace. It was not a successful treaty. The wisdom of it has been discussed without end, but a few comments can safely be made. For practical purposes, with respect to Germany, the treaty was either too severe or too lenient. It was too severe to conciliate and not severe enough to destroy. Possibly the victors should have dealt more moderately with the new German republic, which professed their own ideals, as the monarchical victors over Napoleon, in 1814, had dealt moderately with the France of the restored Bourbons, regarding it as a regime akin to their own. As it was, the Allies imposed upon the German Republic about the same terms that they might have imposed upon the German Empire. They innocently played the game of Ludendorff and the German reactionaries; it was the Social Democrats and liberals who bore the "shame" of Versailles. The Germans from the beginning showed no real intention to live up to the treaty. On the other hand, the treaty was not sufficiently disabling to Germany to destroy its economic and political strength. Even the degree of severity that it incorporated soon proved to be more than the Allies were willing to enforce.

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*The failure  
of Versailles*

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The treaty makers at Paris in 1919, working hastily and still in the heat of war, under pressure from press and propaganda in their own countries, drafted a set of terms which the test of time showed that they themselves did not in the long run wish to impose. As the years passed, many people in Allied countries declared various provisions of the Versailles treaty to be unfair or unworkable. The loss of faith by the Allies in their own treaty only made easier the task of those German agitators who demanded its repudiation. The door was opened for Adolf Hitler.

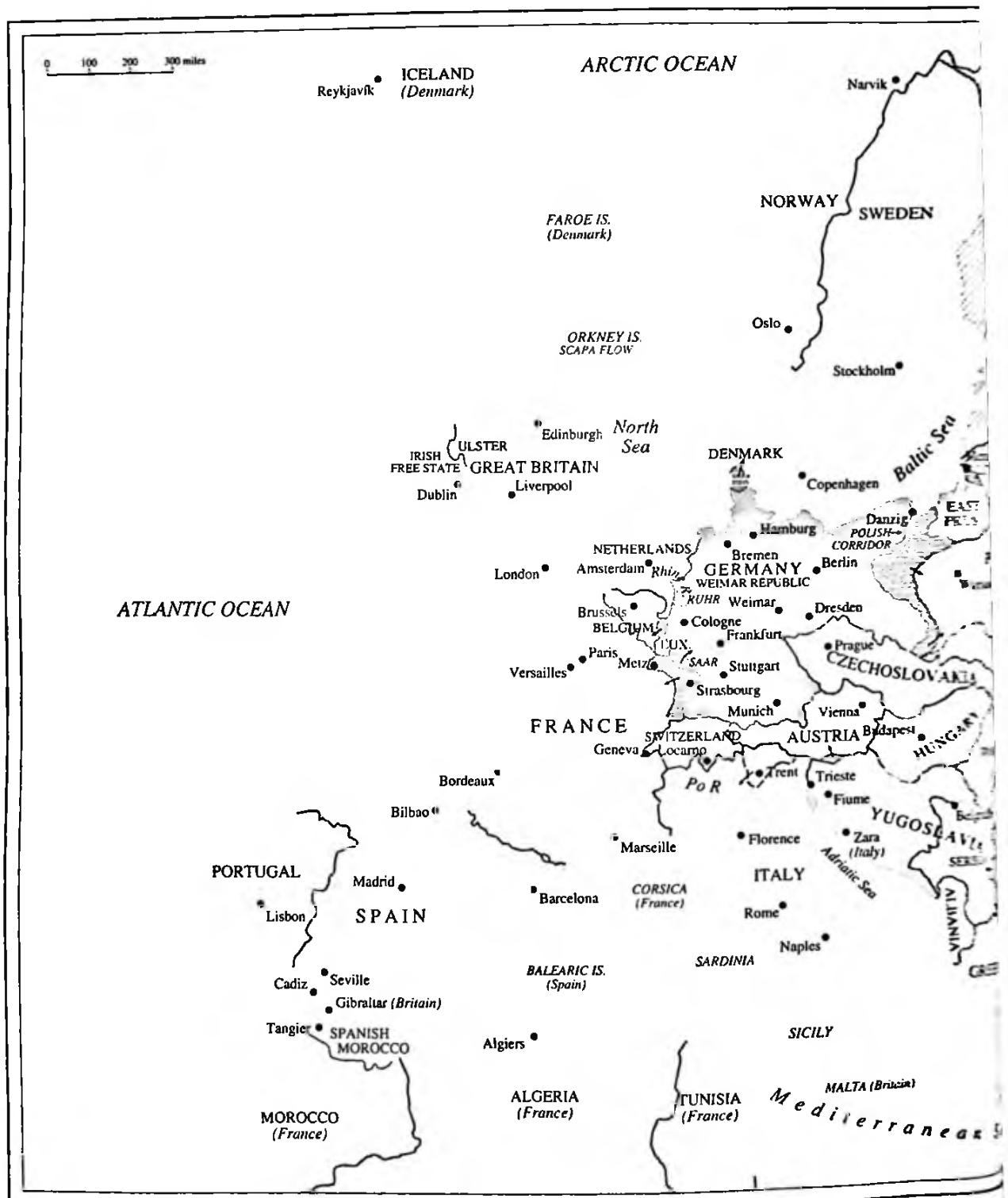
Even at the beginning the Allies showed doubts. Lloyd George, in the last weeks before the signing, tardily called for certain amendments, though in vain; for in 1919 British opinion shifted somewhat from fear of Germany to the fear of Bolshevism, and already the idea of using Germany as a bulwark against communism was expressed. The Italians disliked the whole settlement from the beginning; they observed that the spoils of Africa and the Middle East went only to France and Great Britain. The Chinese were also dissatisfied. The Russians, when they reentered the international arena some years later, found a situation that they did not like and had had no part in making. They objected to being faced with a *cordon sanitaire* from Finland to Romania and soon remembered that most of this territory had once belonged to the Russian empire.

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*Victors'  
uneasiness*

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The United States never ratified the Treaty of Versailles at all. A wave of isolationism and disgust with Europe spread over the country; and this feeling, together with some rational criticism of the terms and a good deal of party politics, caused the Senate to repudiate Wilson's work. The Senate likewise refused to make any advance promises of military intervention in a future war between Germany and France and hence also declined to ratify the Anglo-French-American guarantee treaty on which Wilson had persuaded Clemenceau to rely. The French considered themselves duped, deprived both of the Rhineland and of the Anglo-American guarantee. They raised more anguished cries over their insecurity. This led them to try to hold Germany down while it was still weak, in turn raising many further complications.





### EUROPE, 1923

The map shows European boundaries between the two World Wars, after the Peace of Versailles and certain other agreements. Germany returned Alsace-Lorraine to France and lost the region around Danzig (the "Polish corridor") to Poland. In place of the Austro-Hungarian empire we find the "succession states"—Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Poland regained its independence, and Finland and the three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, emerged from the tsarist empire. Most of Ireland became a "free state" in the British Commonwealth of Nations, only Ulster remaining in the United Kingdom. These boundaries lasted until 1938, when Germany annexed Austria and the Sudeten part of Czechoslovakia.

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*The League  
of Nations*

The League of Nations was established at Geneva. Its mere existence marked a great step beyond the international anarchy before 1914. Wilson's vision did not die. But the United States never joined; Germany was not admitted until 1926, or Russia until 1934. The League could handle and dispatch only such business as the Great Powers were willing to allow. It was associated with a West European ascendancy that no longer corresponded to the facts of the world situation. Its covenant was part of the Versailles treaty, and many people in many countries, on both sides in the late war, saw in it not so much a system for international adjudication as a means for maintaining a new status quo in favor of Britain and France.

The First World War dealt a last blow to the ancient institutions of monarchy and aristocratic feudalism. Thrones toppled in Turkey, in Russia, in Austria-Hungary, in the German Empire and the individual German states; and with the kings went the courtly retainers and all the social preeminence and special advantage of the old landed aristocracies. The war was indeed a victory for democracy, though a bitter one. It carried further a process as old as the French and American revolutions. But for the basic problems of modern civilization, industrialism and nationalism, economic security and international stability, it gave no answer. And it left the major European nations much weaker than before to face the rising economic power of America; the revolutionary government of the newly established Soviet Union; and the emerging anticolonial movements of Africa and Asia.

**Vignette****Stranger than Fiction**

Good storytellers are averse to using coincidences as a plot device. They seem a lazy way to advance a narrative that is bogged down, and audiences are almost always offended at being treated so shabbily. Historians do not share this aversion. So here is a story that would make both storytellers and their audiences wince:

World War I was a seminal event in the history of the modern Middle East, and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the spark that set it off. The reasons for the assassination are complex and explaining them would require a vignette in itself. Anyway, on 28 June 1914, the archduke and his wife paid a visit to Sarajevo to inspect army maneuvers being held outside the city. After a brief inspection, the archduke was scheduled to give a speech at the Sarajevo town hall. Little did he or his security detail realize that six assassins were stationed at regular intervals along the archduke's route waiting for his motorcade to pass. When it did, the first assassin did nothing. Reports were that he lost his nerve. The second assassin was more proactive. He threw a bomb directly at the archduke, but as luck would have it the bomb had a timing device and, apparently, time was not yet ripe for it to explode. Besides, his aim was not particularly good. The bomb hit the side of the archduke's car, bounced off, and exploded as the car behind passed. A number of spectators died and others were injured, as were some of the occupants in the car. The motorcade sped away. The route's third assassin, realizing there was no point to his sticking around, abandoned his post to get a sandwich at a local sandwich shop.

After the speech, the archduke decided he would pay a visit to the injured who had been taken to a hospital. No one told the driver of the vehicle leading the motorcade about the change in plans, however. He thus began to take the scheduled route. One of his passengers realized the mistake and told the driver that the motorcade had to back up in order to get on to the right street. He stopped his car to shift gears. The second car, carrying the archduke, also stopped—a few feet in front of the sandwich shop and the surprised assassin who had just left it. Whether their eyes met, whether the archduke recognized for a fleeting moment what was about to come, is not known. The assassin reached into his pocket, pulled out a pistol, and shot the archduke and his poor wife dead.

How history might have changed had the assassin craved a drink instead of a sandwich.

**PART III**

# World War I and the Middle East State System

**O**n 28 June 1914, the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was shot by a Serbian nationalist while visiting the city of Sarajevo. With the backing of its ally, Germany, Austria presented an ultimatum to Serbia. The Austrians demanded that the Serbs rein in nationalist and anti-Austrian movements in their territory. Then, even after the Serbian government agreed to the ultimatum, the Austrians declared war.

While Germany was allied with Austria, Russia was allied with Serbia. The Russians feared that they would be at a disadvantage if war broke out and Germany had completed its military preparations before them. The Russian tsar thus ordered a general mobilization. Germany also mobilized and, to avoid fighting both Russia and France at the same time, decided to launch a knockout blow against France by striking at France through Belgium. Because Britain was committed by treaty to Belgian independence, it declared war on Germany. World War I had started.

When we think of World War I, we generally think of trench warfare on the Western Front in France. It is important to understand, however, that World War I was truly a world war. As a matter of fact, although the British and French referred to the war as the "Great War" until World War II, the Germans coined the phrase "world war" early on to describe the conflict. German strategists understood that the war was being waged among rival empires with worldwide interests. These empires depended on their colonial possessions to maintain their strategic position and economic well-being. Colonies were also indispensable for the French and British military effort because both powers depended on them for manpower to replenish the depleted ranks of their armies. As a result, much of the globe was dragged into a war which had begun in Europe.

It has been estimated that the per capita losses in the Ottoman Empire and Persia were among the highest of all nations affected by the war. While Germany and France lost, respectively, about 9 and 11 percent of their populations during the war, estimates for Ottoman losses run as high as almost 25 percent—approximately five million out of a population of twenty-one million. These

casualties occurred both on and off the battlefield. As a matter of fact, four out of every five Ottoman citizens who died were noncombatants. Included among these were one to 1.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire who died as a result of starvation and ethnic cleansing. Whilst many Armenians believe the Ottoman government planned genocide at the highest levels, Turkish governments still claim that the tremendous losses suffered by the Ottoman Armenian community were an unfortunate accident of war. Although Persia was officially neutral in World War I, estimates put its per capita wartime losses in the same range as those incurred by the Ottoman Empire.

Many of the casualties suffered by the Ottoman Empire and Persia succumbed to famine. In Mount Lebanon, for example, famine killed upward of half the population. This tragedy still plays a central role in the Lebanese national narrative, which claims that the (Muslim) Ottoman government intentionally created the famine by requisitioning agricultural products and tools from the largely Christian population. While requisitioning certainly aggravated the problem, it was in fact the French and British blockade of eastern Mediterranean ports that had created it. In Persia, tribal insurrections, the collapse of the political order, and the destruction of infrastructure so devastated agricultural production that it did not reach pre-war levels again until 1925.

World War I thus had immediate, tragic consequences for the populations of the region. But the war had other consequences as well. World War I was the single most important *political* event in the history of the modern Middle East. This is not to say that the war changed everything. The great nineteenth-century transformation did more to revolutionize the social and economic relations of the inhabitants of the Middle East than did World War I. So did events during another period of immense change—the period stretching from the 1930s to the 1970s. Nevertheless, World War I did bring about a new political order in the region, one that has lasted to this very day. Four aspects of this new political order are particularly significant.

First, World War I brought about the creation of the current state system in the region. At the beginning of the war, the Ottoman Empire ruled, in law if not in deed, Anatolia, the Levant, Mesopotamia, Egypt, parts of the Arabian peninsula, and a small sliver of North Africa. By the early 1920s, Turkey was an independent republic, the Asiatic Arab provinces of the empire had been divided into what would become separate states, Egypt had evolved from an Ottoman territory to a quasi-independent state, and much of the Arabian peninsula had been united under the control of the dynasty of ibn Sa‘ud.

The ideological glue that bound together these states—and in some cases challenged them—was nationalism. After the war a variety of nationalist movements emerged in the territories previously controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Some of these movements were successful, others not. Nationalism itself was not new to the region. As the nineteenth-century Ottoman state extended its reach into the lives of its citizenry, many in the empire came to view themselves as part of expanded political communities, bound together by shared experiences and distinguishing traits. This is, after all, what nationalism is all about. But at the end of the war Ottoman nationalism—*osmanlılık*—was no longer an option. With the end of the Ottoman Empire, there no longer remained a political framework that could unite Arabs and Turks, the two largest ethno-linguistic groups housed within its boundaries. Nor was there a commonly accepted political framework to unite Arabs with one another. As a result, varieties of nationalism—Turkish nationalism, Arab nationalism, Syrian nationalism, Egyptian nationalism, and so on—spread throughout the region. Each nationalism claimed the exclusive right to command the loyalty and obedience of the citizens its proponents sought to govern.

One other nationalist movement achieved success as a result of the war: Zionism. Zionism might be broadly defined as Jewish nationalism. Zionists believe that Jews have the same right to self-determination as other peoples. More often than not, they have placed the site of that self-determination in Palestine. Although Zionism was a product of the nineteenth century, World War I brought the international Zionist movement its first real diplomatic success. In November 1917, the Zionist movement achieved recognition by a world power, Great Britain. This recognition accorded Zionism enough prestige and drawing power to ensure that it would not follow in the footsteps of hundreds of other nationalist movements that had appeared briefly, then faded into obscurity. During the period between the two world wars, Jewish immigration to Palestine soared. This led to the first large-scale intercommunal violence between Jewish settlers and the indigenous inhabitants of the region. Thus, World War I not only marks a milestone on the road to the establishment of the State of Israel, it marks the point at which the Israel-Palestine conflict became all but certain.

Finally, World War I brought about a political transformation in Persia. In the aftermath of wartime famine and political chaos, a military leader, Reza Khan, took control of Persia and established a political dynasty (if two rulers can be said to constitute a dynasty) that lasted until 1979. Reza Khan, who later adopted the title Reza Shah, and his son, Muhammad Reza Shah, centralized and strengthened the power of the state to an extent never previously accomplished in Persia. Their authoritarian but developmentalist strategy continues to influence economic, social, and political life in Iran to the present day.

## CHAPTER 11

# State-Building by Decree

The states that emerged in the Middle East in the wake of World War I were created in two ways. In the Levant and Mesopotamia, the site of present-day Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq, France and Britain constructed states. Guided by their own interests and preconceptions, the great powers partitioned what had once been the Ottoman Empire and created states where states had never before existed. The wishes of the inhabitants of those territories counted for little when it came to deciding their political future.

In contrast, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt emerged as independent states as a result of anti-imperialist struggle (Turkey), *coup d'état* (Iran), revolution (Egypt), and conquest (Saudi Arabia). In each of these cases, the national myth recounting the deeds of a heroic leader or founding generation created a firmer foundation for nation-building than that enjoyed by the states created in the Levant and Mesopotamia.

To understand the origins of the states that emerged in the Levant and Mesopotamia, it is necessary to return to World War I. World War I drew the final curtain on the century of relative peace that had begun in Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. In addition to marking the end of the nineteenth-century European order, World War I marks a turning point in the relations between Europe and the Middle East.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, European powers acting in concert had taken responsibility for resolving the various crises brought on by the Eastern Question. True, European nations nibbled at the edges of the Ottoman Empire. The French picked away at North Africa, the British were ensconced in Egypt, and the Italians invaded the territory that is contemporary Libya in 1911. Nevertheless, the concert of Europe provided a protective umbrella sheltering the Ottoman Empire from total dismantlement.

There is no telling what the future of the Ottoman Empire might have been had the concert of Europe remained in place. However, the unification of Germany in 1871 disrupted the European balance of power and crippled the ability of

### Vignette

#### Sweaters, Sleeves, and the Crimean War

During the period between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the rise of Germany, the concert of European powers went to war only once to resolve a crisis originating in the Middle East: the Crimean War (1853–1856). The origins of the war were so murky that after its conclusion the government of one of the principal combatants, Great Britain, appointed a commission to determine what, in fact, it had been all about. In part the war began as a result of great power rivalry within the Ottoman Empire: The Orthodox Russians and the Catholic French quarreled over access to holy sites in Palestine. In part it began because of Russia's attempt to extend its patronage to all Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, even those who resided in the Ottoman Empire. When the Russians moved troops into Ottoman Moldavia and Wallachia (in present-day Romania), the Ottomans, British, French, and Piedmontese (!) launched a military campaign to drive them out. They chose the Crimean peninsula, of all places, as the site on which to challenge the Russians. After a truly abysmal showing by both sides, including the famous (and irresponsible) charge of the light brigade, the Russians backed down. In the wake of the war, the Ottomans were admitted into the concert of Europe. Henceforth, the European powers promised to act together to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

However important its diplomatic and military effects, the Crimean War also deserves notice because of its impact on men's fashions. If not for the war, there would be no raglan overcoats or sleeves, named for Fitzroy James Henry Lord Raglan, the British field marshall in charge of the Crimea campaign. Nor would there be cardigan sweaters, named for James Brudenell, the seventh earl of Cardigan, who led the infamous charge of the light brigade. And lest we forget, there is the balaklava, named for the site of the famous battle in which the light brigade charged and the "thin red line"—the 93rd Highlander Regiment—held its position against a Russian attack. Balaklavas are knit caps that drape over the wearer's face, leaving only the eyes and mouth exposed. They remain the headgear of choice for bank robbers and terrorists the world over.

European states to act together on issues of common interest. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the concert of Europe no longer existed. Instead, on the eve of World War I European states divided themselves into two alliances. Britain, France, and Russia (and, after 1917, the United States) formed the core of the entente powers. Germany, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire formed the core of the Central Powers. Other states in Europe and elsewhere also signed on to one alliance or the other.

The Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers for several reasons. Not only did Germany enjoy extensive political and economic influence in the empire, the empire was unlikely to join any alliance that included its archrival, Russia. In addition, the Austrians, anxious to control Ottoman ambitions in the Balkans, actively solicited the empire's participation in the war on their side. For their

part, the entente powers did not try very hard to attract the Ottomans to their side. Because the entente powers assumed that the war would be short, they believed that including the Ottoman Empire in their alliance would not affect its outcome. They also believed that attracting Greece and Italy into their alliance was more important (both countries laid claims to Ottoman territory) and that the Ottomans would make up their minds about which alliance to join based on the progress of the war.

As soon as it became clear that the war would not be over quickly, each of the entente powers began to maneuver to be in a position to claim the spoils it desired in the Middle East in the event of victory. Russia had its eye on two prizes. The Russian government hoped to realize its long-standing dream of acquiring a warm water port by laying claim to the Turkish Straits. What made this dream all the more compelling was the fact that almost 40 percent of Russia's exports passed through the straits. Russia also had interests in the heartland of the Ottoman Empire, particularly Ottoman Palestine. Not only were sites holy to the Orthodox Church located there, Orthodox Christians looked to Russia to protect their interests against Catholics, whose interests were backed by France. France, on the other hand, claimed to have "historic rights" in the region of the Ottoman Empire that lies in present-day Syria and Lebanon. France based this claim both on its role as protector of Lebanon's Maronite Christian population and on its economic interests in the region, such as investments in railroads and in silk production.

In contrast to the single-mindedness of the Russians and the French, the British were a bit flustered about the spoils of war they sought from the Ottomans. After all, for much of the nineteenth century Britain had been the staunchest defender of Ottoman integrity. The British government thus appointed a special committee to determine its war aims in the Middle East. The committee was made up of representatives from a variety of ministries, from the foreign office to the India and war offices. Each of these ministries had different preoccupations. As a result, the committee returned with an eclectic wish list. For the most part, this list focused on Britain's long-standing obsession with the protection of the sea routes to India and on ensuring postwar security for British investment and trade in the region.

Starting in 1915, the entente powers began negotiating secret treaties that pledged mutual support for the territorial claims made by themselves or their would-be allies. By negotiating these treaties, entente powers hoped to confirm those claims, attract to their alliance outlying states such as Italy and Greece, and, as the war went on, keep the alliance intact by promising active combatants a payoff at the close of hostilities. For example, the British assumed that continued Russian pressure on Germany was the key to entente victory in Europe. To prevent Russia from signing a separate peace with the Central Powers and withdrawing from the war, the British and French negotiated a deal with the Russians. According to what became known as the Constantinople Agreement, Britain and France recognized Russia's claims to the Turkish Straits and the city that overlooked them, Istanbul. In return for their generosity, France got recognition for its claims to Syria (a vague

geographical unit never defined in the agreement), and Britain got recognition for its claims to territory in Persia.

What makes the Constantinople Agreement important is not what it promised. Russia never got the straits nor did it remain in the war until the bitter end. France and Britain enjoyed only temporary control of the territories promised them. What makes the agreement important is that it established the principle that entente powers had a right to compensation for fighting their enemies and that at least part of that compensation should come in the form of territory carved out of the Middle East. Other secret treaties and understandings soon followed: the Treaty of London, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of Saint-Jean de Maurienne. All of them applied the principle of compensation. Sometimes the treaties and understandings stipulated that compensation should take the form of direct European control over territories belonging to the Ottoman Empire. At other times, the entente powers masked their ambitions by promising each other the right to establish or maintain protectorates or to organize zones of indirect control. In those zones, one European state would enjoy economic and political rights not granted to other states, but would not rule the zone per se. That would be the function of local power brokers who would receive the support of the European state in charge. In yet another attempt to arrive at a formula that would satisfy all entente powers, the alliance at one point committed itself to establishing an "international zone" in Jerusalem. This was done mainly to relieve Russian anxieties by making sure that no single Christian group would be in a position to deny another access to the holy sites.

Britain not only initiated or signed on to secret agreements, it also made pledges to local or nationalist groupings to assure their support or, at least, quiescence. For example, the British offered to shelter ibn Sa'ud within a "veiled (secret) protectorate" if he would only remain out of trouble. Far more important for the story of state-building in the Levant and Mesopotamia were two other pledges that most historians regard as contradictory, despite the efforts of diplomats to square the circle after the war. In 1915, the British made contact with an Arabian warlord based in Mecca, Sharif Husayn. Husayn promised to delegate his son, Amir Faysal, to launch a rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. In exchange, the British promised Husayn gold and guns and, once the war ended, the right to establish an ambiguously defined Arab "state or states" in the predominantly Arab territories of the empire. The negotiations between Sharif Husayn and the British led to the famous Arab Revolt, guided by the even more famous British colonel T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). British military strategists championed the revolt because they thought it a useful way to harass the Ottomans and compel them to overextend their forces. They also believed the revolt would shore up the right flank of a British army invading Ottoman territories from Egypt. The leaders of the revolt, taking the British at their word, viewed it as a means to achieve Arab unity and independence from the Ottoman Empire. As we shall see later, the revolt was more successful in creating the legend of heroic Arab struggle and imperialist betrayal, in spreading the fame of T. E. Lawrence, and in advancing the careers of Peter O'Toole and Alec Guinness than it was in fostering Arab unity and independence.

While the negotiations that led to the Arab Revolt were held in private, the British government pledged support to another group openly, on the pages of *The Times* of London. According to the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, the British endorsed the Zionist goal of establishing a “national home” in Palestine for Jews around the world.

Historians disagree as to exactly why the British would make such a promise. Some assert that the British did so for strategic reasons. Because the Jewish settlers in Palestine would be far outnumbered by Muslim Arabs, they would remain dependent on the British and be more than willing to help the British preserve the security of the nearby Suez Canal. Others attribute the Balfour Declaration to a British overestimation of Jewish power in the United States and Russia. Britain wanted to maintain support in the United States for the entente side. It also wanted to keep Russia, which had just experienced a revolution, in the war. Thinking that Jews had a great deal of influence over the American president, Woodrow Wilson, and within the Bolshevik movement, the British figured a little pandering might go a long way. For his part, British prime minister David Lloyd George lists at least nine reasons for the Balfour Declaration in his memoirs. The most convincing is his assertion that “it was part of our propagandist strategy for mobilizing every opinion and force throughout the world which would weaken the enemy and improve the Allied chances.” In other words, it couldn’t hurt—and might even help. As we know, the British underestimated the effects of the Balfour Declaration. Their wartime promise had consequences far beyond those they anticipated at the time.

While the secret agreements and pledges set a number of diplomatic and political precedents, they were relatively ineffective in determining the postwar settlement. There were a number of reasons why this was the case. First, the agreements were both ambiguous and mutually contradictory. Take the issue of Palestine, for example. According to the French reading of one of the secret agreements, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Syria was promised to France and Palestine was part of Syria. According to the Russian reading of the same agreement, Palestine was simply the territory surrounding Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was to be placed under international control. According to the Arab reading of the letters Sharif Husayn exchanged with the British government before the Arab Revolt, Palestine was to be part of the Arab “state or states.” And then, of course, there was the Balfour Declaration.

Changed circumstances also muddied the waters of the postwar settlement. For example, during the war Britain had launched attacks on the Ottoman Empire from India and Egypt. At the close of the war British troops occupied Iraq and parts of the Levant. This gave them leverage in postwar negotiations with other victorious powers. At the same time, the Russian Revolution brought to power a government that, in theory at least, opposed the imperialist designs of the tsarist government. The new Bolshevik government of Russia not only renounced the claims made by its predecessor, it embarrassed the other entente powers by publishing the texts of the secret agreements signed by Russia. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks were ideologically committed to atheism and thus had no desire make an issue about Orthodox access to Christian holy sites. In other words, now there

was no need to “internationalize” Jerusalem. Finally, a nationalist revolt broke out in Turkey. This prevented the Greeks, Italians, and French from dividing Anatolia as they had arranged in the secret treaties.

One last obstacle to implementing the secret agreements came from the United States. When the United States entered the war on the side of the entente powers, President Woodrow Wilson announced his intention to make his Fourteen Points the basis of a postwar peace. Included among those points were a number of relatively benign ones, such as freedom of navigation on the seas. There were, however, three items that made European diplomats wince. Wilson’s first point called for “open covenants of peace, openly arrived at,” and an end to secret diplomacy. After the war, nationalist leaders in the Middle East would claim that this point invalidated the secret agreements. Wilson’s fifth point stated that, when it came to independence of colonies, “the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight” with the colonial power. After the war, nationalist leaders in the Middle East would claim that this meant they should be consulted about their future. Finally, Wilson’s twelfth point stated that “nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured... an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.” After the war, nationalist leaders in the Middle East would read into this point their right to self-determination (a phrase, interestingly, coined by the leader of the Russian revolution, Vladimir Lenin, and only later picked up by Wilson). Increasingly frustrated British and French diplomats humored Wilson as best they could while they seethed in private. French president and foreign minister Georges Clemenceau reportedly scoffed at the Fourteen Points, remarking, “Even the good Lord contented himself with only ten commandments, and we should not try to improve on them.” Nevertheless, Wilson had let the genie out of the bottle, and delegates to the peace conference ending the war were beset by Kurds, Arabs, Zionists, Armenians, and others, all demanding their place at the table.

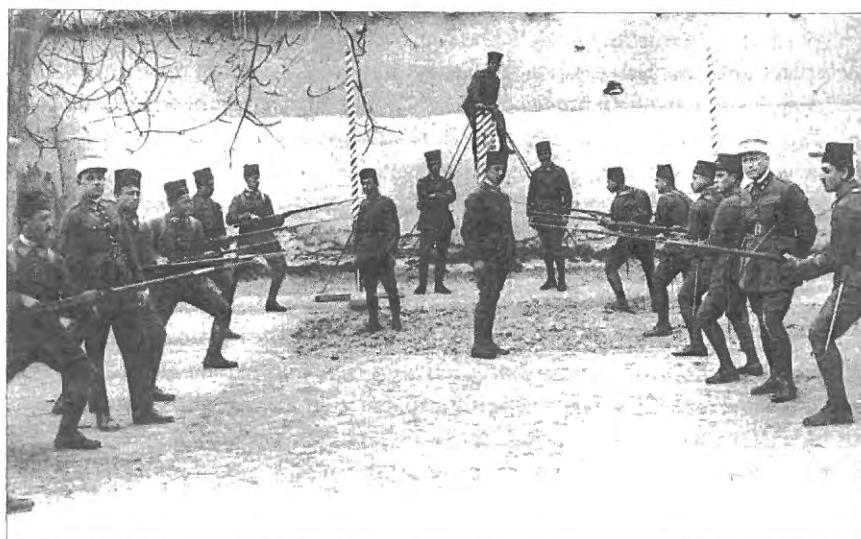
Meeting in Paris, entente peace negotiators attempted to unravel the conflicting claims of their governments and lay the foundations for the postwar world. The negotiators agreed to establish a League of Nations to provide a permanent structure in which international disputes might be resolved peacefully. Although the original call for a league can be found in Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, the United States did not join it once it had been created. Nor, initially, were Germany or the newly established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics members. This weakened the league from its inception. But while the league failed miserably in its main mission—its peacemaking activities were unfortunately interrupted by the onset of World War II—its charter did sanction French and British designs for the Levant and Mesopotamia. Article 22 of the charter dealt directly with the region, establishing the so-called mandates system there:

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the last war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the states which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle

that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of that trust should be embodied in the covenant. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience, or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility.... Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent states can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of assistance by a mandatory [power] until such time as they are able to stand alone, the wishes of the communities must be a principle consideration in the selection of the mandatory.

Accordingly, after World War I, France got the mandate for the territory that now includes Syria and Lebanon while Britain got the mandate for the territory that now includes Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Iraq. The phrase “territory that is now Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Iraq” is used here deliberately. The states known as Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Iraq had never before existed, but were created under the auspices of France and Britain.

The mandates system was a compromise solution to a problem that divided the “Big Three” powers at the conference. As the largest manufacturer in the world, the United States wanted a level playing field in trade. In other words, the United States wanted free trade (point three of Wilson’s fourteen points) and an end to the system of imperial trade preferences—a system in which colonial powers had special trade privileges with their colonies. Britain and France, on the other hand, were perfectly happy with the colonial system as it stood. The mandates system



French mandatory officials established a military academy in Damascus to train a “Syrian Legion.” (From: *The Collection of the author*.)

broke the deadlock: Mandates were to be temporary “colonies” with equal access for all in trade.

But conciliation was not for everyone. Contrary to the Charter of the League of Nations, the inhabitants of the region were never seriously consulted about their future. For example, the elected parliament of Syria that met after the war, the Syrian General Congress, declared that it wanted Syria to be independent and unified. By unity, they meant that Syria should include the territories of present-day Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Jordan. If Syria had to have a mandatory power overseeing it, a majority of the representatives declared, it should be the United States. Their second choice was Great Britain. For the representatives to the congress, France was unacceptable as a mandatory power. Nevertheless, a geographically diminished Syria went to France as a mandate.

But there was more. Although they had to report their activities to a special committee of the League of Nations, the mandatory powers had absolute administrative control over their mandates. They could sever and join the territories under their control as they wished. Thus, the French took their geographically diminished Syria and rubbed salt into the wounds of those who had put their faith in the League’s pledges. The French created what they thought would be a permanent Christian enclave on the coast by severing Lebanon from Syria. They included in Lebanon just enough territory to make it economically viable and strategically useful, but not enough to threaten Christian dominance—at least for the time being. They then divided and redivided the territory of present-day Syria into up to six ethnically and religiously distinct territorial ministates. While the French soon abandoned their ministate experiment, the local leaders they supported in each of them would remain a thorn in the side of Syrian governments for almost half a century.

Even though the British and the French could sever and join territories under their control as they wished, implementing the mandates system was not as easy as planning it. Although the two mandatory powers played the major role in the creation of states in the Middle East, there was a third actor involved as well—the Hashemite family of Sharif Husayn of Mecca. In the wake of the Arab Revolt, troops under the command of Amir Faysal had occupied Damascus. Immediately after the war, Faysal tried to assume administrative control over the surrounding region as well. The French, supported by the League of Nations, opposed Faysal’s pretensions and sent an army to Damascus to depose him. The first and last king of Syria was king no more.

The British reacted somewhat passively to the French dismissal of their client. Fearing that only France stood between them and a resurgent Germany, the British had no desire to jeopardize their relations with France over some trivial problem in the Middle East. As Lloyd George put it, “The friendship of France is worth ten Syrias.”

The French ouster of Faysal was only the beginning of a more complex story, however. Soon after the French took possession of inland Syria, another son of Sharif Husayn, Amir ‘Abdallah, began marching north from his home in Mecca

to avenge his brother's humiliation. The British now faced two problems: what to do with their wartime ally, Faysal, and what to do about 'Abdallah, who was threatening to make war on their more important wartime ally, France. The British persuaded 'Abdallah to remain in the town of Amman, which was then a small caravan stop on the route to Syria, while they called a conference to determine what to do about the worsening situation in the Middle East. At the Cairo Conference of 1921, the British came up with a solution. To divert 'Abdallah, the British divided their Palestine mandate into two parts and offered their new protégé the territory east of the Jordan River as a principality. The territory lying across the Jordan River was first called, appropriately enough, Trans-Jordan (across the Jordan, from a European vantage point). 'Abdallah made Amman his capital. Since Trans-Jordan was no longer part of the Palestine mandate, the British closed it to Zionist immigration. After independence in 1946, Trans-Jordan became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Descendants of 'Abdallah have ruled Jordan ever since, and the present king of Jordan is his great-grandson. The territory west of the Jordan River (Cis-Jordan, or "this side of the Jordan") retained the name Palestine. Although also a mandate, the British ruled Palestine like a crown colony until they withdrew in 1948. This territory comprises present-day Israel and the Palestinian territories.

While the British thus solved the problem of 'Abdallah, they still had the problem of Faysal to contend with. Once again, the British came up with an inventive solution. They granted Faysal the throne of Iraq, a realm they created by joining together the Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. The descendants of Faysal ruled Iraq until they were overthrown in 1958.

On paper, Iraq appeared to be a good idea. The northern territory of Mosul had oil, which would ensure the economic viability of the state and a ready supply of the valuable commodity for the mandatory power. Basra in the south provided the territory with an outlet to the Persian Gulf. The territory in between, irrigated by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, includes rich farmland that the British planned to use as a granary for its Indian colony. Ironically, however, the very mandates system that had created Iraq also conspired against its full political and economic development. In this, Iraq was not exceptional. The mandates system also frustrated the full political and economic development of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

In theory, the League of Nations had entrusted the territories of the Ottoman Empire to Britain and France so that the European states could prepare their charges for self-rule. Whatever the charter had said about "the sacred trust of civilization," however, Britain and France accepted the mandates so that they could retain control over those areas in which they felt they had vital interests. In their shuffling and reshuffling of their mandates' territories, the two mandatory powers rarely gave much thought to ensuring their mandates were both economically and politically viable. The invention of Jordan, for example, solved a political problem for the British but created an economic nightmare: a country with virtually no economic resources. Since its earliest days, Jordan's economic survival has

### Vignette

#### Drawing Boundaries

In the aftermath of World War I, French and British diplomats created states and the boundaries separating them where none had previously existed. Sometimes, their decisions seem to lack any rationale. If you look at a map of Jordan, for example, you will see a strange indentation in its eastern border with Saudi Arabia. There is no reasonable explanation for that indentation. No river runs through the area, no mountain range forms a natural division between the two states.

Jordan (or Trans-Jordan, as it was then called) was created at the Cairo Conference of 1921. Winston Churchill, who presided over the conference as the British colonial secretary, later bragged that at the conference he had "created Jordan with a stroke of the pen one Sunday afternoon." But why did it take the shape it did?

Churchill was a man who enjoyed a good meal, which, more often than not, meant heavy food topped off with brandy or whiskey. According to legend, Churchill began to draw the boundary dividing Jordan from Saudi Arabia after a particularly bounteous repast. Midway through drawing the boundary line, Churchill hiccuped and his pen deviated from the straightedge. Hence, according to the legend, the strange indentation in Jordan's border—and hence the reason why some Jordanians call the indentation "Churchill's hiccup" to this very day.

An apocryphal story, to be sure, but one that speaks to the artificial nature of the states created through the mandates system.

depended on the kindness of strangers. Foreign subsidies have maintained Jordan since 1921, when the British began paying 'Abdallah a yearly stipend of five thousand pounds. Foreign subsidies increased steadily for the next half century, and by 1979 they provided over 50 percent of government revenue (by 2010 the figure slid to 45 percent).

Iraq presents us with a different story. From its inception, the territory of Iraq has included populations with significant ethnic and religious differences. As we saw in Chapter 6, these differences took on new significance during the nineteenth century, when religious and ethnic affiliation became associated with political identity. It thus became a platform for asserting political claims. A majority of those living in mandated Iraq were Shi'i Arab, although the ruling elites—Faysal and his cronies—were Sunni Arab. The northern area, Mosul, was inhabited in large measure by Sunni Kurds, many of whom would have preferred self-rule. As a result, Iraq was notorious for its political instability. Beginning in 1933, when Iraqi troops massacred a Christian group in the north called Assyrians, it also became notorious for dealing with political instability through violence. British policy makers well understood the problem they had created. Although Britain's responsibility toward its mandates was, according to the Charter of the League of Nations, the "rendering of assistance...until such time as they are able to stand alone," upon discovering that the game was not worth the candle Britain abandoned its Iraqi charge. Iraq became independent

in 1932, well before other mandates better prepared to withstand “the strenuous conditions of the modern world.” With an initial boost from the Royal Air Force, Iraq remained intact and under the authority of Sunni Arab kings, then Sunni Arab presidents until 2003.

The mandates system also stacked the deck against economic development in the mandated territories. European investors were reluctant to invest in territories their governments were contractually bound to surrender. What little investment was made in the mandates was made in colonial-style infrastructure, such as transportation networks necessary to send locally produced raw materials to European factories and markets. And because the mandates were temporary and supposed to pay for themselves, neither Britain nor France was particularly keen on investing public funds.

Then there was the question of what the counterinsurgency strategy of the mandatory powers did to existing patterns of land tenure and relationships of labor. The mandatory powers were suspicious of urban notables who had enjoyed wealth and local power under the Ottomans. This is because urban notables were prone to identify with one nationalist movement or another. The mandatory powers thus sought to counterbalance them by creating a loyal base among tribal leaders and rural notables. In return for their loyalty, tribal leaders and rural notables gained access to property. This simple exchange—property for loyalty—sparked the greatest Middle Eastern land rush since the Land Code of 1858. It also resulted in the accumulation of vast agricultural estates by the new rural gentry, as well as the transformation of once independent pastoralists and farmers into tenant labor. As we shall see in Chapter 15, the extent of the holdings of this gentry, coupled with their newness, would make land reform a key issue in Arab domestic politics during the post-World War II period.

The thinly disguised colonialism that underlay the mandates system and led to the creation of modern Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq affected the legitimacy of those states as well. State-building in the Levant and Mesopotamia was initiated by victorious European powers rather than by the inhabitants of the region. No Washington or Garibaldi forged nations through wars of national liberation. No Valley Forge became a mythic symbol of nation-building. No indigenous Bismarck or Napoleon stirred patriotism through conquest. States in the Levant and Mesopotamia were plotted on maps by diplomats and received their independence in stages, usually after painstaking treaty negotiations. The correspondence between patriotic sentiments and the national boundaries of newly independent states was, at best, sporadic, and many among the Arab population of the region saw the division of the Levant and Mesopotamia into separate nations as debilitating and unnatural. Many still do. This is one of the reasons for the emergence and persistence of pan-Arabism in the region, the sentiment that stresses the unity of all Arabs and, in its political form, calls for the obliteration of national boundaries separating them. This is also one of the reasons why many in the region—even those who should have and did know better—could cast Saddam Hussein in the role of an Arab Bismarck after his invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

However much pan-Arabism might resonate with the populations of the Levant and Mesopotamia, however, it must be stressed that years of state-building have strengthened national allegiances and have transformed pan-Arabism from a blueprint for political action to a nebulous sentiment. This can be seen by tracking the fate of Arab unity schemes, particularly those involving Syria, the “beating heart of the Arab nation.” From 1946 through the 1960s, Syrian politicians seeking to exploit a popular issue proposed no less than nine schemes to unite Syria with various other countries of the region. Since the 1960s, there have been only three such proposals, and none of them recently. Throughout the region, crowds that had once demonstrated in support of Arab unification now march in support of the right of Palestinians to establish their own state, or in support of the Iraqi state’s battle against what has been widely perceived to be foreign aggression. However rickety the foundations upon which it was built, the state system established in the Levant and Mesopotamia in the wake of World War I has held for almost a century.

## CHAPTER 12



# State-Building by Revolution and Conquest

When the League of Nations established the mandates system in the Middle East, its member states had no intention of applying the system beyond the Levant and Mesopotamia. Nor did they have the capacity to do so. Outside that region, in Anatolia, Egypt, Persia (officially called Iran since the 1930s), and Saudi Arabia, indigenous nationalist movements and nation-builders established states through revolution, conquest, *coup d'état*, and anti-imperialist struggle.

The establishment of Saudi Arabia was discussed in Chapter 8. Suffice it to say that in 1924, seven months after Sharif Husayn (the father of Faysal and 'Abdallah) had himself proclaimed the caliph of all Muslims, ibn Sa'ud kicked the unfortunate monarch out of western Arabia, thus continuing the run of bad Hashemite luck. Ibn Sa'ud then united eastern and western Arabia into a single kingdom and, in 1932, officially proclaimed it the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The period between the two world wars was a particularly fortuitous one for the kingdom, for on the eve of World War II oil was discovered there, making this relative backwater of the Arab world into a player in international affairs. Until then, however, the attention of the great European powers focused elsewhere in the region.

### EGYPT

World War I had both political and economic consequences for Egypt. Although Britain had occupied Egypt since 1882, Egypt had been legally part of the Ottoman Empire until World War I. In December 1914, after the outbreak of war, Britain declared Egypt a protectorate, ending Ottoman sovereignty once and for all.

British rule in Egypt had become increasingly unpopular over the course of its history, and by the end of World War I the British had managed to alienate virtually all segments of the Egyptian population. During the war, the British had established controls over the marketing of cotton, thereby alienating the influential stratum of large landowners. Wartime inflation devastated the living standards of civil servants, the urban poor, and even the peasantry. Peasants also suffered

from famine during the war. The complaints of Egyptians found voice among an educated stratum of intellectuals and activists who, at the close of the war, found release from the constraints of wartime repression.

All that was needed to ignite the tensions between much of the Egyptian population and the British occupiers was a spark. That spark was touched off in November 1918, when a delegation of Egyptian politicians, testing the limits of the Woodrow Wilson's twelfth point ("nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured...an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development," in case you forgot), petitioned the British high commissioner in Cairo for permission to go to Paris to represent the Egyptian population at the peace conference. The leader of this group was Sa'd Zaghlul. Although born into a family of mid-level peasants, Zaghlul had married well (his wife was a daughter of an Egyptian prime minister). He procured a number of important positions in the Egyptian government, including those of minister of education, minister of justice, and vice president of the legislative assembly. During the war, Zaghlul used the last position to organize nationalist committees throughout Egypt.

When the British arrested and deported Zaghlul and his colleagues for their presumption, the committees founded during the war sprang into action. Demonstrations and strikes broke out throughout Egypt in the spring of 1919. They spread from students and labor activists to artisans and civil servants and even the urban poor of Cairo. Peasants, fearing imminent starvation, attacked the rail lines by which scarce food supplies might be taken to distant cities. Alongside the peasants were many rural landowners, who not only had complaints of their own but who feared social upheaval if they stood on the sidelines. The revolt—called by Egyptian nationalist historians the 1919 Revolution—lasted two months before the British put it down by force.

In response to the uprising, the British government appointed a commission under Lord Milner to investigate its causes and to propose a solution. The Milner Commission concluded that Britain could not hope to keep direct control of Egypt and that British interests might best be maintained in Egypt if Britain gave Egypt conditional independence. Only then could the British hope to rein in the most vehement Egyptian nationalists. Thus, in 1922, the British granted Egypt conditional independence. The treaty they imposed on the Egyptians was a disappointment to Egyptian nationalists. The British asserted their right to control Egyptian defense and foreign policy, protect minorities and the Suez Canal, maintain their role (alongside the Egyptians) in the governance of the Sudan to the south, and safeguard the capitulations. Independence indeed. Making conditional independence into unconditional independence would be the focus of nationalist efforts for the next three decades, even after the British sought to placate Egyptian public opinion by negotiating a new treaty on the eve of World War II.

Independence was also hampered by the strange system of governance in Egypt that pit three powerbrokers against each other. First, there was the Wafd, the main nationalist party. Sa'd Zaghlul had founded the Wafd not as a party but as the platform representing the aspirations of the Egyptian nation. This can be seen

in the name itself, which means “delegation” in Arabic and refers to the delegation Zaghlul had put together to represent Egypt at the Paris negotiations. In the contentious environment of interwar Egypt, however, the Wafd was soon joined by a number of other parties also seeking to become the platform for Egyptian aspirations. Arrayed against the Wafd were the king (still a descendant of Mehmet Ali) and the British ambassador. Although the Wafd was extremely popular, both the king and the British conspired against unfettered parliamentary rule. Ultimate power rested, of course, in the hands of the British. The British only allowed the Wafd to take power when it needed to exploit the party’s popularity in times of crisis. The first time was in 1936, when the British, fearing the rise of the original “axis of evil,” needed to negotiate a new, less provocative treaty with the Egyptians. The second time was in 1942 when, in the midst of World War II, German field marshal Erwin Rommel’s troops threatened Egypt.

In the decades following World War I, the mainstream nationalist movement in Egypt did not advocate radical social change. Indeed, the mainstream nationalist movement in Egypt represented the interests of two groups in particular that feared unbridled democratic rule and social revolution: large landowners and members of the upwardly mobile intelligentsia. Neither group rejected Europe or European ideas, and their brand of nationalism demonstrated the role European conceptions of nation and state had in shaping their worldview. In 1914, one of Zaghlul’s more articulate colleagues put the mission of the nationalist movement as follows:

The wave of civilization has come to us with all its virtues and vices, and we must accept it without resisting it. All that we can do is to Egyptianize the good that it carries and narrow down the channels through which the evil can run. We must possess that civilization as it is, but not try to control it.

By narrowing their concerns to independence and by representing the interests of layers of the population that were anything but plentiful, the nationalist movement failed to encompass or even control the totality of the Egyptian public sphere. This left the door open to a host of other political movements that posed alternatives to the mainstream nationalist movement. A communist party, capitalizing on the success of the revolution in Russia and resurgent labor activism, opened its doors in the early 1920s. Then, toward the end of the decade, that apotheosis of modern Islamist organizations, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, began recruiting its first members in the Suez Canal city of Isma‘iliyya. Like the mainstream nationalists, the Muslim Brotherhood had also made its peace with the modern nation-state system and even nationalism. And like the mainstream nationalists, the Muslim Brotherhood claimed to represent the one true voice of Egypt, above the partisan fray. According to its founder, Hassan al-Banna,

The love for one’s country and place of residence is a feeling hallowed both by the commands of nature and the injunctions of Islam.... The desire to work for the restoration of the honour and independence of one’s country is a feeling approved by the Qur'an and by the Muslim Brotherhood.... However, the love

for party-strife and the bitter hatred of one’s political opponents with all of its destructive consequences, is a false kind of nationalism. It does not benefit anybody, not even those who practise it.

On the other hand, the brotherhood articulated its message in a language that differed dramatically from that used by the mainstream nationalist movement, a language whose point of reference was Islam. The brotherhood thus spoke to layers of the population left unmoved by or alienated from the mainstream nationalist movement.

## TURKEY

In both Turkey and Iran, leaders seeking to centralize their authority and “modernize” their states took power in the wake of World War I.

At the end of the war, the entente powers occupied Istanbul and held the Ottoman sultan virtual prisoner. In 1920, the government of the sultan signed the Treaty of Sèvres, which formally severed the connection between Turkish and non-Turkish regions of the Ottoman Empire. It also divided western Anatolia among Greece, Italy, and France. While all three states sent armies of occupation to affirm their claims, Greek ambitions in Anatolia were particularly expansive. Greek nationalists drew inspiration from what they called the *megali idea* (grand idea). They sought to unite all Greeks from the Mediterranean islands to the Black Sea coast into one state, thereby restoring the glory of the Byzantine Empire. They thus sought to snatch as much territory in Anatolia as possible. But Greek ambitions were also particularly obnoxious to many Turks who chafed at the idea that a former vassal state would now attempt to turn the tables on its former overlord. Throughout unoccupied Anatolia, popular “Committees for the Defense of Rights” sprang up to resist the occupiers. To restore order, the government in Istanbul sent General Mustafa Kemal east to suppress the committees.

Mustafa Kemal hailed from Salonika, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire but now the second largest city in Greece. Trained in various military academies, he fought for the Ottomans in Libya (against the Italians) and in the Balkan Wars (against the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks). He achieved his greatest fame as a military commander at the Battle of Gallipoli in 1915. The entente powers conceived the Gallipoli campaign as a quick stroke to knock the Ottoman Empire out of World War I. Their plan was to seize the peninsula south of Istanbul, then march on the Ottoman capital. Rather than a quick stroke, however, the battle degenerated into trench warfare that was catastrophic even by World War I standards. Between one-third and one-half of the British, Australian, New Zealand, French, and Ottoman combatants were killed, wounded, or succumbed to disease. Nevertheless, the Ottomans repulsed the invaders and Mustafa Kemal emerged from the battle a national hero.

Instead of suppressing the Committees for the Defense of Rights, Mustafa Kemal took charge of the rebellion. In a costly war that lasted two years, he forced foreign troops from Anatolia. In the wake of his victory, Mustafa Kemal adopted

the name "Ataturk" (father of the Turks) and guided the establishment of a Turkish Republic that has ruled over an undivided Anatolia ever since.

Mustafa Kemal has been at the center of a Turkish cult of personality whose vehemence seems bizarre to outsiders. When *Time* magazine asked readers worldwide to choose the most influential "Men of the [Twentieth] Century," it received over two hundred thousand votes for Mustafa Kemal, not only in the category of "Warriors and Statesmen," but in the categories of "Scientists and Healers," and "Entertainers and Artists." While, presumably, most of these votes came from Turkey, something of a cult has developed around Mustafa Kemal outside Turkey as well. Mustafa Kemal has served as the model for those who claim that the only future for the Middle East is Westernization. Unlike, for example, the Islamic modernists who sought to find a compromise between Islam and Western ideas, Mustafa Kemal and his acolytes sought to impose a model for modernity borrowed directly from the Western experience.

In the early days of the new Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal abolished the caliphate, banned sufi orders, nationalized religious endowments, and closed down Islamic courts. In other words, he established Turkey as a secular state in which private beliefs were tolerated but religion was not allowed to enter into the public sphere. He changed the calendar to a Western calendar and he "Latinized" the Turkish alphabet, arguing that the new alphabet would be easier to read than the Ottoman script, which used Arabic letters. (Since a billion people do quite well using Chinese characters, the argument rings hollow.) Mustafa Kemal granted women the right to vote in municipal elections in 1930 and in national elections in 1934, eleven years before France allowed women to vote. He even proposed legislation forbidding women from wearing the veil in public (contrary to myth, it never became law) and men from wearing the conical hat, the fez, that had been associated with high Ottoman modernity. Although breaking down the fashion barrier between east and west was not far from his mind, state-builders such as Mustafa Kemal regularly legislated on matters of clothing during this period. They wanted to eliminate all clothing styles that alluded to regional, religious, or ethnic identities that might compete with the state for the loyalty of its citizens. They also wanted to advertise government policies (in this case, Westernization) by making citizens into walking billboards for them. And, perhaps most important, they regulated clothing because they could. By attacking something as personal as clothing, governments demonstrated their ability to cow their citizens. The reason why so many Turkish peasants to this very day dress like characters out of the comic strip "Andy Capp" can be attributed to Mustafa Kemal's policies.

In addition to introducing unabashed Westernization into Turkey, Mustafa Kemal might also be viewed as an heir to the great defensive developmentalists of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Like his predecessors, he attempted to expand the role of the state, centralize power, and spread a single, official ideology to bind citizens to each other and to the state. Following in their footsteps, Mustafa Kemal introduced policies to standardize Turkish legal institutions and



Mustafa Kemal shown demonstrating the new Turkish alphabet. (From: Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *La Turquie se dévoile, 1908–1938* (Paris: PML Editions, n.d.), p. 231.)

educational curricula. Unlike his predecessors, however, he was able to harness twentieth-century technologies and assumptions about governance in support of this project. For example, Mustafa Kemal ruled during a period in which centralized economic planning had become second nature to policy makers. Liberal democracies adopted centralized economic planning in response to the Great Depression. For Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, it provided one more means to control their populations. The Soviet Union adopted centralized economic planning for ideological reasons. Mustafa Kemal thus had a list of blueprints from which to draw, each with an underlying rationale. Ultimately, the economic policies adopted by the Turkish government came closest to resembling those adopted by Benito Mussolini's government. The guiding principles of Turkish economic policy would remain constant through 1980.

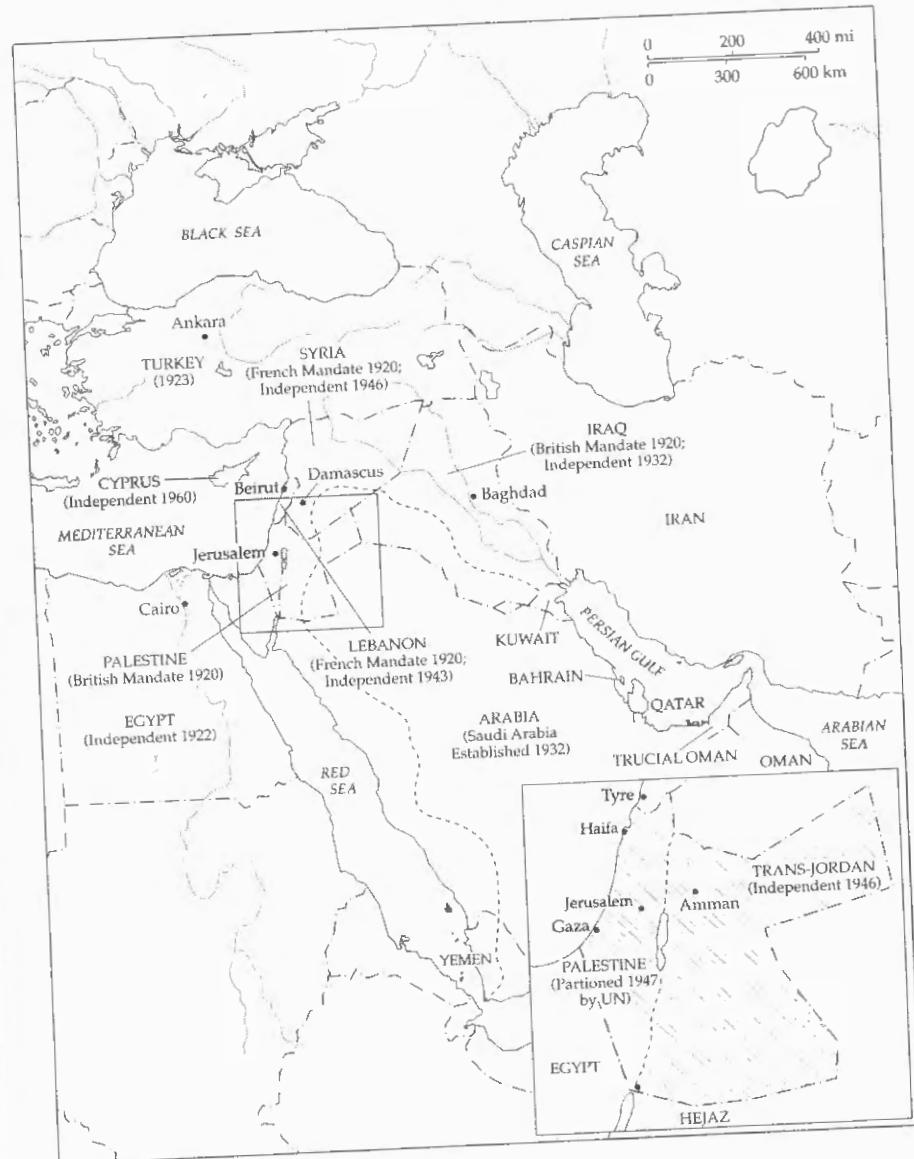
Overall, the fact that Turkey is today a republic and that many Turks consider their country to be part of Europe might be attributed to Mustafa Kemal's policies. In contemporary Turkey there are elections that are relatively free, particularly by Middle Eastern standards. Parliamentary representatives include members of minority groups, such as Kurds, although the formation of political parties based on ethnicity is forbidden. And there is a vibrant press and a host of non-government organizations that address problems and issues of public concern. Nevertheless, the construction of the Turkish state was not as straightforward or humane as many of the devotees of Mustafa Kemal have made it out to be. For example, soon after the Turks expelled the Greek army from Anatolia,

the governments of the two states arranged a population transfer. The Turkish government, working under guidelines which had, in fact, been set by the League of Nations, forced up to 1,300,000 Christian Turks out of the country. Many had lived for centuries in Anatolia, spoke Turkish as their native language, and only differed from their neighbors in terms of the religion (Orthodox Christianity) that they practiced. In return, about 380,000 Greek Muslims went to Turkey. Like the ethnic cleansing of Armenians that took place during World War I and the “dirty war” to suppress Kurdish separatism, the transfer of “Greeks” to their “ancestral homeland” displays the dark side of nationalism in all its grisly detail.

There is a dark side to the history of Turkey’s official ideology, Kemalism, as well. When Mustafa Kemal took charge of the Committees for the Defense of Rights, no one fighting by his side could have realized the breadth or depth of the changes he would oversee. In fact, many fought in the name of Islam. Others fought merely to eliminate a foreign presence from Anatolia. Thus, from its inception Kemalism met with opposition, and that opposition—and the state’s response to that opposition—continues to color Turkish politics to this day.

Sometimes, opposition to Kemalism has broken down along ethnic lines. For example, Kurds have resisted the “Turkification” policies of the government. Although one former Turkish prime minister claimed that Kurds were merely “mountain Turks,” Kurds continue to assert an ethnic and linguistic identity separate from Turks. To this day, some Kurds demand cultural autonomy while others go so far as to demand separation from Turkey. Other ethnic and religious minorities have also experienced inequities because they, too, have not fit into the Kemalist mold.

Opposition to Kemalism has also come from those put off by its uncompromising secularism. As early as 1950, the Democratic Party, which had distanced itself from the official secularist line and wrapped itself in Islamic imagery, emerged the victor in Turkish national elections. Since the 1950 elections were the first true multiparty elections in Turkish history, the Democrat’s victory sent a clear message of disaffection to the country’s ruling elites. Then, in 1980, the wall separating religion and politics was officially breached. In the wake of an economic and political crisis, a military junta took power and declared what was called the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” the new state ideology. The synthesis, as the name implies, married a right-wing Turkish nationalism to what its advocates termed the “Islamic tradition.” The junta hoped that the wide appeal of an ideology that included a call for both political unity and moral virtue would help stem the factionalism and violence in Turkish politics that had reached unprecedented proportions. More specifically, they believed the synthesis would link military officers with Islamic activists in the battle against the non-believers of the political left. But there was a consequence to breaching the wall separating religion and politics: By promoting the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, the junta opened up a space in politics for Islamic political parties, such as the popular Justice and Development Party. And this story has an ironic coda: In 2010, the ruling Justice and Development Party announced the discovery of a military conspiracy against their government. For the first time in Turkish history, civilian rulers arrested the top brass and not the other way around.



The Middle East, 1923

All of which brings up the thorny issue of military/civilian relations. Turkish democracy works until it doesn’t. Whenever the Turkish military has felt that stability or the principles of Kemalism is threatened, as it did in 1980, it has stepped into the political process to “restore order” and “uphold the constitution.” Mustafa Kemal may have set the precedent for this himself. In the wake of an internal rebellion in 1925, he assumed sweeping emergency powers for four years. Subsequently, the Turkish military assumed emergency powers three times, in 1960, 1971, and

1980, and forced the replacement of the prime minister in 1997. Like Mustafa Kemal, it relinquished control, but only after “cleansing” the political system by disbanding political parties, jailing, and, in some cases, torturing those it deemed enemies of the state. In sum, any assessment of Turkish democracy has to balance a dynamic public sphere and parliamentary tradition with a history that includes repression and military intervention into politics.

## IRAN

At the beginning of World War I, the Russians occupied northern Persia while the British occupied the south. When the Bolsheviks toppled the tsarist government, they withdrew Russian troops from Persia and the British occupied the entire country. After the war, the British attempted to impose a treaty on their hosts that would have made Persia into a virtual British protectorate. At the same time, the communist government in Russia backed separatist movements in the north.

The Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919 was so unpopular that no Persian government could afford to ratify it. This created a dilemma for the British. British policy makers wanted to maintain their position in Persia to protect their oil interests and their Indian colony. They also wanted to prevent the expansion of Bolshevism to the south. But Britain could not afford to maintain an occupation force in Persia. Fearing a total breakdown of their Persian “buffer state,” local British envoys encouraged the leader of the Cossack Brigade, Reza Khan, to take matters into his own hands.

Reza Khan came from a Turkish-speaking family in Mazandaran by the Caspian Sea. He had enlisted in the Cossack Brigade at the age of fifteen and rose through the ranks. Soon after British officers took over from the brigade’s Russian officers in 1920, he became commander. Reza Shah marched on Tehran with three thousand men and forced the shah to appoint him defense minister. Within a few years he had outmaneuvered his political opponents. After toying with the idea of establishing a republic in Persia with himself as the first president, he had himself proclaimed shah in 1926. Reza Khan became Reza Shah.

Like Mustafa Kemal, Reza Shah was one of several strongmen who took power in the wake of World War I and changed the paradigm for state-building. As a matter of fact, Reza Shah deliberately modeled his policies on those of Mustafa Kemal, and like Mustafa Kemal found policies introduced by Benito Mussolini useful as well. Like his exemplars, Reza Shah was a self-proclaimed modernizer, a centralizer, and a nationalist. Also like his exemplars, Reza Shah disdained liberal democracy and mistrusted parliamentary rule. All three state-builders believed that the masses had to be led by a powerful leader.

Reza Shah was barely literate and reportedly had little patience with abstract discussions of policy. Nevertheless, he promoted an economic and political blueprint called the “New Order,” a name that Mussolini also used to describe his policies. At the heart of the New Order was national consolidation, economic development, and Westernization.

To achieve national consolidation, Reza Shah expanded the military and bureaucracy, suppressed the tribes and secessionist movements that threatened the territorial integrity of Persia, and promoted a single nationalist ideology. The nationalism Reza Shah promoted traced an uninterrupted history of the Persian nation from pre-Islamic times to the present. Islam did not play a role in this nationalist ideology, and the Arab/Islamic conquest was presented as the beginning of a period of darkness. Changing the official name of the country from Persia to Iran, described earlier, was one of the actions Reza Shah took to highlight the pre-Islamic, “Aryan” roots of his domains. To strengthen the population’s Persian identity, Reza Shah had ethnic and regional clothes outlawed and Arabic and Turkish place names replaced with Persian ones. The province of Arabistan thus became the province of Khuzistan. He also commissioned the Iranian Academy to eliminate Turkish and Arabic words from the Persian language. The project failed, mainly because about 40 percent of Persian words come from Turkish and Arabic.

Reza Shah used the resources available to the state to spread the official ideology. There was, for example, the public school system he had created, which held a captive and an occasionally impressionable audience. And to reach those no longer of school age, Reza Shah founded the “Society of Public Guidance.” He modeled the society on the propaganda machines of Italy and Nazi Germany, and he used it for the same purposes they did. The society scripted radio broadcasts and published journals, pamphlets, newspapers, and textbooks parroting the official national narrative. The fact that most Iranians still believe, decades after the Islamic Revolution, that the tenth-century poem, the *Shahnameh*, is their *national* epic speaks to the effectiveness of Reza Shah’s efforts.

Like Mustafa Kemal and Mussolini, Reza Shah adopted a state-directed economic policy to eliminate foreign control over the economy and to foster rapid development. Under the shah, the state canceled foreign concessions, established a national bank to take the place of the British-run “Imperial Bank,” and took control of posts, telegraph, and customs from foreigners. The state also set high tariffs to protect the infant industries being established. To accumulate capital for investment, the state confiscated landholdings of many of the wealthiest landlords and ulama and instituted government monopolies over select industries. Most importantly, the state acquired revenues from oil. The shah himself negotiated new terms for the d’Arcy concession, first threatening to cancel the concession entirely, then granting the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (which became the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company two years later) a concession for another sixty years. Although the company increased its payments and obligations to the Iranian government, it was clear to all but the self-impressed shah that the British government had proved the more wily negotiator.

The capital accumulated from confiscations, monopolies, and oil enabled the shah to launch an ambitious program of what would later be called “import substitution industrialization.” Reza Shah believed that Iran should produce as many domestically consumed goods as it could, rather than importing those goods from abroad. This would keep money circulating within Iran rather than pouring

out. The policies of Reza Shah (and Mustafa Kemal) thus differed from those of nineteenth-century state-builders in a significant way. Because European imperialists disapproved, defensive developmentalists in the nineteenth-century Middle East could not do the sorts of things their successors could do to build industry. Instead, their only recourse to modernize was by selling cash crops or raw materials, by offering concessions, or by taking out loans. This only served to integrate their states further into the world economy. Times had changed, however. The age of free trade was long gone. So was Europe's desire and capability to project direct power into Turkey and Persia. Reza Shah and Mustafa Kemal therefore tried to nurture their national economies by freeing them from the constraints of the world system. Unfortunately for them, it was a fool's errand. Nevertheless, import substitution industrialization would become the norm among states on the periphery of the world system after World War II.

Reza Shah resembled Mustafa Kemal in another way as well: Like Mustafa Kemal, Reza Shah associated modernization with Westernization. Reza Shah and Mustafa Kemal might have associated the two because it was easier to borrow from the West hook, line, and sinker than it was to sort out what was essential to borrow from what was not. They might have associated modernization with Westernization simply because they presumed Western modernity, represented by secularism and fedoras, *was* modernity. They might have adopted the trappings of the West to gain stature among Europeans who also believed that their modernity was the only modernity. After all, European diplomats did not take their Japanese counterparts seriously until the latter substituted high hats and tail-coats for kimonos at international conferences. Or Reza Shah and Mustafa Kemal might have used the trappings of the West to distinguish themselves from their domestic opponents. Whatever the case, Reza Shah looked at Western modernity and instead of seeing a source of inspiration saw a source from which to draw.

At the top of his list was secularism. Reza Shah expanded the role of the state in society at the expense of the religious establishment. This was a task that was more difficult in Iran than it was in Turkey. In Iran, the ulama were involved in a broader range of activities than their counterparts in Turkey. They were also more closely interwoven with the rest of society. In Turkey, on the other hand, *tanzimat* policies had effectively done much of Mustafa Kemal's job for him. Nevertheless, the changes introduced by Reza Shah were sweeping. He required the ulama to be certified by the state and denied them any role in the administration of justice, save for a limited role in matters concerning family law. And since the job of the ulama had been to apply shari'a, its role, too, diminished. In its place, Reza Shah introduced the French civil code and the Italian penal code. But Reza Shah did not stop there. He also tried to keep any displays of religiosity out of the public sphere and limited the state's engagement with religion. During his reign, the state refused exit visas to pilgrims wishing to go to Mecca and Medina or to the Shi'i holy cities of Karbala and Najaf in Iraq, and Shi'i rituals deemed "barbaric" or potentially subversive were prohibited. To further exasperate ulama, Reza Shah had statues of

himself erected in town squares throughout Iran, violating the religious injunction against representation of the human form.

In addition to secularism, Reza Shah appropriated other features of Western modernity. Like Mustafa Kemal, for example, he prescribed the appropriate clothing for the "modern Iranian." After a trip to Turkey in 1934, he prohibited women from wearing the veil (thus outdoing his mentor) and required all adult men to wear Western clothes and a brimmed hat that obstructed one of the positions for prayer. His visit to Turkey also resulted in his first forays into women's rights. During his reign, the state mandated female education, outlawed discrimination against women in public facilities, and ended the segregation of men and women in places they might mingle, such as coffeehouses and cinemas. Iranian women did not have the right to vote (as they do now in the Islamic Republic), but then again, under Reza Shah voting did not mean much anyway. In his crusade for women's rights, Reza Shah was hardly motivated by a desire to expand the range of civil liberties available to Iranians. That would have been too much out of character. Reza Shah had a different goal in mind. Like other authoritarian figures whose stance on the "woman question" appears progressive, Reza Shah sought to expand the reach of the state into the home and to replace the "private patriarchy" of the husband/father-dominated family unit with a "public patriarchy" defined by the state.

Reza Shah's New Order changed the face of Iran. It brought to Iran the institutions of a modern state, which then expanded into domains no Persian state before it had penetrated. The New Order triggered the formulation of a powerful national myth which has yet to be superseded. It also brought about social changes, from resolving Persia's "tribal problem" in favor of the state to creating an industrial working class.

In the wake of the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979, however, many of these accomplishments—and, admittedly, this word must be used advisedly—have been lost in a narrative that gives pride of place to Reza Shah's autocratic style of rule—a style which his son, the last shah of Iran, supplemented in ways his father could only have dreamed of. It is therefore ironic that of all people, Reza Shah might rightfully claim a place in the pantheon of heroes of the revolution. Without the Iran that Reza Shah had created and passed on, the revolution would have been unimaginable. It is not just that the autocracy or secularism that the two Pahlavi shahs put in place provoked a revolutionary backlash. It is, more importantly, that revolutionary Islamic movements of the sort that overthrew the monarchy in 1978–1979 can only thrive under modern conditions, and that Reza Shah was largely responsible for shaping those conditions. This is a thread of the story we shall take up in Part IV of this book.

losses were spread all around the Continent; each of the European Great Powers, except for Italy, lost at least a million men in the war. The U.S. casualties, 115,000 killed and a similar number wounded, were light in comparison and were fewer than those the main combatants suffered in single battles like Verdun or the Somme. Europe lost, essentially, a entire generation of young men. As Winston Churchill wrote presciently about the war in 1929, "injuries were wrought to the structure of human society which a century will not efface and which may conceivably prove fatal to the present civilization."<sup>4</sup>

The duration and totality of the war transformed the home fronts in other ways as well. In every country, governments became more involved in economic planning and control as consumer economies were regeared for military production. With most men at the military fronts, women were brought into the workforce by the millions. (A 1916 British propaganda poster read, "Shells made by a wife may save a husband's life.")

This wartime upheaval in gender roles continued after the war and accelerated the movement toward women's suffrage in Britain and elsewhere. In Britain, women over thirty years of age gained the vote in 1918, and full female suffrage was extended in 1928. Women also won the right to vote in Germany, Scandinavia, the newly created states of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, and in the new communist state of the USSR.

The war also marked the end of absolute monarchies in Europe, culminating a process that had begun with the French Revolution of 1789. With the defeat of the Central powers, the autocrats of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans were banished, and with the 1917 revolution in Russia, the tsar was ousted and then executed by the Bolsheviks. This time, unlike after previous revolutions and wars, the monarchies would not reappear. Out of the old empires emerged many incipient democratic states based on eighteenth-century ideals of popular sovereignty and nineteenth-century ideals of liberalism and nationalism.

This was a great advance for democracy, but many of these new states were weak, poor, and unaccustomed to democratic traditions of tolerance, compromise, and incremental change. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia inspired unsuccessful left-wing revolutions in Germany, Austria, and Hungary in 1918–1919, polarizing those populations between the Left and Right. Some states, Germany especially, chafed under the punishments and restrictions of postwar peace settlements. Perhaps in good economic circumstances the new political order in Europe could have gained a footing and flourished, but the worldwide economic depression of the late 1920s and 1930s dashed any such hope. In Germany, already weakened by punishing reparations payments after the war, the depression was devastating. With millions of Germans unemployed, impoverished, and resentful about Versailles, the stage was set for the rise of Adolf Hitler.



## The Russian Revolution and Communism

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917 took that country out of World War I and, in many respects, also took it out of Europe and launched it on a bold experiment: building a communist state based on the ideas of Karl Marx. The impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution was at least as great as that of the French Revolution of 1789 in terms of both its domestic consequences and its international implications. The year 1917, like 1789, was one of great political, social, and economic revolution. Also, like their French counterparts, the Russian revolutionaries claimed that their ideology was transcendent and universal, and they fully believed that the revolution in Russia would be the spark to ignite revolutions throughout the world.

The communist ideology of the new Russia was both anticapitalist and atheistic, so the Western governments, especially the United States, feared and distrusted it. The U.S. government hoped and expected that the communist regime in Russia would fail and refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the new government until 1933. The fear and hostility between Russia and the West were intensified by the communists' stated desire to spread communism elsewhere in the world, including into Western Europe and the United States. These tensions were muted somewhat during the interwar years because both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the new name for the communist state, were focused on internal, rather than international, issues, and then during World War II because of their common alliance against Hitler's Germany. But with the end of World War II and the emergence of the United States

and the Soviet Union as the world's two superpowers, those tensions reemerged and dominated international politics during the Cold War.

### TSARIST RUSSIA

To understand the Russian Revolution, however, it is necessary to understand the nature of the state in which it occurred. Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was the last great **despotism** in Europe and the most conservative of the Great Powers. Although some liberalizing changes had occurred in Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, since 1789, Russia remained autocratic, economically backward, and mostly isolated from the rest of Europe. Yet, it was a huge and diverse empire, covering a sixth of the land surface of the globe, dominated by the Russians but containing hundreds of other nationalities. These included other Slavic peoples, like Ukrainians and Poles, as well as non-Slavic Europeans such as Finns and Latvians, plus the largely Turkic Muslims of Central Asia. Many of these groups had been brought into the Russian Empire by imperial expansion or warfare, and the task of controlling and integrating them plagued the empire through much of its history.

A Russian state, centered in Kiev (in present-day Ukraine), first emerged in the ninth century; soon thereafter, Prince Vladimir accepted Eastern Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium. From then on, the state and the Orthodox Church were closely entwined. During the three hundred years of Mongol occupation from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the church kept alive Russian culture, traditions, and identity. Russian rulers, who took the title "tsar" (the Russian version of the Latin *Caesar*), were the head of both the state and the Russian Orthodox Church. Moscow claimed the title of the "Third Rome" (after Constantinople), representing the center and the future of Christendom. The last dynasty of the tsars, the Romanovs, ruled from 1613 until the revolution of 1917.

Russia in 1900 was behind the other European powers, both politically and economically. The government remained a rigid and unrestrained autocracy, with the tsar at the head of both church and state. No local governments existed until the 1860s, and no national representative institutions until 1905, and even these were severely limited in their authority. The government prohibited political parties and kept dissent in check through a rigid system of censorship, a pervasive secret police, and an internal passport system that restricted people's movement around the country. Politically, Russia in 1900 was much like France in 1780.

Economic change was also slow to reach Russia. Until the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, Russia was still a feudal economy decades after feudalism had mostly disappeared from the rest of Europe. In 1900, peasants made up almost 90 percent of the population, and two-thirds of the population were illiterate. The Industrial Revolution and industrialization, which had begun in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century, did not take hold in Russia until the end of the nineteenth century. There was, therefore, not much of an urban working class, the group Karl Marx thought necessary for a revolution.

### HINTS OF CHANGE AND REFORM

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, there were already hints of change and reform in Russia. The French Revolution and Napoleon's armies spread liberal, revolutionary, and Enlightenment ideas all across Europe, including Russia. In 1825, a group of former Russian military officers, some of whom had fought in the Napoleonic wars, been exposed to Western liberalism, and grown discontented with their own country's reactionary government, mounted an antitsarist revolt. The Decembrist revolt was crushed, but it sent a message and set a precedent for later protests and movements against the autocracy. The most important changes of the century, however, came from the top down rather than from insurrection or revolution. Tsar Alexander II (r. 1855–1881), known as the "Tsar Liberator," launched a series of liberalizing reforms that included the creation of local self-government, modernization of the judiciary, and, most importantly, the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, and his successors returned to more autocratic and draconian rule, but the freeing of the serfs, especially, stimulated enormous social and economic changes in Russia.

Many peasants were actually worse off economically after the emancipation, and many migrated to the cities in search of work. This fueled both urbanization and industrialization, which took off in Russia in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1861 and 1900, pig iron production increased tenfold, and coal output increased forty-two-fold. Railroad mileage doubled between 1888 and 1913. The social fabric of the country began to change, too, with the growth of an urban working class (the proletariat), new industrial entrepreneurs (the bourgeoisie), and an emerging middle class.

All of this political and socioeconomic ferment stimulated a number of bottom-up reform movements, too, including some revolutionary



A meeting of the village mir, the traditional peasant council, made the basic unit of local government by the reforms of 1874. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

ones. "Westernizers" believed that Russia's future was tied with that of Western Europe and favored a constitutional political order and rapid economic development. *Slavophiles* (literally, "fond of Slavs"), in contrast, believed Russia to be culturally, morally, and politically superior to the West, so opposed Westernization and favored traditional institutions such as the orthodox Church and the peasant commune (*mir*). The *populists* (*narodniki*) also focused on the peasantry and wanted to base society on the *mir*, which they saw as an incipient form of socialism. In the 1870s, they launched a campaign of "going to the people" to educate the peasants in revolutionary ideas. An even more radical tendency was represented by the *nihilists*, who rejected institutions of all kinds, including government and the church, and favored freeing individuals from all religious, political, and family obligations. While all of these movements were gaining adherents in the mid-nineteenth century, Marxism, as such, had virtually no visibility in Russia and would not for many years to come.

Europeans during the nineteenth century were increasingly paying more attention to Russia, especially to its culture. Despite Russia's political and economic stagnation (or perhaps because of it), the country experienced a cultural renaissance in the nineteenth century. Russian novels became known throughout the world and included works of timeless and universal appeal, such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*

(which some consider the greatest novel ever written). Classical music by Russian composers became familiar to people worldwide (then and now) with works such as Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and *A Night on Bald Mountain*, and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.

### 1905: PRELUDE TO REVOLUTION

While Russian culture was flourishing in the nineteenth century and industrialization was transforming the economy, the autocracy remained rigid, backward, and increasingly ineffectual, both inside the country and in its foreign relations. Russia suffered a humiliating loss in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, the first time in modern history that a European power was defeated by an Asian one.

In the middle of that war, an insurrection developed against the autocracy. It began with a large but peaceful demonstration in January 1905, led by an Orthodox priest named Father Gapon, in front of the tsar's Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. Guards fired on the protesters, killing hundreds in what became known as Bloody Sunday. The massacre precipitated nationwide strikes and demonstrations, which by the fall had paralyzed the country. The tsar, Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917), issued a conciliatory manifesto allowing the formation of an elected legislature (the Duma), and by the end of the year, the revolutionary movement petered out. The Duma was the first national representative institution in Russian history, and although it never had much power, it did allow the emergence of legal political groups and parties, including both liberals and socialists.

The reign of Nicholas II was a period of much change and development in Russian society. One historian has characterized this period as "a time of troubles" but also as a time of "self-scrutiny, experimentation with new institutions and dreams."<sup>1</sup> There were further economic reforms and advances, a growing middle class, and increasing numbers of independent farmers. After 1905, more freedom of expression was permitted in politics and the arts, and Russia became a center of the avant-garde in both music (e.g., Igor Stravinsky) and the visual arts (e.g., the abstract art of Wassily Kandinsky). But the more open environment also revealed the tensions that were so long repressed in the Russian Empire, including increasing pressures from political liberals and revolutionaries and increasingly assertive nationalism from Poles, Ukrainians, Latvians, Armenians, and the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. The twin forces that would finally topple the empire were Marxism-Leninism and World War I.

**BOX 10.1**  
**"The First Bolshevik" in Russian Literature**

In nineteenth-century Russia, tsarist censorship and the secret police prevented most forms of political opposition, so literature and the arts became the main vehicle for social criticism and political dissent. Two of the most influential literary publications of the century were written by Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818–1883), who was born and died in the same years as Karl Marx. Less known now than his contemporaries Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, in the mid-nineteenth century Turgenev was the most famous writer in Russia and the first Russian writer to gain a reputation outside the country. His *Sportsman's Sketches* (1852), which depicted the miserable condition of peasants, was widely read in the country (including by Tsar Alexander II), provoked discussion and debate about the status of the peasantry, and probably contributed to the tsar's emancipation of the serfs in 1861. His masterpiece *Fathers and Sons* (1862) is at once a story of romantic love, generational conflict, and the tensions between change and tradition and between reform and revolution.

Turgenev himself was an example of many of these tensions. He grew up on a prosperous estate worked by serfs, part of an educated family that spoke French at home, and he spent many years in the West. After studying in Germany, he said, "I found myself a Westernizer," but he remained devoted to Russia and the Russian countryside. At the age of twenty-five, he fell in love with a young, but married, Spanish prima donna and spent the rest of his life following her around Europe in hopeless infatuation. He died in France, and his remains were transferred back to Russia for burial.

In *Fathers and Sons*, the main character is Bazarov, a young student and doctor who professes to be a nihilist, one who rejects everything that cannot be established by observation, experiment, and science. He repudiates all authority, in fact "everything," and believes that "the ground must be cleared" for the reconstruction of society. In the novel, he confronts and rejects romanticism, conservatism, and even liberalism. His host, Nikolai, a thoughtful and kindly owner of an estate, has freed his own serfs before the Emancipation required it, but Bazarov is both unsympathetic and rude to the older man. Bazarov's revolutionary rhetoric, uncompromising ideology, and commitment to science have led some critics of the novel to label him "the first Bolshevik," although Lenin's Bolshevik party was not formed until thirty years after the appearance of the novel.

### MARXISM AND LENINISM

As we saw in chapter 5, the idea of communism was first developed by Karl Marx and others in the middle of the nineteenth century. The word "communism" basically disappeared from political discourse after the 1850s in most of Europe, although much of Marxism had been incor-

porated into the socialist movements and parties that thrived with the expansion of the urban working classes. In Russia, the absence of both a working class and parliamentary politics through most of the nineteenth century meant that Marxism had little influence in any form. It is somewhat ironic, then, that Marx's ideology of communism was revived not in an advanced capitalist state, but in Russia, the least developed of the major European powers.

The ideology of Marxism appealed for a number of reasons to people working for fundamental change in the Russian Empire. First of all, many Russian radicals had given up in frustration at trying to radicalize the Russian peasants (a goal of the populists in earlier decades) and liked the Marxist focus on urban workers, the proletariat, whom they thought would be more receptive. The scientific and antireligious elements of Marxism also had appeal to many Russian intellectuals, an instrumental group in the reform and revolutionary movements in the country. Marxism appealed to many because it had the potential to make Russia more modern and "enlightened." Marxist theory also helped explain Russia's backwardness as part of a process of historical development and not as some flaw in the Russian character. Finally, Marxism had some advantages tactically because the Russian regime and secret police thought it was harmless!

Russian radicals living outside Russia formed the Marxist Social Democratic Labor Party in 1898. Despite its small size, within a few years, the nascent party split into two factions, with the Bolsheviks (majority) pressing for a quick revolution in Russia and the Mensheviks (minority) arguing for a more gradual approach. It was the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, who in 1917 would seize power in the Russian Revolution.

Lenin was born in 1870, to a middle-class family. His older brother was hanged in 1887 for a plot to assassinate the tsar, and this contributed to Lenin's radicalization. He became involved in revolutionary activity, was arrested, and spent three years in exile in Siberia. From 1900 onward, he spent most of his time outside Russia, planning for an eventual revolution in his country.

For Lenin and other Russian Marxists, the Russian situation posed somewhat of a dilemma and a challenge. Marx had posited that a revolution would occur in an advanced capitalist state with abundant wealth and a large but exploited proletariat. Russia in 1900 was still a mostly rural country, just beginning to industrialize, with a working class that made up only 3 percent of the population. Lenin resolved this dilemma by proposing a number of modifications to Marx's original theories. In his 1902 essay "What Is to Be Done?" he argued that since the Russian working class was so small and weak, it was necessary to create a "vanguard of the proletariat," a small, disciplined elite that would help workers

develop revolutionary consciousness and lead them to revolution. The Bolsheviks would play this role.

The other dilemma was the undeveloped state of Russian capitalism. Were Russian Marxists simply to wait for capitalism to evolve and develop its contradictions, as Marx seemed to suggest was necessary? For Lenin, the answer was for Russia simply to skip over the capitalist phase of development and proceed directly from feudalism to communism. For this to happen, though, the Russian communist state would need assistance from other wealthier states to provide the material abundance that was necessary for communism to work. He believed that this would happen because a revolution in Russia would break the weakest link in the chain of worldwide capitalism, which was sustained by Western imperialism. "Imperialism," Lenin wrote, was "the highest stage of capitalism" and the final one. Once the Russians established their revolutionary state, workers in other, more developed capitalist states would be inspired to conduct their own revolutions. These countries, then, could help to sustain the revolution in Russia, thus fulfilling Marx's vision.

These ideas of Lenin, who was in exile and marginalized, were at best airy theorizing and speculation. Few people in Russia paid much attention to the Bolsheviks, and when the 1905 revolution broke out, the Bolsheviks were hardly involved. But Lenin's ideas are important for understanding how the 1917 revolution came about and why the Soviet Union, as it eventually emerged, looked so much different from what Marx had in mind. When the leaders of the Soviet Union referred to their communist ideology in later years, they called it Marxism-Leninism.

### WORLD WAR I AND THE TWO REVOLUTIONS

Lenin and the Bolsheviks might have disappeared into weighty history books were it not for the erosion and collapse of the Russian state during World War I. As we saw in the previous chapter, the war had a devastating effect on all European states, but on none more than the Russian Empire. The doddering political system was not up to the task, and the Russians suffered far more casualties than any of the other belligerents. Nicholas II, although a kind family man, was a weak and feckless leader. He spent most of the war at the front, attempting to direct military operations there. He left the operation of government to his wife, Alexandra, and an influential, but bizarre, monk named Grigory Rasputin, who had a hypnotic ability to stop the bleeding of Alexandra's hemophiliac son.

#### BOX 10.2

#### The Bolsheviks and the Role of Women

When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they expected that, under socialism, the family would "wither away," as would the state. They believed that capitalism was particularly oppressive for women, and they aimed to remedy that. Lenin envisioned the establishment of public dining rooms, kitchens, laundries, and kindergartens that would relieve the woman "from her old domestic slavery and all dependence on her husband."<sup>2</sup> Free unions of men and women would replace marriage, which would increasingly become superfluous. In the early years of communist rule, legislation (including legalized abortion) was crafted to liberate women and to encourage the disappearance of the family. In the 1930s (under Stalin), however, much of this social experimentation was reversed as the government emphasized more traditional family roles.<sup>3</sup>

By the beginning of 1917, both the military and the country were near collapse. Soldiers were undersupplied and were sometimes sent into battle without weapons or even boots. Over fourteen million peasants were in military service, which contributed to widespread food shortages. In March of that year, bread riots (begun by women), strikes, and demonstrations convulsed the capital city of Petrograd (St. Petersburg was renamed during the war to avoid the German sound of it). Troops summoned to maintain order turned on their officers and mutinied. Nicholas was forced to abdicate. Three hundred years of Romanov rule had come to an end.

A provisional government established by the Duma promised to form a constitutional government and hold free elections. But it made a fatal error in not pulling Russia out of the war, which eroded its popularity and legitimacy. Meanwhile, throughout the country, workers and soldiers had established alternative governing bodies called *soviets* (councils). The Petrograd Soviet, where the Bolsheviks and other socialists had considerable sway, took over some functions of city administration and increasingly challenged the provisional government.

In April 1917, Lenin returned from exile to Petrograd, rallied the Bolsheviks, promised "peace, land and bread," and called for "all power to the Soviets," directly confronting the provisional government. Over the next months, the Bolsheviks gained strength in soviets around the country, and by the fall, had won a majority in the Petrograd Soviet and elsewhere. On November 7, Bolsheviks and their supporters in the Petrograd Soviet occupied the Winter Palace, disbanded the provisional government, and seized power. In his 1927 film, director Sergei Eisenstein

depicted these events in the film *October*, showing hundreds of citizens shooting their way into the Winter Palace.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the real event was practically bloodless, and more damage was done to the Winter Palace in the filming of *October* than in the November 7 events themselves. Nevertheless, the Eisenstein version became the icon of the Russian Revolution, and November 7 was celebrated every year in the Soviet Union, with parades, speeches, and huge posters of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, as the day of the first communist revolution.

The Bolsheviks were not the largest or most popular of the political movements in Russia at the time of the revolution, but they were one of the best organized, and Lenin was a charismatic speaker and leader. In the chaos and virtual anarchy of the war and the collapse of the monarchy, these characteristics were enough to ensure a Bolshevik victory. Lenin moved quickly to consolidate power, to remove or neutralize rival parties, and to establish the soviets as the government. The Bolsheviks were renamed the Communist Party. To fulfill Lenin's promise, the new regime opened negotiations with Germany to end Russia's involvement in the war, signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Russia had to concede most of Germany's territorial demands, losing a quarter of its prewar population and three-quarters of its iron- and steel-producing areas. Lenin believed, however, that these losses were incidental and temporary, as the Bolshevik seizure of power was only the first stage of worldwide revolution and Germany itself would not be far behind.

### CIVIL WAR, NEP, AND CONSOLIDATION

The treaty with Germany ended one major problem for the new communist government, but almost immediately it was faced with a host of new ones threatening its very survival. Groups opposing the Bolsheviks, including supporters of the tsar, the provisional government, or other political parties, organized to resist the new government, causing a devastating civil war that lasted four years. Worried that Tsar Nicholas would serve as a rallying point during the civil war, the Bolsheviks executed him and his family in 1918.

The Bolsheviks also faced challenges from other quarters. The newly formed government of Poland, a creature of the Versailles settlements, moved into areas vacated by the Germans and clashed with the Russians. The Polish-Soviet War raged for twenty months, until Lenin finally sued for peace. Meanwhile, other nationalities that had been part of the Russian Empire were declaring independence and sometimes fighting against

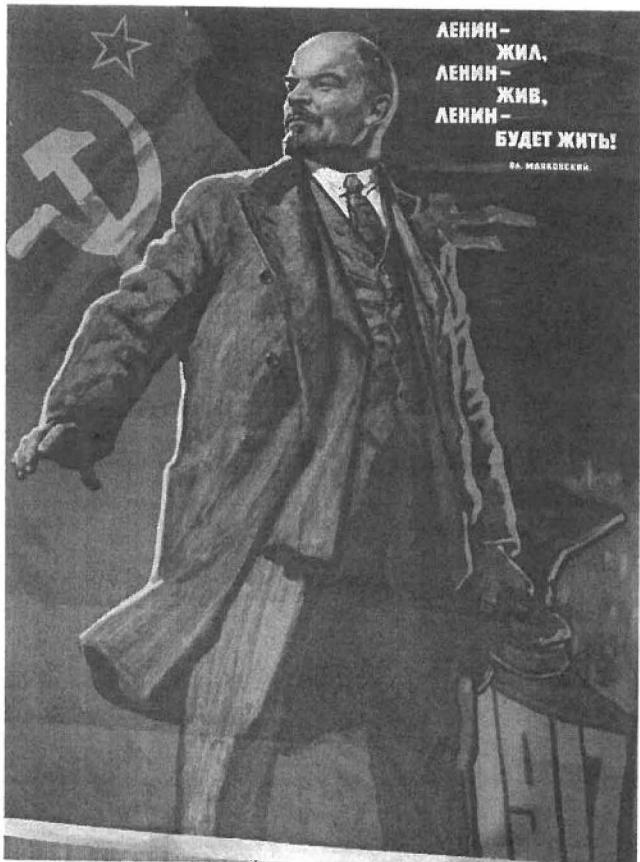


"Comrade Lenin Sweeps the World Clean." This 1920 Soviet propaganda poster illustrates the party's commitment, later abandoned, to promoting world revolution. Courtesy of the David King Collection.

the Bolsheviks—in the Ukraine, Finland, the Caucasus, and the Baltics. To complicate and inflame matters even further, French, British, American, and Japanese troops became involved in some of these conflicts, usually fighting against the Bolsheviks.

By 1921, the communists had defeated most of the White Russian (anti-Bolshevik) armies and settled the conflict with Poland. Foreign troops had withdrawn from Russia. But the country was ruined by eight years of war, revolution, terror, civil war, and famine. Lenin called a truce on the domestic front as well, announcing a New Economic Policy (NEP)

intended to revitalize the economy by allowing greater freedom in agriculture, industry, and trade. This was also a period of consolidation. In 1922, the communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or Soviet Union), consisting initially of Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, but over the years expanding to include fifteen republics. In 1924, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR formally adopted a constitution, declaring the founding of the USSR to be “a decisive step by way of uniting the workers of all countries into one world Soviet Socialist Republic.”



*“Lenin Lived, Lenin Lives, Lenin Will Live!” A 1970s Soviet propaganda poster, reflecting the almost religious homage to the former leader.*  
Photo by David Mason.

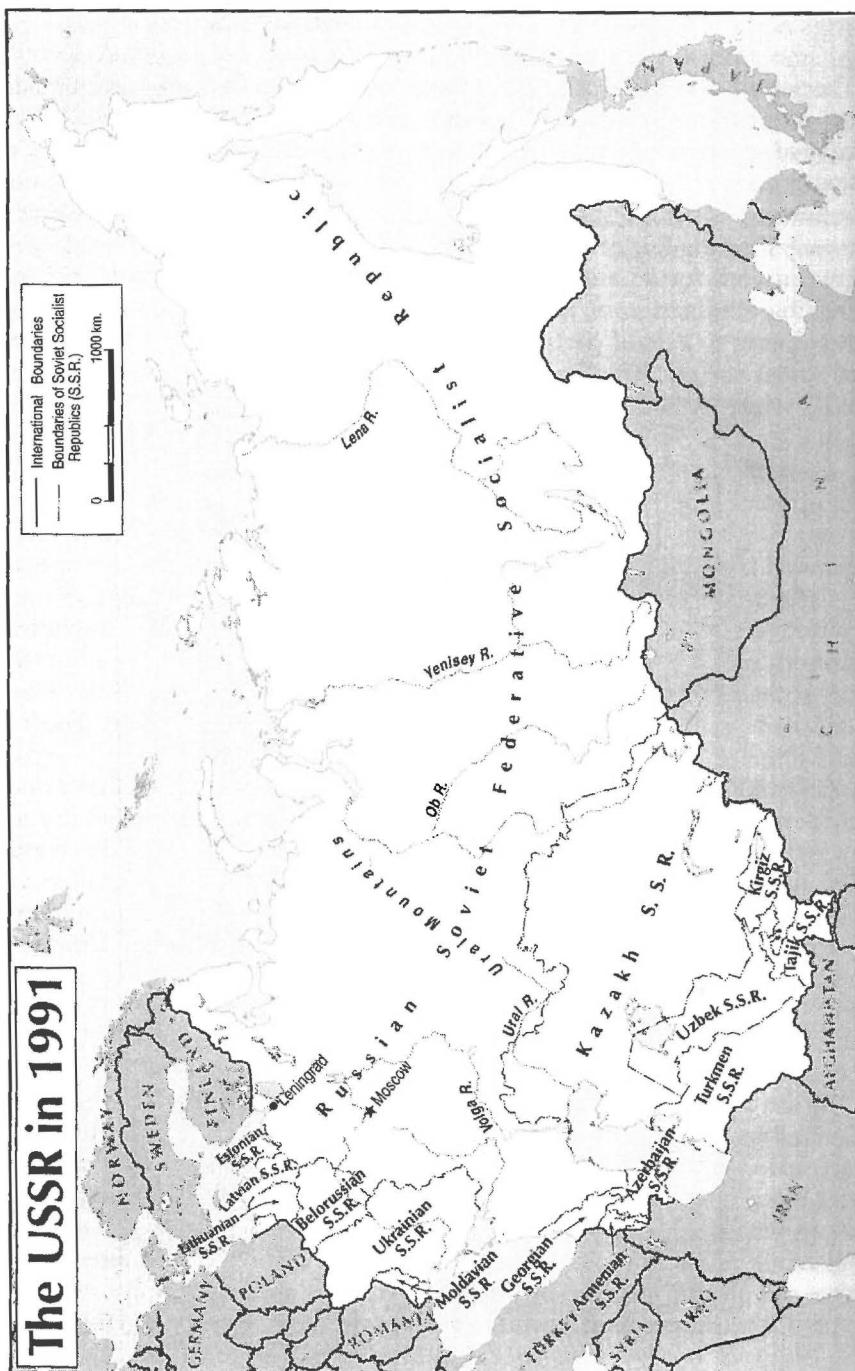
## STALIN AND TOTALITARIANISM

The period of relative calm and recovery under the NEP was interrupted, however, by the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924. His body was embalmed and placed in a glass sarcophagus in a mausoleum in Moscow’s Red Square, where it remains to this day. There was no clear successor to Lenin, and after a sustained power struggle, Joseph Stalin (1879–1953) emerged as the leader of the Communist Party. Lenin may have laid the groundwork for an authoritarian state, with censorship, a secret police, and the elimination of rival political parties, but Stalin perfected it by attempting to extend party and state control over virtually every aspect of Soviet society. This began with the first **five-year plan**, launched in 1928, which focused on a rapid industrialization of the Soviet economy and the collectivization of agriculture. The five-year plans, which became a continuing feature of the Soviet economy, entailed lodging virtually all economic decision making—about wages, prices, and the output of every single product—in centralized government ministries. Supply and demand and other rules of the market had no role in the Soviet economy.

Collectivization, the amalgamation of individual peasant holdings into collective farms, was met by much resistance, especially from wealthier farmers, many of whom burned their crops and destroyed their livestock rather than contribute them to the collectives. By 1937, virtually all of the land had been collectivized, but at a tremendous cost: Millions died of starvation or were sent to forced labor camps in Siberia.

Collectivization was primarily an instrument of Stalin’s larger goal, the quick transformation of the Soviet Union from an agricultural country to an industrial power and the closing of the economic gap with the West. The quick development of heavy industry was facilitated by the collectivization campaign, which contributed to the migration of twenty million people from the countryside to the cities in the first decade of the five-year plans. In this goal, too, Stalin was largely successful. Between 1928 and 1939, iron and steel production increased fourfold, and by 1939, the USSR’s gross industrial output was exceeded only by those of the United States and Germany.

By the mid-1930s, the dominance of the Communist Party and Stalin’s leadership of it seemed unassailable. Stalin himself apparently did not feel that way, and from 1936 to 1938, he carried out the **Great Purge** to root out all potential sources of opposition to him and to the party. This began with a series of politicized show trials in 1936, in which all the old Bolshevik revolutionaries, men who had been Lenin’s closest associates, were put on trial, accused of treason or subversion, found guilty, and executed. The purges then extended downward into the party and the army



and through the rest of society; millions of people were executed or sent to Siberian labor camps. Soviet citizens grew afraid to speak openly even to close friends or family members for fear that they would be turned in to the NKVD, the Soviet security police. The Russian Orthodox Church was persecuted and subordinated to the state, and most churches and monasteries were closed or destroyed. By the end of the purges, the Stalin regime had virtually total control over the economy, media, church, culture, education, and even people's private lives, leading to the designation of Stalin's Soviet Union as a totalitarian state. Stalin was to rule, unchallenged, until his death in 1953.

### THE LEGACY AND MEANING OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The French Revolution of 1789 was the first in Europe to overthrow a monarchy; the Russian Revolution of 1917 overthrew the last absolutist monarchy in Europe. This in itself marks the event as significant in European history, but the influence of the Russian Revolution was far more widespread, as was that of the French Revolution. Although the French revolutionaries attempted to put into practice some of the principles and ideals of liberalism and the Enlightenment, their Russian counterparts not only built on these principles but also based their state on the nineteenth-century ideals of Marxian socialism. In this, they had some successes, but at enormous costs.

On the positive side of the ledger, one can argue that the communists, particularly under Stalin, were able to transform Russia from a rural, economically undeveloped country into a major economic, political, and military power. By the 1960s, in fact, it was one of two global superpowers, along with the United States. If Stalin had not achieved his goal of industrial and military development, the Soviet Union probably would not have been able to repel the Nazi German onslaught of World War II, when it came in 1941.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union was able to achieve this economic development while simultaneously pursuing the Marxist goals of social welfare and egalitarianism. There was virtually no unemployment in the Soviet Union, and because of that, no hard-core poverty. Health care and education (through the university level) were free, and housing, food, and mass transit were heavily subsidized by the state and inexpensive for consumers. And, although the government never tried to achieve complete equality (and many people complained of the privileged status of the communist elites), the differences between the rich and poor were far fewer than in capitalist countries. Marx would have been pleased with these achievements.

These gains, however, came with substantial costs in both human lives and human rights. The worst came during the Stalin years: Several million lives were lost during the forced collectivization after 1929, and millions more died in the *Gulags*, the forced labor camps of Siberia and the frozen north.<sup>5</sup> The situation improved after the death of Stalin, but the Soviet political system remained throughout its history a single-party state, brooking no political competition, protest activity, or independent press. All books, periodicals, and mass media were censored. Most churches, synagogues, and mosques were closed or destroyed. People who dared challenge the regime or its policies were subject to arrest and possibly death in the Stalinist era and imprisonment or exile in the years after that. People had little choice about where they worked or lived, were restricted in their travel within the country, and could travel abroad only with difficulty.

Despite all this, the Soviet Union became increasingly powerful and influential on the world stage. Through the Communist International (the Comintern), Moscow helped establish communist parties and encourage revolutionary movements all over the world, including the Communist Party of China, which won power in that country in 1949. The Soviet Union bore the brunt of the losses from Germany during World War II, but it was the Soviet army that managed to liberate Eastern Europe from the Germans and to seize Berlin and force German surrender in 1945. This placed Moscow in a position of unparalleled strength in the center of Europe and brought it into conflict with the other new global power, the United States, in the emerging Cold War. Elsewhere in the world, the Soviet Union and its economic successes became a model for leftists, anti-imperialists, and revolutionaries all over the Third World. Indeed, by the 1970s, almost half the world's population was living under governments inspired or supported by the communists of Russia.



## World War II and the Holocaust

The Paris Peace Settlements of 1919–1920 brought to a close the bitter divisions and seemingly endless conflict of World War I. European participants in the war were devastated and exhausted and yearned for peace, stability, and normality, and many of the European governments (and the United States) retreated into isolationism, neutrality, or pacifism. The Paris agreements, including the crucial Versailles Treaty affecting Germany, had established national and democratic states in Germany, as well as the new states of Eastern Europe, and had created the League of Nations to protect the peace and ward off future wars. A sense of calm and relief spread through much of the Continent.

There were, however, storm clouds on the horizon even in those first postwar years, with economic distress and inflation, irredentist discontent with the Versailles Treaty (especially in Germany), and the unsettling presence of a new communist state in Russia. By the 1930s, things fell apart as a worldwide economic depression weakened governments everywhere, and many of the newly established European democracies were subverted from within or without. In Germany, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) capitalized on economic distress and discontent, seized absolute power, and began constructing his *Third Reich*. His aggressive military moves to reclaim German territory and then to conquer all of Europe led to World War II, which was even more devastating than the previous war, and to the Holocaust. The United States finally intervened to help end the war, as it had in World War I, and the potent alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union finally crushed Nazi Germany. But, with the end of



# South Asia in World History

Marc Jason Gilbert

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*Frontispiece: Mughal Emperor Akbar is shown in the midst of a theological discussion with Jesuit missionaries.* © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

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## Toward Freedom, 1877–1947

In 1877, Benjamin Disraeli, the British Conservative prime minister, arranged for Parliament to proclaim Queen Victoria as Empress of India in an attempt to strengthen the link between the British monarchy and Britain's imperial ambitions. The queen had long taken an interest in Indian culture. She studied Urdu and dined on Indian food prepared by a *munshi* (clerk) in her home at Windsor Castle. She also took an interest in the region's politically emasculated, but still colorful, indigenous royalty. In the wake of the celebration of the queen's new title, her son the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) made a tour of South Asia. He was impressed by his nation's material achievement there, particularly its railroads and modern ports, but was shocked by the "rude and rough manner" of British officials in advising its surviving aristocrats, his mother's favorites. He was also offended by the "disgraceful usage of nigger" by South Asia's British residents. In his view, just "because a man has a black face and a different religion from one's own, there is no reason why he should be treated like a brute."<sup>1</sup>

In a sense, the Prince of Wales had identified the reason why, at the very moment of Disraeli's celebration of India's place as the brightest jewel in the queen's imperial crown, the prospects of Britain's Indian empire were beginning to fade. Unwittingly, Britain's effort to consolidate its rule via increased transportation and communication was speeding the development of a national consciousness. Its post-Great Mutiny effort to lower the status of traditional South Asian leaders had created a political vacuum, clearing the way for the emergence of new leadership whose growing national identity undermined British authority. This new leadership arose out of a growing Western-educated Indian middle class called "New India"<sup>2</sup> by a few far-sighted officials willing to acknowledge the rise of indigenous political aspirations for self-rule. But British self-interest, compounded by racist

values, made conflict between the British and their South Asian subjects inevitable.

South Asia's anti-colonialist and nationalist stirrings, among the first arising in Europe's overseas possessions, were stimulated by the work of a new generation of intellectuals. Among them was the Muslim intellectual Sayyid Ahmed Khan, the author of *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1858), who blamed the "Mutiny" on unethical British policy. He also championed Western-style scientific education, as did Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, who produced a synthesis of modernist and Salafist outlooks. Though born in Iran in 1838, al-Afghani studied in India in the years before and after the Great Mutiny to gain knowledge of modern European science. He then visited the Ottoman Empire, arguing that a return to the older forms and practices of Islam, together with the adoption of Western technological innovations, would enable the Islamic world to revive itself without sacrificing its religious convictions to secular modernization. "It is not," he wrote, "that religious beliefs are opposed to culture and material progress," but the false belief that they do, "which prohibits learning of sciences, earning one's livelihood and the ways of culture."<sup>3</sup> In 1866, followers of the Muslim Salafist philosopher Shah Waliullah created a madrasa (school) in Deoband, near Delhi, where they combined their resistance to religious pluralism (no compromise with Hindu and Christian ideas) with their opposition to British imperialism, which they believed oppressed Muslims globally.

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda, acting as a representative of Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, delivered an electrifying speech representing the Hindu faith, which he opened by saying, "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance."<sup>4</sup> In 1876, Dadabhai Naoroji, a leading Parsi of Bombay (the Parsi were descendants of Zoroastrians who had fled Persia at the time of the Muslim conquest in 642–651 CE), gave a speech in Bombay that became an influential study, *Poverty and un-British Rule in India*, in which he championed the idea that poverty in India was not the result of overpopulation or even "the pitiless operations of economic laws, but . . . the pitiless action of British policy; it is the pitiless eating of India's substance in India and further pitiless drain [of its wealth] to England."<sup>5</sup> This "drain theory" of colonial underdevelopment (poverty among the colonized was due to the extraction of their fiscal and material resources by colonial powers) became a standard critique of imperialism in South Asia adopted by nationalist movements the world over. In 1909, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar offered an analysis of the War of 1857 that attempted to prove that it was not a



### "DISPUTED EMPIRE!"

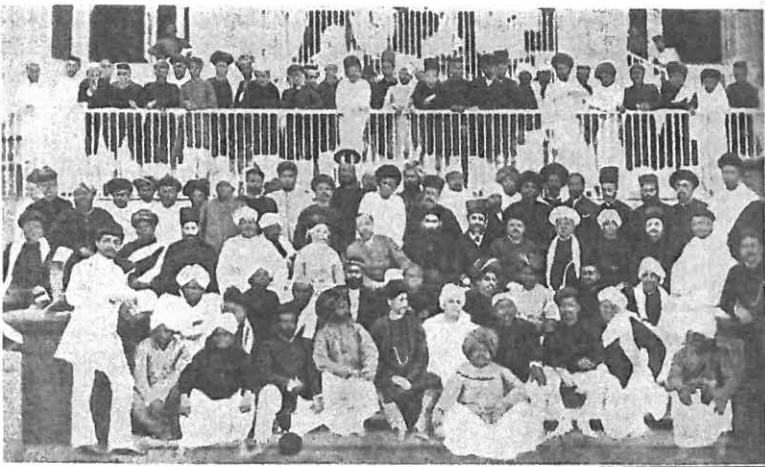
The Indian famine of 1877–1878 was so horrific and so much a product of British economic policy that cartoons critical of British Indian policy appeared in the British press. *Punch*, vol. 72 (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co., Printers, Whitefriars, 1877), 427

mere rebellion but the Indian War of Independence of 1857. This interpretation of that event was influenced by his study of the American and French revolutions and, like Naoroji's work, served as a useful nationalist critique of foreign rule.<sup>6</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, South Asians of all philosophic stripes asserted with increasing confidence that they were the moral, intellectual, and cultural equals of their British rulers and Western culture at large, reflecting the belief among its middle class that the achievement of a modern national identity, such as the one possessed by their colonial masters, was within their reach. This outlook was reinforced by their growing command of British political ideals and also by contemporary European developments, such as the demand for "home rule" in Ireland and the rise to nationhood of Italy, whose diverse population had not possessed a common identity until inspired by nationalists to join together to throw off their foreign masters.

Aggressive imperial policy on South Asia's frontiers by British Conservative Party politicians stimulated nationalist sentiment in India. Conservatives supported a second invasion of Afghanistan in 1878 and annexed what remained of independent Burma in 1885 in order to thwart what proved to be largely imagined expansionist thrusts by Russia and France, respectively. When Indian-owned newspapers complained about Indian taxpayers paying for such imperial adventurism, British administrators passed legislation muzzling the press and restricting other civil liberties that Western-educated Indians had enjoyed. These repressive actions backfired, raising the ire of the Indian-owned press and regional political associations. When members of these associations learned that the Indian government's Famine Fund had been emptied to cover the expenses of the final conquest and pacification of Burma, they joined to create the Indian National Congress (1885), which was to serve as the umbrella organization under which most South Asians began their quest for political freedom. It also served as the prototype for the African National Congress in South Africa.

Searching for a counterweight to the outspokenness of their largely middle-class, Western-educated Indian critics, the British began elevating the status of the traditional South Asian aristocracy, which they had shunned after the War of 1857. They showered these nobles with hollow awards, such as grand military honors, a process later labeled "ornamentalism."<sup>7</sup> The British also became more alert to ways in which they could benefit from traditional Hindu-Muslim divisions. They shunned overt divide-and-rule tactics: communal violence, once ignited, might be



This group photograph records the delegates at the first meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1885. In the center is Allan Octavian Hume, a cofounder of the organization and one of a few former British-Indian officials who embraced the Indian nationalist cause. H. P. Mody, *Sir Pherozeshah Mehta: A Political Biography* (Bombay: Times Press, 1921)

beyond their ability to control. However, they did little to resolve these divisions in the self-interested belief that nothing could resolve them.

A few liberal-minded British officials, some with ties to or experience of conditions on the subcontinent, and well known to each other, attempted to anticipate and even advance India's political development. Lord Ripon, secretary of state for India (1874–1880) and viceroy of India (1880–1884), established the building blocks of democracy at the local level (*Resolution on Self-Government*, 1882). He also introduced legislation giving Indian judges jurisdiction in areas in which they could judge crimes of Europeans against Indians (the Ilbert Bill).<sup>8</sup> Lord Lansdowne, a parliamentary undersecretary to Ripon (1880) and viceroy (1888–1894), after consulting with Ripon, championed the expansion of British India's existing small advisory provincial and imperial legislative councils via the election of Indian members and giving them the power to debate British administrative policies (the Indian Councils Act of 1892).

Lansdowne's grandfather had helped draft the Company Charter Act of 1833, promising that Indians would be eligible for government employment. That promise, Lansdowne believed, had been so long unfilled in any meaningful way as to become a danger to the British Raj.

Correctly gauging the frustrations of Western-educated Indians seeking "a greater role in the governing of their own country," Lansdowne warned in his correspondence with the secretary of state for India that unless these aspirations were met, Britain faced political agitation in India that "would likely gain strength" and would inevitably lead to reforms being "extorted from us."<sup>9</sup> Lord Minto (viceroy 1905–1910), an aide-de-camp to Lansdowne in Canada, helped secure a major expansion of the 1892 reform scheme and the appointment of two Indians to the secretary of state for India's own council in London (the Indian Councils Act of 1909).

All three reformers met overwhelming opposition among British officials in India, which, Minto admitted in a letter to the secretary of state for India, was rooted in "our own inherent prejudice against another race."<sup>10</sup> That opposition was supported by the dominant Conservative Party in Parliament, guided by its prime minister, Lord Salisbury. Upon learning that Dadabhai Naoroji was planning to run as a Liberal Party candidate in the next British elections, Salisbury declared in a speech that he would "never countenance the seating of a Black Man" in Parliament.<sup>11</sup> This opposition succeeded in so weakening Ripon's reforms and the Councils Acts of 1892 and 1909 that they proved, as Lansdowne feared, to be too little and too late to meet the rising political aspirations and economic concerns of Western-educated Indians.

In an attempt to break the opposition to Indian political reform in Britain, the Indian National Congress made alliances with Irish home-rulers in the British Parliament and also gained strength from the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, in which an Asian power defeated a European imperial state in 1905. Nationalist-minded Indians faced opposition not only from the British imperial state, but also from within their own movement. They were aware that most of their movement's leaders were drawn from a Western-educated middle class arising from the most privileged social orders, which Lansdowne's predecessor as viceroy, the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, dismissed in a dinner speech as a "microscopic minority."<sup>12</sup> However, their numbers were growing rapidly and the benefits they derived from British rule, such as Western education, rail transportation, and other trappings of modern technology, had both encouraged a sense of national unity and provided the means of communication to rally their people to recover their lost sovereignty. If they initially addressed issues of concern, such as admission to places in government, mostly to the Western-educated elite, the Indian National Congress's attacks on British economic policy and its

criticism of the use of the British Indian Army as an engine of imperialism elsewhere in the empire won public support and laid the foundation for mass political action.

The Indian National Congress also had to confront the traditional ethnic and religious divisions among Indians. Many Muslims and other minority groups saw little future in a new Hindu-majority nation whose policies were decided by “one man, one vote.” Further, in the first decade of the twentieth century, moderate Congress leaders who sought increased power through gradual and peaceful constitutional change faced stiff competition from more extreme nationalist factions who sought immediate *swaraj* (self-rule) and encouraged the action of assassins and suicide bombers, both men and women, who killed British officials at work or in their racially exclusive clubs. The ablest representative of these factions, the ardent Hindu nationalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak, imprisoned from 1908 to 1914 for encouraging such violence, denied he had done so but thereafter won fame for his declaration that “*Swaraj* is my birthright, and I shall have it!”<sup>13</sup>

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 forced the British to take a “different angle of vision”<sup>14</sup> toward Indian political affairs such that implied support for the postwar movement toward Tilak’s goal of self-government. They had little choice but to do so, as Britain desperately needed Indian troops to blunt the early German offensive in Belgium and northern France and to use against the Ottoman Empire when the Ottomans decided to ally themselves with the German and Austrian cause. It also needed to forge a united war effort among its major colonies, all of which were populated by white settlers and all of which, save India, were self-governing. Angered by such patent inequality, Tilak and Annie Besant, a firebrand, sari-clad longtime resident and newspaper editor in India, founded Home Rule Leagues, which demanded self-government within the empire, not in return for their loyalty, but in recognition of India’s place as an equal partner in empire. Their efforts won the support of many Hindus and Muslims, including a rising young Muslim leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. However, criticism of the British administration in India, at least initially, was tempered by the belief that Britain’s touted new angle of vision would lead to a major advance toward the desired goal at the end of the war. Most Indians, regardless of their status or political affiliation, would support the transfer of Indian revenue to Britain to aid in the war and help recruit the approximately one million Indian troops that eventually fought on all fronts, of whom fifty thousand were killed and seventy thousand were wounded.



Indian Muslim soldiers guard the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem in 1917. Approximately one million Indian troops served in virtually every theater of combat in the First World War. Library of Congress LC-DIG-ppmsca-13291-00042

The first of 28,500 Indian soldiers arrived on the western front in September and October 1914. They served to blunt the initial German advance through Belgium and into France, having arrived “just in time” to save the British position in Flanders, where British troops were heavily outnumbered by German forces.<sup>15</sup> They fought in the battles of Ypres, Loos, and Neuve Chapelle, among others, winning the first two Victoria Crosses issued to Indians in the war. In addition to being among the first to encounter modern trench warfare, Indian sepoys were compelled to serve under officers who could not speak their languages, as their own British Indian army officers were killed in the war’s initial bloody campaigns. When these conditions began to eat away at their efficiency, they were shifted to Africa and the Middle East to join Indian units fighting there and once again performed superbly, even in defeat, as much of the Indian Expeditionary Force deployed to Mesopotamia under British army command was destroyed at the First Battle of Kut in 1915–1916 due to the British government’s over-eagerness to take Baghdad. However, the highest casualty rate among Indian forces committed to battle was at Gallipoli, where 1,624 of the 3,000 Indian combatants were killed or wounded. Indian letters written on the battlefield

described “poisonous gases, bombs, machine guns which fire 700 bullets per minute, large and small cannon throwing [huge] cannon balls . . . Zeppelins, large and small flying machines which throw bombs from the air . . . liquid fire that causes the body to ignite.” One Punjabi soldier wrote home: “No man can return to the Punjab whole. Only the broken limbed can go back.” Another Indian soldier wrote, “In one hour 10,000 men are killed. What more can I write?”<sup>16</sup>

On the Indian home front, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League’s united support of the war helped effect a subsidence of domestic terrorism. There was limited violent extremist action in Bengal, and there was the small but active revolutionary Ghadar (Mutiny) Movement, which rallied Indian opposition to British rule in California, Singapore, and the Punjab. However, British administrators publicly attributed these signs of discontent to anarchists in the pay of Germany (which did attempt to supply them with arms). There was no stoppage in the export of strategically vital food and war materiel for the Allied war effort. However, while South Asia itself emerged virtually unscathed physically from the war (some coastal shipping was sunk and coastal cities were briefly bombarded by the German cruiser *Emden*), millions of Indian civilians endured a reduced standard of living, and some areas experienced famine due to food shortages and high prices driven by wartime exports and the diversion of public and private money to the war effort.

By the autumn of 1916, with no end of the war in sight and its costs to Indians rising, the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, and leading Indian nationalist newspapers began asking for some sign that the British intended to make good on their promises of postwar political reform. When these requests were rebuffed, Hindu and Muslim nationalists agreed in Lucknow in northern India to promote a proposal of their own—the Joint Congress-Muslim League Scheme—that overcame past political divisions over majority-minority representation between the two communities. It also introduced a plan that would result in elected majorities of Indians in the legislatures of their own country (the Lucknow Pact—destined to be the high watermark of Hindu-Muslim political accord). Indian nationalists went on to establish this scheme as the vehicle for eventually securing Indian autonomy within the empire and the bare minimum they would accept with regard to postwar reforms.

In the face of such pressure, the viceroy, Lord Chelmsford (1916–1921), and his executive council were willing to introduce some degree of reform but would not agree to the elected Indian majorities in India’s

legislatures. They viewed elected Indian legislative majorities as bringing an early end to British rule, which many of Chelmsford’s colleagues believed was premature given India’s need for at least a generation of further British tutelage. Sir Afsar Ali Baig, the only Indian on a committee advising the secretary of state in London on the Chelmsford administration’s reform policy, accurately observed that this view—when taken to its extreme, as some members of the viceroy’s council were determined to do—would mean that “India may be effectively shut out from any reasonable prospect, proximate or remote, of ever becoming a self-governing unit of the Empire.”<sup>17</sup>

Yet, much to Chelmsford’s frustration, he found the government in London too preoccupied by the war to allow them to seriously consider any reform scheme they developed. Handcuffed by this decision and embarrassed by increasingly virulent Indian criticism of its failure to act on the issue of political reform, the Indian government decided in June 1917 to crack down on Indian unrest in order to preserve its authority. This included the internment without a hearing of the then seventy-year-old Annie Besant, an act that some British officials recognized beforehand would only raise her political profile and that of her own and Tilak’s Home Rule Leagues. They were right. Soon-to-be leading figures in the nationalist movement, including Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. R. Das, Sarojini Naidu (the remarkable nationalist poet who would one day become the first woman to be the governor of an Indian state), and Rabindranath Tagore (the first South Asian winner of the Nobel Prize, for literature), then formally joined the leagues. Besant was elected president of the Congress later that year.

With the political situation in India fast deteriorating and India’s support for the war still vital, the secretary of state for India, Edwin Samuel Montagu, announced in Parliament on August 20, 1917, that henceforth the aim of British policy was “the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.”<sup>18</sup> Much to the delight of Indian moderates and extremists alike, Montagu followed these remarks by coming to India at the head of a delegation that would meet with Indian leaders across the subcontinent, as well as the viceroy and other officials “on the spot” in an effort to draw up legislation designed to further that goal. At the start of these discussions, Besant, who was released from internment on Montagu’s order, read a welcoming address. Tilak, having been released from jail in 1914, but closely watched, placed the

traditional Indian welcome of a garland of flowers around Montagu's neck. Not everyone present at these acts of mutual respect and accommodation was pleased by them. Sir Malcolm Seton, an adviser to the secretary of state for India who was opposed to political reform in India, composed a letter after witnessing these events in which he bitterly remarked, "That I would live to see a Secretary of State garlanded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak!"<sup>19</sup>

In fact, even before Montagu's arrival, members of his own delegation, like Seton, were prepared to join with high officials in India and conservative politicians in Britain to undermine Montagu and Chelmsford's progressive efforts, much as these factions had undermined the liberal spirit of the Council reforms of 1892 and 1909. They achieved this goal. When the Montagu-Chelmsford (or Montford) reforms eventually passed into law as the Government of India Act of 1919, it came as an embarrassment to both moderate and extremist Congress leaders who had believed that British pledges would be redeemed with more substantial postwar reforms, which even British officials in India admitted was a reasonable assumption. The reforms offered only very limited power-sharing at the provincial level and continued the British practice of providing separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims that threatened the unity that Hindu and Muslim leaders had forged during the war. It left nationalists divided into a variety of factions over how best to respond to them: to reject the scheme outright was ungenerous, given the genuine effort Montagu had made to overcome official opposition to reform, but to accept proposals that fell so far short of their own wartime proposals was a bitter pill to swallow. In a speech made at the special session of the Indian National Congress held in 1918 to consider the options, Tilak expressed the view of Annie Besant and many other leaders of Congress that the reforms were "disappointing and unsatisfactory." He saw them, as had Sir Afsar Ali Baig, as reflecting the views of diehard British Indian officials who would delay real progress toward self-government for at least a decade and perhaps a generation.<sup>20</sup>

The strength of the conservative backlash against the reform proposals was so pervasive that, despite the admission of key officials that Indian unrest was at its lowest point in decades, the Indian government followed the passage of the reforms into law with the near-simultaneous passing of the Rowlatt Act, which contained unprecedented restrictions on Indian personal and political freedoms.

The Congress and leading Indian newspapers called this step "monstrous" and "a gigantic blunder which would arouse the worst passions of peaceful, law-abiding people."<sup>21</sup>

Frustration over the betrayal represented by the 1919 reforms, the harshness of the Rowlatt Act, and the divisions among nationalist political parties over how best to respond to the new act led younger nationalists to seek a fresh approach that would take them beyond the gradualist posture of moderate leaders but would also avoid violent extremist acts that might provoke the British to even greater acts of repression. They would find that fresh approach in the strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience developed by the charismatic Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who became known as Mahatma (Great-Souled One).

Like many Western-educated Indians, Gandhi was from childhood prepared to go to any length to resist British rule. As a boy in the early 1880s, he once ate meat on the advice of a mentor, Mehtab Singh, who argued that it was this dietary habit that gave Britons their advantage over South Asians. "We are a weak people," he told the young Gandhi, "because we do not eat meat. The English are able to rule over us, because they are meat-eaters . . . Try it and see the strength it gives."<sup>22</sup> He did try it but abandoned the effort at the behest of his father, a modern man but one who valued tradition—as did Gandhi himself. After training in England to become a lawyer in the family-run law firm in Bombay, he was as well versed in the work of Western political theorists as in the texts of the classical Indian philosophical political tradition. His chosen course of political action would combine elements of each.

After earning his legal qualifications in London and a brief return to India, Gandhi journeyed to South Africa as a lawyer serving the needs of Indian merchants who had gone there to supply the needs of Indians working on railway projects. It was there, after experiencing the racism of white South Africans, that he began his experiments with satyagraha (holding fast to the truth), an active, courageous, nonviolent approach to social as well as political change that drew on the textual centerpiece of modern Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita, with its evocation of selfless action in pursuit of righteousness. It also drew on the Sermon on the Mount's evocation of the transformative power of love, the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau's practice of civil disobedience against government-sponsored injustice, and the Jain-Buddhist philosophy of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) that had permeated Gandhi's birthplace in western India. Through a synthesis of these and other philosophies of human transformation, Gandhi created a vehicle for nonviolent political action designed to persuade the oppressor to accept the "truth" that injustice was the denial to others of that which one desired for oneself.<sup>23</sup>

In Gandhi's view, violence against the oppressor merely enabled him or her to justify their own violent behavior. Nonviolent resistance not

only removed this path of escape, but offered open arms to the oppressor, thus creating space for reconciliation. As for the campaign to end British rule in India, he wrote in *Non-Violence in Peace and War* that “a non-violent revolution is not a program of seizure of power. It is a program of transformation of relationship, ending in a peaceful transfer of power.”<sup>24</sup> Gandhi enjoyed only limited success from his practice of satyagraha in South Africa, but what he did achieve made him a renowned figure in the fight against racial discrimination and a hero upon his return to India in 1915.

One of Ghandi's first political acts was to provide leadership for peasant resistance to conditions imposed by a British-owned indigo plantation system, for which he was briefly jailed. This action garnered support for his leadership that reached beyond Congress's traditional following among the Hindu urban middle class. He also sought to broaden the nationalist movement by lending his support to the Muslim Khilafat Movement that had emerged to protest the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. Muslims across the globe had risen in protest against what was perceived as a European-led assault on the Ottoman Empire's role as the symbol of the unity of the Islamic world. Indian Muslims joined in the Khilafat struggle, though they needed no transnational movement to convince them that the British were among those determined to divide and rule the Middle East, as they believed the British had already done so in South Asia. Gandhi identified himself with the Khilafat Movement because he hoped to employ local Muslim opposition to Britain's interference in the Islamic world as a means of binding Indian Muslims more closely to the Indian freedom movement. He needed to do so because his employment of traditional Hindu religious symbols and tactics (such as ahimsa) did not have the same appeal to Muslims as it did to Hindus.

Nonetheless, the Muslim leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan, an anti-colonialist hero of the Pashtun-speaking Indo-Afghan borderlands, became known as the “Frontier Gandhi” for his adoption of satyagraha. He was impressed that Gandhi strove to live his principles through patience and humor and afforded respect to all whom he encountered. In the final analysis, Gandhi's personal character attracted many to the nationalist cause, while the power inherent in his mass boycotts and campaigns of civil disobedience won over all those who sought to benefit from the end of British rule. Among the latter were many of South Asia's leading entrepreneurs, such as the Tata (in steel) and Birla (in jute and cotton) families, whose financial contributions

fueled the independence movement. Few Indian businessmen shared Gandhi's belief that private wealth was a public trust, but they came to see satyagraha as the best means of liberating themselves from British imperial control and unfair British competition.

Gandhi's opposition to immoral activities, such as alcohol consumption, which destroyed many Indian families, and his commitment to the advancement of women attracted many social reformers and women, including Madame Bhikhaji Rustom Cama, a firebrand nationalist, who had earlier made history by unfurling an Indian national flag on foreign soil for the first time (Germany, 1907), and Sarojini Naidu, a poet and president of the Indian National Congress (1925). Gandhi's assault on racism rallied to the nationalist cause even many of the pro-British Parsi of western India. This shift in allegiance to the nationalist cause was noticed by an American financier, Robert Drennan Cravath, traveling in India in 1924 and again in 1930. When he asked a junior British official to explain this, the answer was, “Because they want to be members of the Bombay Yacht Club and we will not let them in.” In his 1931 memoir of that visit, Cravath judged that “the young man was not far from right.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite the support of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and a few other leading Muslims, Gandhi proved unable to develop close ties with the traditional Muslim elite or to sustain Hindu-Muslim unity on a mass level. In December 1906, a group of Muslim leaders drawn from a small circle of conservative nawabs, religious leaders, and intellectuals, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, formed the All-India Muslim League, which courted the favor of British administrators in the hope that they might serve as a counterweight against what they perceived as a rapidly mobilizing majority-Hindu polity. When the end of the caliphate in 1922 alienated many Muslims from British rule, the Muslim League shifted its stance and joined the nationalist mainstream, a transition aided by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who had joined the League in 1913. Jinnah, like Gandhi, was a British-trained lawyer with exceptional political skills. At that time, he shared Gandhi's vision of a united and independent nation, though to protect the interests of the subcontinent's largest minority, he sought to reserve for Muslims one-third of the seats in any future national assembly. However, in the 1930s and 1940s, Jinnah and the Muslim League took an increasingly separatist stance, which gained popularity and strength among many Muslims who were increasingly alienated by Hindu extremists. These extremists were perhaps the greatest force that impeded the consensus Gandhi sought to build. They not only ramped up their campaign to seek the “reconversion” of Indian

Muslims to Hinduism, but they also opposed the political secularism, as well as the religious syncretism, that Gandhi preached.

Gandhi's campaigns were also hampered by poor mass communication resources, which made it difficult for him to achieve the level of discipline necessary to ensure nonviolent behavior among the millions of freedom campaigners required to appeal to the hearts of the oppressors. This problem was revealed during Gandhi's first major political campaign, an effort in 1919 to repeal the Rowlatt Act via an India-wide *hartal* (work stoppage). In the Punjab, a local official so feared the possibility of another great Mutiny that he called in the local military commander, who, to demonstrate British resolve in the face of that threat, gave orders that led to a massacre of hundreds of unarmed demonstrators at a peaceful rally in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. Gandhi blamed himself for the incident, as his followers had not been able to prevent a riot sparked by the sudden and unexplained British seizure of local leaders in the days preceding the massacre. He ended another campaign in 1922, when a single act of deadly violence against a police headquarters marred an otherwise peaceful national protest.

The British arrested Gandhi in the belief that his confinement would reopen the divisions within the Indian nationalist movement, which it did. Moreover, the nationalist movement had a new foe, Winston Churchill. Churchill rarely strayed from the prevailing post-Mutiny view that British India would need generations more of British rule before the subcontinent was ready for self-rule and that this development depended on crushing the dominance of its landlord class and other traditional elites: Britain itself had only just achieved those goals shortly before the First World War. Nonetheless, during a short stint of military service in India, he had participated in a campaign on the northwestern frontier of India against communities that he recognized were merely fighting because of "the presence of British troops in lands the local people considered their own."<sup>26</sup> He also regretted the Amritsar massacre of 1919, remarking in Parliament that "collisions between troops and native populations have been painfully frequent in the melancholy aftermath of the Great War . . . [and] the Amritsar crowd was neither armed nor attacking."<sup>27</sup>

However, his commitment to the imperial idea was total. Within a decade, Churchill was the leading opponent of the devolution of power in South Asia. In 1931, he condemned the efforts that the then-viceroy, Lord Irwin, to negotiate with Gandhi, who attended these meetings dressed as always in a common dhoti (a seamless cloth worn about the body). Churchill, when addressing a conservative political meeting in

February 23, 1931, declared, "It was alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious . . . lawyer of the type well-known in the East, now posing as a fakir (a holy man), striding half naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor." Gandhi successfully turned the tables on Churchill, saying that he was merely "trying to identify with India's naked millions."<sup>28</sup> In fact, Churchill's concerns were perhaps more economic than political or even racial. He remarked in a speech that India was so important to the British economy that if its troops ever marched home from the subcontinent, "they would bring famine in their wake."<sup>29</sup> He was wrong. The subcontinent would, as Macaulay suggested, be a better trading partner when freed of its imperial yoke.

In January 1930, Gandhi was no longer in prison and had recovered from the ill health he had experienced while there. He revived nationalist aspirations with a national declaration of independence and shortly thereafter launched the civil disobedience campaign of 1930–1934, during which he began a 241-mile walk culminating in a symbolic making of salt from the sea that violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the long-standing retrogressive British levy on salt. Gandhi was immediately arrested for this act of defiance, even though salt made this way was not taxed and was inedible. But this Salt March, in which thousands joined Gandhi, drew worldwide attention to the British reliance on a tax that fell most heavily on those who could least afford it. The rich needed little salt for survival and their income was hardly denting by the tax, while it was a heavy blow to poor farmers sweating in the fields, as the tax took a large portion of their meager earnings. Many Indians who had in the past mistrusted Gandhi rallied to him, providing the leverage he eventually used to force the colonial government to make significant political concessions, including provincial autonomy, direct elections, and a template for an All Indian Federation (the Government of India Act of 1935).

Believing that the achievement of full independence was now inevitable, Gandhi focused on *sarvodaya* (the uplift of all) in an effort to heal the divisions of religion and caste within South Asia via *satyagraha* at the grass roots; unless these divisions were resolved, political independence would have no meaning. He addressed caste discrimination on the local level by encouraging young *satyagrahis* (practitioners of *satyagraha*) to use nonviolent techniques such as sit-ins to open up Hindu temples and village wells that denied access to the lower orders. Parallel efforts were aimed at building Hindu-Muslim unity. As Gandhi argued in his weekly newspaper, *Young India*, "Everybody knows that

without unity between Hindus and Mussulmans no certain progress can be made by the nation.”<sup>30</sup> But nothing he did could change the divisive tenor among both Hindu and Muslim leaders. Many members of the Indian National Congress had by then spent much of their lives in political struggle, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, newly elected as president of the Muslim League, was determined to prove himself on the national stage. Neither party could take their eyes off the now inevitable prize of complete independence. Their subsequent actions led to Gandhi’s worst nightmare: communal violence and partition of the subcontinent along religious lines.

In 1937, national elections mandated by the Government of India Act of 1935 were carried out. These were largely swept by candidates put forward by the Indian National Congress, now a political party as well as a movement. Congress interpreted this victory as confirmation of their claim to represent all Indians and, as a result, refused to share power with the Jinnah-led Muslim League, which had not put up candidates in key areas, but expected a power-sharing agreement to emerge. This lack of generosity may have sprung from the Congress’s long struggle to establish itself as the sole voice of India against British rule, but it did nothing to reduce Muslim fears of a Hindu-dominated government.

Two years later, the region was once again embroiled in a world war. Once again, Britain called on Indian troops, eventually numbering over 2.5 million men, to fight in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. As they had thirty years before in Flanders, the British Indian army helped turn the tide of a world war, defeating a Japanese invasion of India in the jungles of Manipur State in eastern India in a battle from which Japanese imperial forces in south and southeast Asia never recovered. However, where thirty years before Indians fought with the blessings of the most politically advanced among their own leaders, this was not to be the case in the sequel to the Great War.

Britain had granted a sufficient degree of freedom to India in 1935 to ensure the loyalty of most Indians, including soldiers in the British Indian army, many of whom were from professional soldiering communities who remained beyond the reach of Gandhi’s political agitation. At the commencement of hostilities, Britain again made unspecified pledges of postwar reforms, but as in 1914, it had also unilaterally declared India at war against Germany in 1939. The Congress was furious at Britain’s presumption to again act without any consultation with Indian leaders and eventually adopted a stance of non-cooperation as a means of securing complete autonomy for India to avoid a repetition of

the betrayal of political promises the British had made at the beginning of the First World War.

With the Indian army and India’s resources central to the British war effort and the astute political use by Japan of Indian prisoners of war captured early in the conflict to create an Indian National Army under the command of Gandhi’s chief Hindu rival, Subhas Chandra Bose, Britain had no choice but to negotiate with Indian nationalists. Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour Party leader supportive of the independence movement, was dispatched to India to help resolve this situation. Yet the “Cripps Mission” of 1942 was thwarted by Winston Churchill, who had become Britain’s wartime prime minister. He made his stance clear in a famous address at Mansion House in London: “I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.”<sup>31</sup> What is less well known was his determination not only to hold on to the British Indian Empire but to expand it in postwar Asia by linking Burma to Malaya through the annexation of Thai territory that separated these two British possessions.<sup>32</sup>

These self-interested visions of British postwar imperial expansion only served to strengthen Churchill’s lifelong opposition to Indian nationalism. Without a moment’s reflection on the realities of Britain’s class system, which until just before the First World War had long reserved the highest political offices for aristocrats and only grudgingly raised taxes on the wealthy to support the needs of commoners, Churchill would tell Parliament that it was Britain’s duty to continue to protect India from “its political parties and classes [that] do not represent the masses.”<sup>33</sup>

Consistent with these views, Churchill undermined the work of the Cripps Mission, further alienating the Congress. In response, the Congress launched the “Quit India” movement. Although it was intended as a strident, but still peaceful campaign, growing frustration among nationalists led to murderous attacks on European civilians, some of whom were dragged from trains and slaughtered. Congress leaders were then rounded up and imprisoned for the duration of the war, as the British blamed them for this explosion of violence.

The Muslim League had by then positioned itself as the vehicle for achieving autonomy for areas with a Muslim majority—or outright independence, should the decolonization process endanger Muslim interests. The Muslim League profited from the imprisonment of Congress leaders by impressing British leaders with their loyal support. This stance yielded dividends at the war’s end. In 1946, a British Cabinet Mission sent to India offered a groundwork for future Indian independence. This

plan met the Muslim League's desire in that it permitted some areas, such as those with a Muslim majority, to opt out of a proposed Indian federal state. Congress rejected this formula in part because they were unable to accept that Britain, so proud of its vast South Asian empire, would simply divide and quit the subcontinent. Yet postwar economic decline at home and the consequent need to draw down its garrisons overseas and put them to work rebuilding their own country was driving Britain to extricate itself from its South Asian quagmire created by the intractability of Congress and the Muslim League.

The Muslim League helped push the British to exit the subcontinent when it called for a "Direct Action Day," a *hartal*, on August 16, 1946, which may have been an act of brinksmanship designed to force Congress to accept the Cabinet Mission's plan, and thus providing Muslims a means of exiting the federal union if it threatened Muslim interests. It may also have been an effort by the Muslim League's leadership to reject the Cabinet Mission's plan and directly engage the masses in a unilateral effort to establish a separate state composed of Muslim-majority areas. Neither the Muslim League nor Congress anticipated what followed: waves of communal violence that left four thousand dead and one hundred thousand homeless in Calcutta alone. Moreover, the possibility of violence and political impasse convinced the rulers of the fading British Empire that they could not and would not try any longer to control events on the subcontinent. On August 15, 1947, after a seventy-two-day marathon of final negotiations, Britain granted independence to India and Pakistan, via a partition made so hastily as to bequeath the two states only sketchily drawn common borders, and granting the rulers of the semi-autonomous Princely States the right to determine the future national identities of their subjects.

It will never be possible to take the full measure of the psychological as well as material damage done to those South Asians who crossed the Indo-Pakistani border or who remained where they were, only to find themselves socially, politically, and economically marginalized in the land of their ancestors. Moreover, the number of lives lost in conflicts directly arising from Britain's hasty departure from the subcontinent, such as in post-partition Kashmir, continues to mount. An estimated ten million to fifteen million people left their homes seeking a safer national haven, with Hindus and Sikhs traveling to India and Muslims to Pakistan. In so tense an atmosphere, rumors of massacres, often all too true, spread among the affected communities. As many as one million perished in revenge killings. A survivor remarked in an interview that "Nobody imagined that such a holocaust would take place," as

Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs had often engaged in each other's society and culture. "You have played with them, you have lived with them, you have eaten together," he said, but as independence loomed, "the same people are coming and burning your houses and looting."<sup>34</sup>

Many Muslims, either unsafe in their own districts or unable to get to Pakistan (or both), gathered in Delhi in search of protection. Gandhi then undertook a fast-unto-death, a gesture of self-sacrifice he rarely employed, but usually to great effect. His intent was to move the new government of India to divert some of its hard-pressed resources to protect this gathering of its most vulnerable population. G. D. Khosla, an official returning from a visit to the main Muslim refugee camp in Delhi, reported to Gandhi that these refugees told him "they wanted to go to Pakistan anyway," implying that they should be encouraged to do so as "our own people are without houses and shelter." He asked Gandhi, "What should I do?" Gandhi replied, "When I go there, they say they do not want to go to Pakistan . . . They are also our people. You should . . . protect them."<sup>35</sup> A few days later, on January 30, 1948, Gandhi was slain by a Hindu fundamentalist who considered providing succor to Muslims an act of treason.