

## The Lamps Go Out in Europe

At 11:00 AM in the morning on November 11, 1918, the cease-fire went into effect on the Western Front. It marked the end of more than four years of unprecedented butchery and devastation. Though the costs in human life and material destruction were not as great as those which would be incurred in the war of 1939-45, by all previous standards they were gigantic. Germany had lost 2 million dead, Russia almost as many. France suffered just under 1.5 million killed, Austria-Hungary 1.25 million, and the British Empire nearly 1 million. Of the remainder, Italy lost 500,000 men, Turkey 325,000, and the United States a "mere" 112,000. In all, 10 million young men had been killed and a further 20 million wounded, many of them maimed for life. In addition large areas of France and Belgium had been laid waste, Germany and Austria were close to starvation, and Eastern Europe was ravaged by cholera and typhus. Revolution had broken out in Germany, Austria, and Hungary as well as in Russia,

where it had resulted in a murderous civil war and would be followed by a major famine. The end of the war thus found Europe exhausted, impoverished, and in turmoil. And although the armistice touched off hysterical celebrations in some victorious capitals, it produced in most people only a sense of profound relief and thankfulness.

All this was in contrast to the wild scenes of popular rejoicing that had greeted the outbreak of war in August 1914. In Vienna, Berlin, Paris, St Petersburg, and London cheering crowds had demonstrated their enthusiasm for war. Trainloads of garlanded reservists had gone off to fight in holiday mood. Recruiting offices had been besieged by eager volunteers fearful only that the war might be over before they could get into it. It was not surprising that no one knew what war would be like. There had not been a war between the Great Powers since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, and that had been over in a few weeks. Nearly everyone expected that the war would be short and sharp. There would be a series of great battles and it would be over by Christmas. Almost no one anticipated the long-drawn-out, static war of attrition that was actually to take place.

Still fewer people foresaw what the war would entail

for Europe—either for its political system or for its influence in the world. In the event the map of Europe was redrawn. The conflict brought down four great empires—those of Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Turkey—and from their ruins new states were created and old ones resurrected. And with the collapse of empires came the virtual disappearance of crowned heads. Pre-1914 Europe had been composed mainly of monarchies; after 1918 it was made up almost wholly of republics. The war also ended Europe's global pre-eminence. There was a shift of power away from Europe to the United States and, less immediately, to the Soviet Union and Japan.

More important even than the momentous political results of the war were its moral consequences. The conflict of 1914-18 was a watershed in that it marked the end of an era of peace and stability. It destroyed, perhaps for ever, the sense of security, of faith in progress that had been built up over the centuries. Conducted with great ruthlessness by all the belligerents, it was the first total war—the first, that is, to involve the mobilization of whole populations for military purposes, the first in which the distinction between combatants and noncombatants disappeared. So destructive was it of standards of civilized behavior that European civilization itself seemed at risk and a return to barbarism threatened. There had been

occasional warning voices. In 1909 Norman Angell, in *The Great Illusion*, had argued that the increasingly international character of trade had rendered wars between sovereign states not merely unprofitable but positively harmful to victors and vanquished alike. But such warnings had made little impact. Among leading statesmen the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, was almost alone in 1914 in sensing the magnitude of the disaster that was to follow. Sitting alone in his office on the last evening of peace, and watching the dusk gather round London, he wrote: "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

### *Background to the Conflict*

Those who lived through the war of 1914-18 knew it as the Great War. Only much later was it given the name of First World War (or World War I). This was a name it did not wholly deserve, for it was essentially a European conflict. It is true that, once begun, the war overflowed geographical boundaries and had global repercussions. The fighting ranged widely. There were significant military campaigns in the eastern Mediterranean, in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Dardanelles. There were naval engagements in the Indian Ocean and off the Falkland Islands. In Africa, Germany's colonies were overrun by Allied forces and in the Far East her naval station in Shantung was reduced by the Japanese. But these were sideshows; it was on European battlefields that the bulk of the heavy fighting took place.

It is true also that men from the rest of the world played an important part in the fighting. Canadians and Indians fought on the Western Front; Australians and New Zealanders distinguished themselves in the Dardanelles campaign; South Africans conquered German South-West Africa. But these men joined the fight voluntarily out of a sense of loyalty to the British Empire, not because they believed the countries they lived in to be in danger. Not even the entry of the United States, two and one-half years after the war began, transformed it into a world war. There was no question in 1917 of America's national survival being threatened. Americans saw from the start that the war was the product of European national rivalries; that was why they had been determined for so long to have no part in it. They were drawn in only because Germany, in a bid for victory in Europe, wantonly challenged the United States on the issue of the freedom of the seas. Entering the war was for America a matter, as George M. Cohan's song had it, of going "over there" to settle a European quarrel from which they could no longer remain aloof.

No single nation was to blame for the outbreak of war in 1914. It was the product in the last analysis of "inter-

national anarchy," of a situation which had been developing over a long period of time, and in which the essential ingredients were the alliance system, Anglo-German naval rivalry, and Slav nationalism. These were the real causes of the war; the murder of the archduke at Sarajevo was merely the immediate occasion for it.

What transformed a local Balkan quarrel into a general European war in 1914 was the system of European alliances. This was the product of a search for stability on the part of the Great Powers. It was a system of checks and balances whose essence was the maintenance of a parity of force, and an agreement between nations to settle their differences peacefully. For more than thirty years it succeeded in keeping the peace, but in the end its very existence produced war. This was because the system did nothing to remove the causes of international enmity, or indeed to limit the freedom of nations to pursue their own interests. The Great Powers were not joined in a universal league but were grouped in two competing alliance systems. Competing alliances produced competing armaments and led to an atmosphere of hatred and suspicion which aggravated every minor dispute and resulted in a succession of international crises.

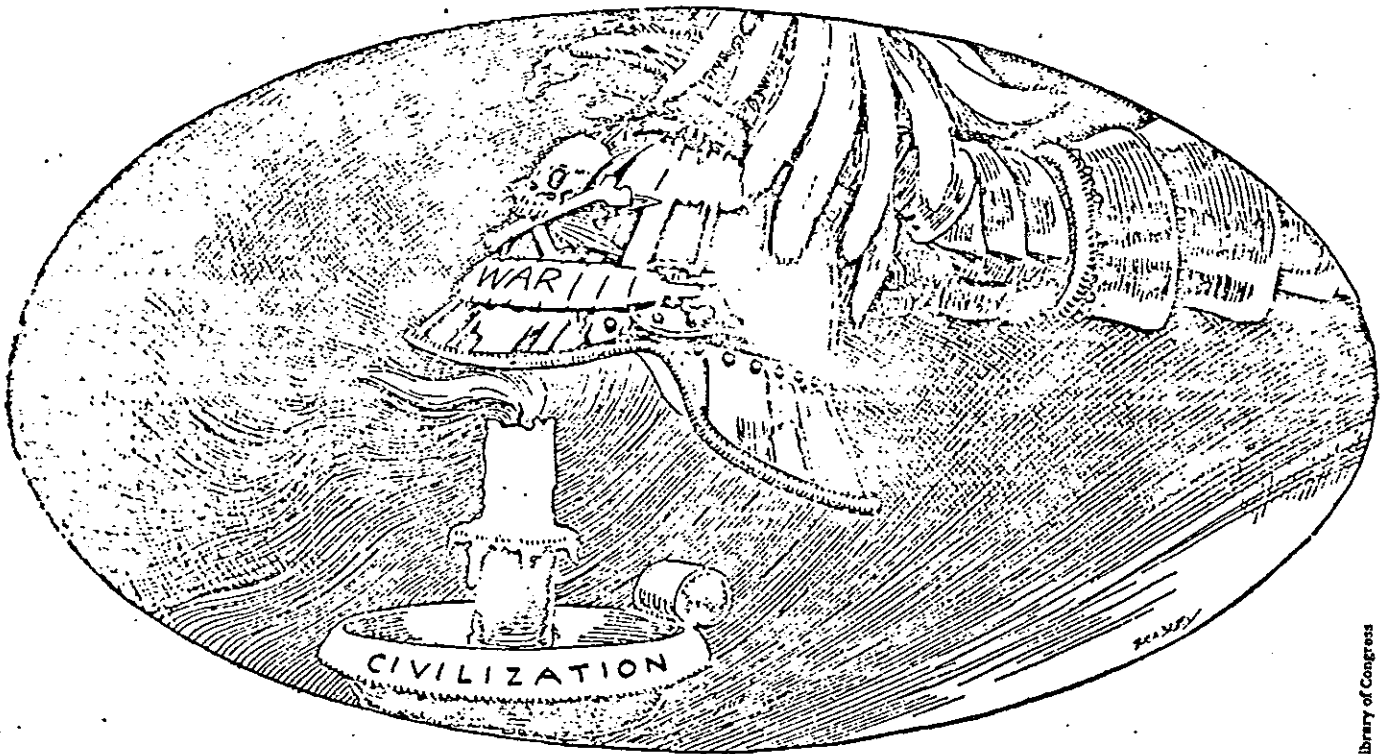
The chief architect of the alliance system had been Prince Otto von Bismarck, the first German chancellor. His main purpose in creating it was to keep France isolated and thus prevent her from attempting revenge for her defeat by Germany in 1870-71. At first Bismarck relied upon the League of the Three Emperors—the *Dreikaiserbund*, consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia—who were drawn together by a common dislike of republican France. But when circumstances forced Bismarck to choose between his two allies, he chose the one to which Germany was most closely linked by blood. The Dual Alliance of 1879 between Germany and Austria-Hungary became, by the addition of Italy in 1882, the Triple Alliance which lasted until the outbreak of war in 1914.

Looking back on the events which led to that war, the creation of the Dual Alliance has a special significance. It ensured that if Austria and Russia came to blows over the Balkans, the German army would come to the aid of its Austrian ally. But such a war was unlikely so long as Bismarck remained in power. He strained every nerve to prevent it and indeed crowned his system of alliances in 1887 by negotiating a Reinsurance Treaty with Russia which put him in the position of being able to hold the balance between Austria and Russia. After his fall in 1890, however, his successors allowed the Reinsurance Treaty to lapse and Russia looked elsewhere for allies. The result was the very conjunction Bismarck had worked to prevent. The Franco-Russian Alliance, which was completed in 1894, provided for mutual assistance in the event of a German attack and conjured up for Germany the specter of a war on two fronts.

## NATIONS AT WAR

The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy was now confronted by the alliance of France and Russia. From both these combinations Britain remained for a time aloof. Indeed at no time before 1914 did she become a fully-fledged member of the alliance system. But the Boer War of 1899-1902 showed her to be dangerously isolated in Europe and she began to look for friends. She tried first to reach an accord with Germany and, when that attempt failed, turned her thoughts to an understanding with France. Such an understanding was in fact reached in 1904. The Entente Cordiale, as it was called, was in form nothing more than a mutual liquidation of colonial rivalries. Under German pressure, however, it developed into something more. There was close diplomatic cooperation between Britain and France and secret military conversations between their general staffs. And when the Anglo-French agreement was followed in 1907 by an Anglo-Russian entente on Middle Eastern questions, the alignment of the European Powers was almost complete. Each was now a member or a close associate of one of the two armed camps.

## NATIONS AT WAR



Library of Congress

Above: This British cartoon illustrates the Allied viewpoint. The Germans must be prevented from extinguishing "civilization." Left: On August 4, 1914, Britain declared war on Germany and crowds of cheering Londoners converged on Buckingham Palace. Similar scenes were repeated in most of the great capitals of Europe.

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0 200  
Miles

British suspicions of Germany's growing naval power, accentuated by the opening of the Kiel Canal, enabling German ships to move safely and swiftly from the Baltic to the North Sea

## EUROPEAN FEARS AND AMBITIONS BEFORE 1914

British fears of a German invasion, played upon by novelists and newspapers

German desire for territory and influence in the east, at the expense of Russia

Desire of the minorities inside Austria to win independence, or to have a larger say in their own affairs

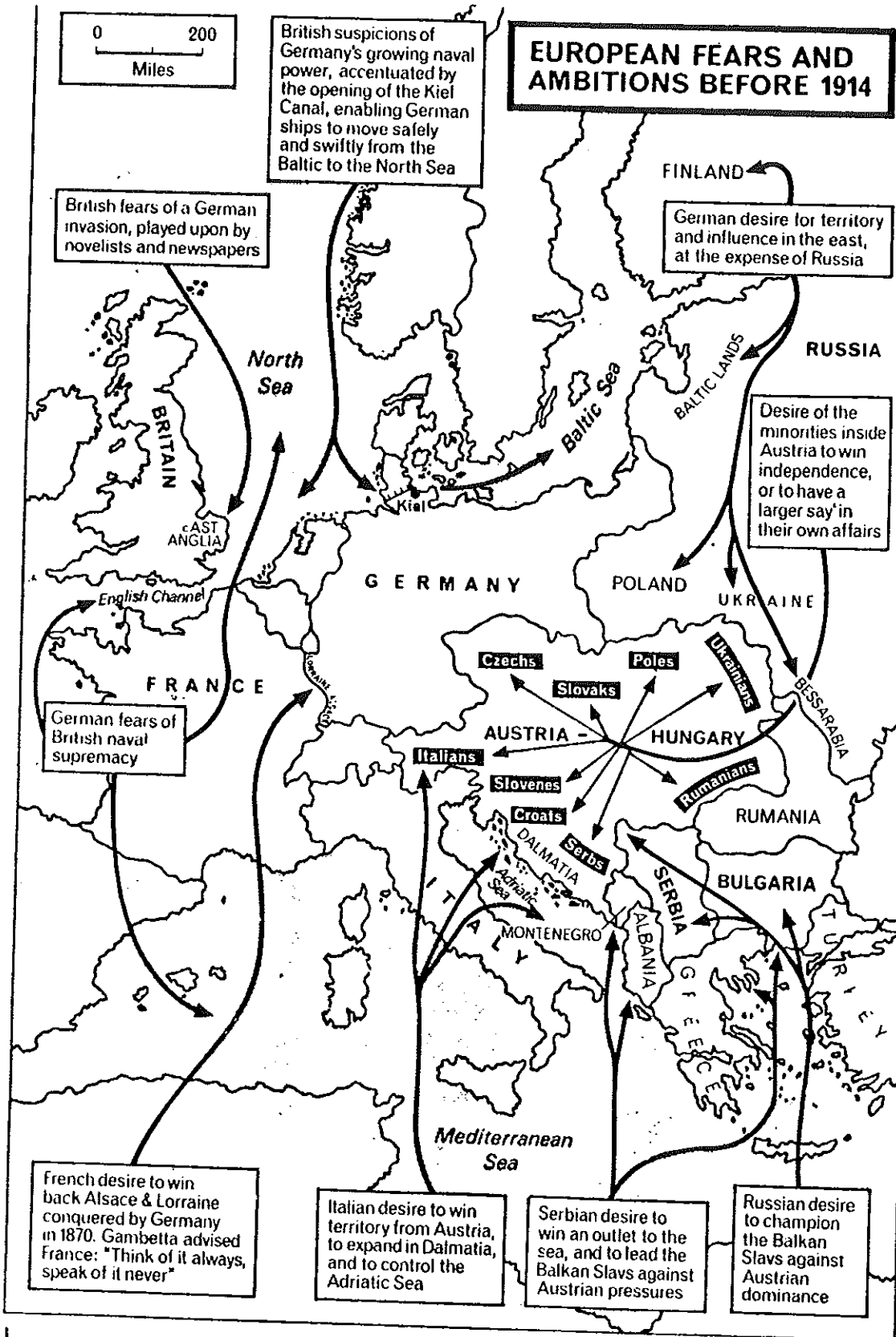
German fears of British naval supremacy

French desire to win back Alsace & Lorraine conquered by Germany in 1870. Gambetta advised France: "Think of it always, speak of it never"

Italian desire to win territory from Austria, to expand in Dalmatia, and to control the Adriatic Sea

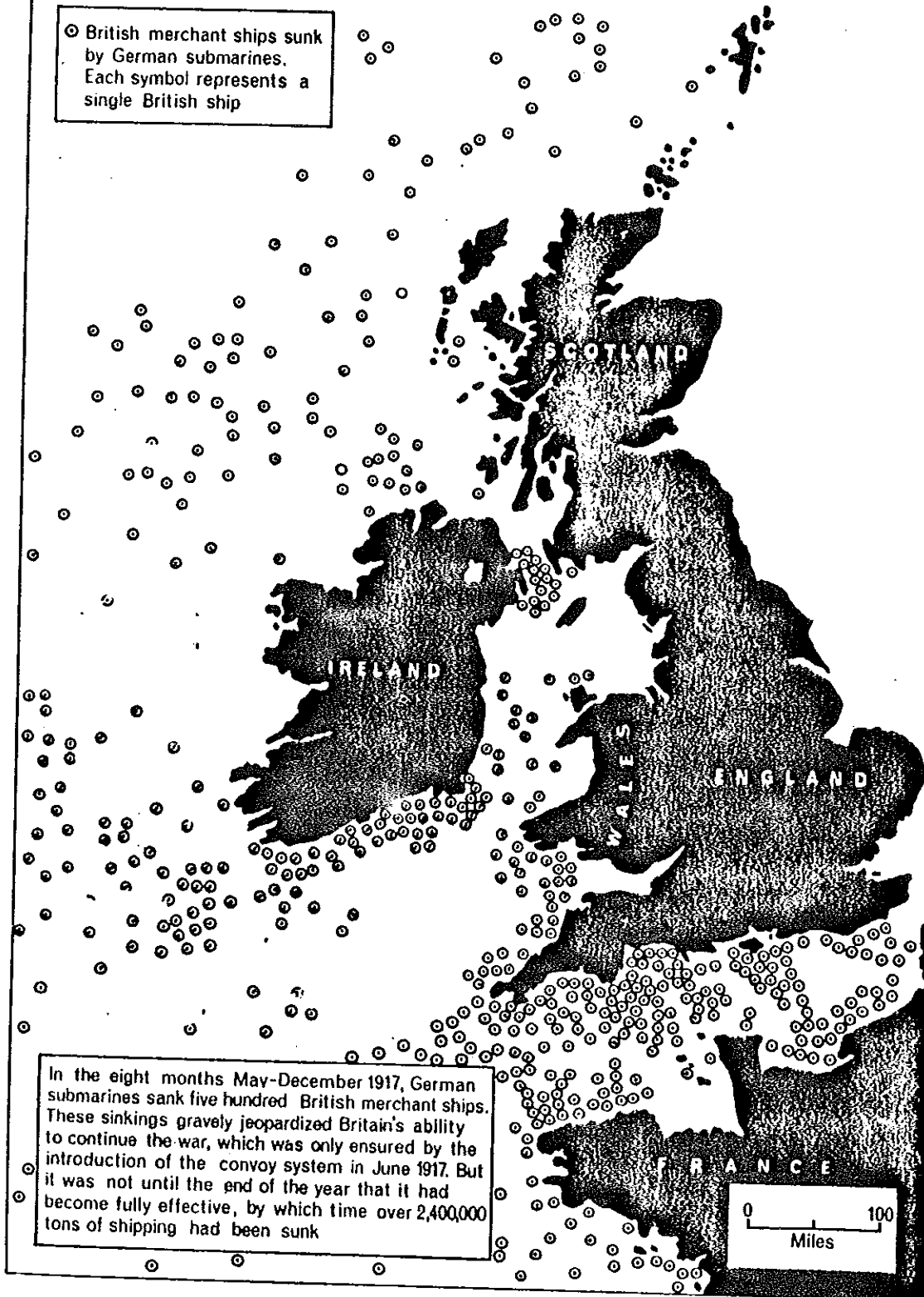
Serbian desire to win an outlet to the sea, and to lead the Balkan Slavs against Austrian pressures

Russian desire to champion the Balkan Slavs against Austrian dominance

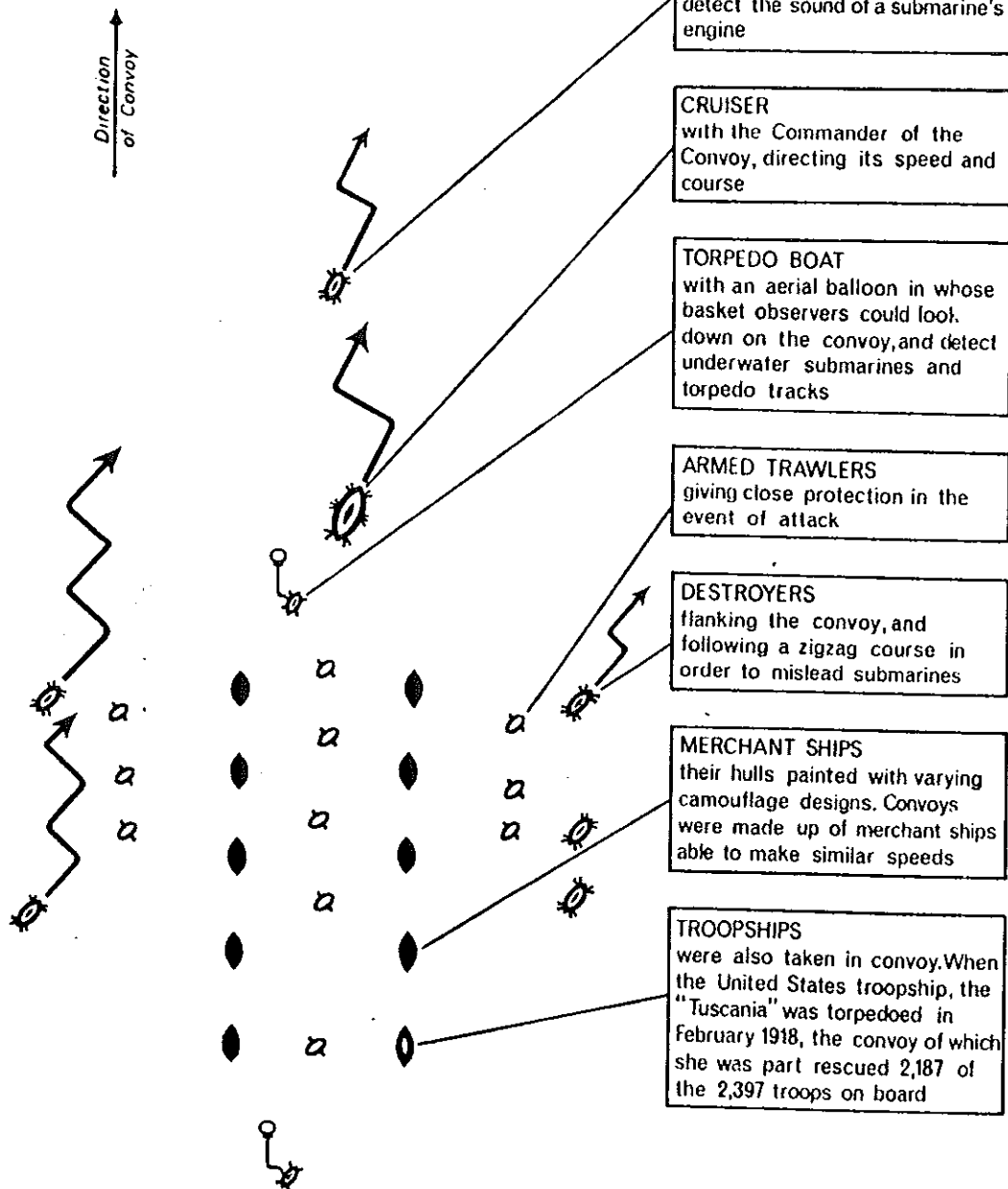


## BRITISH MERCHANT SHIPS SUNK MAY-DECEMBER 1917

⊙ British merchant ships sunk by German submarines. Each symbol represents a single British ship



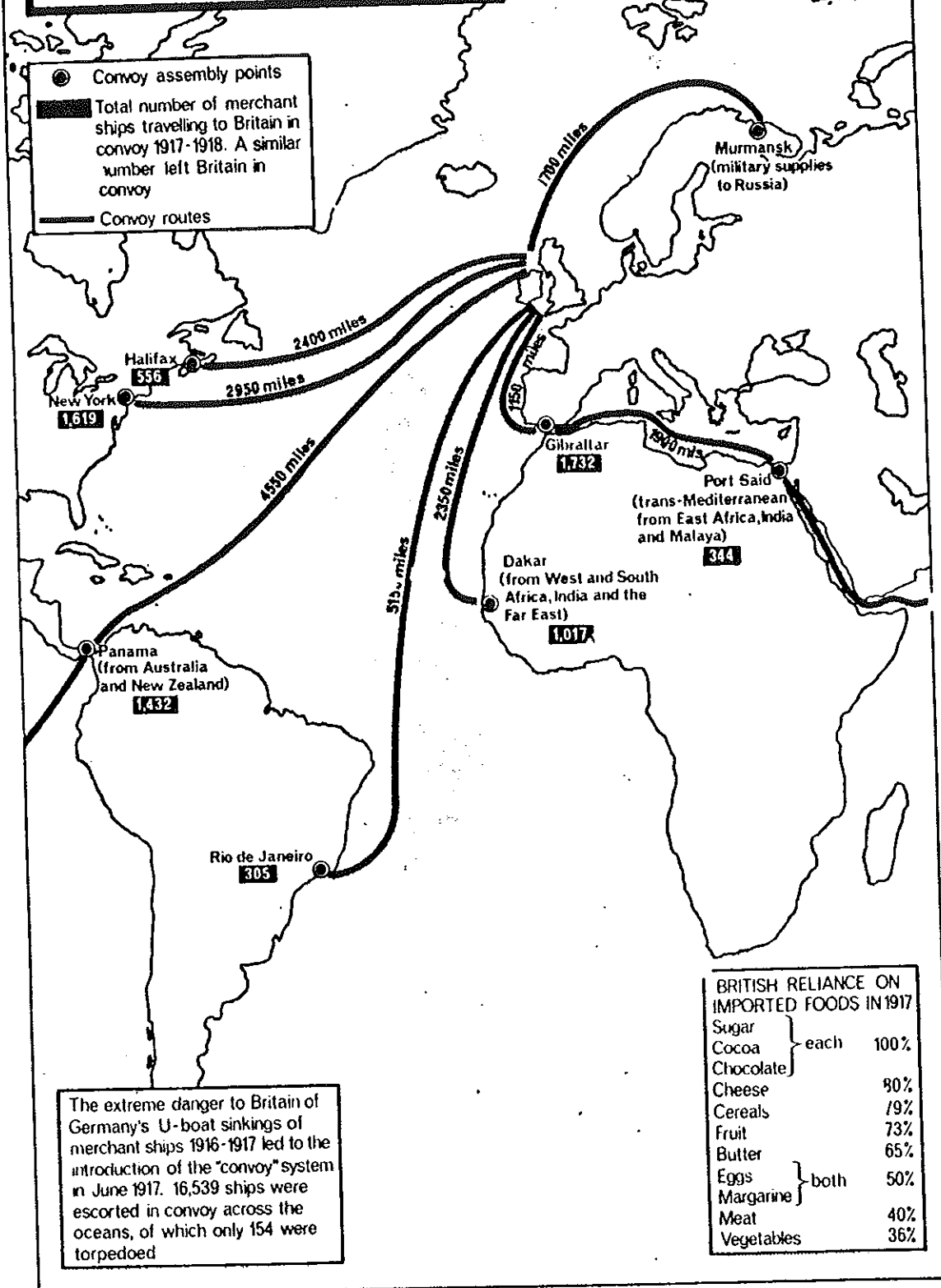
## A TYPICAL CONVOY 1917-1918



0 5  
Miles approx.

Using the convoy system, 1,100,000 United States troops crossed the Atlantic Ocean in British ships 1917-1918. Of this considerable total, only 637 were drowned

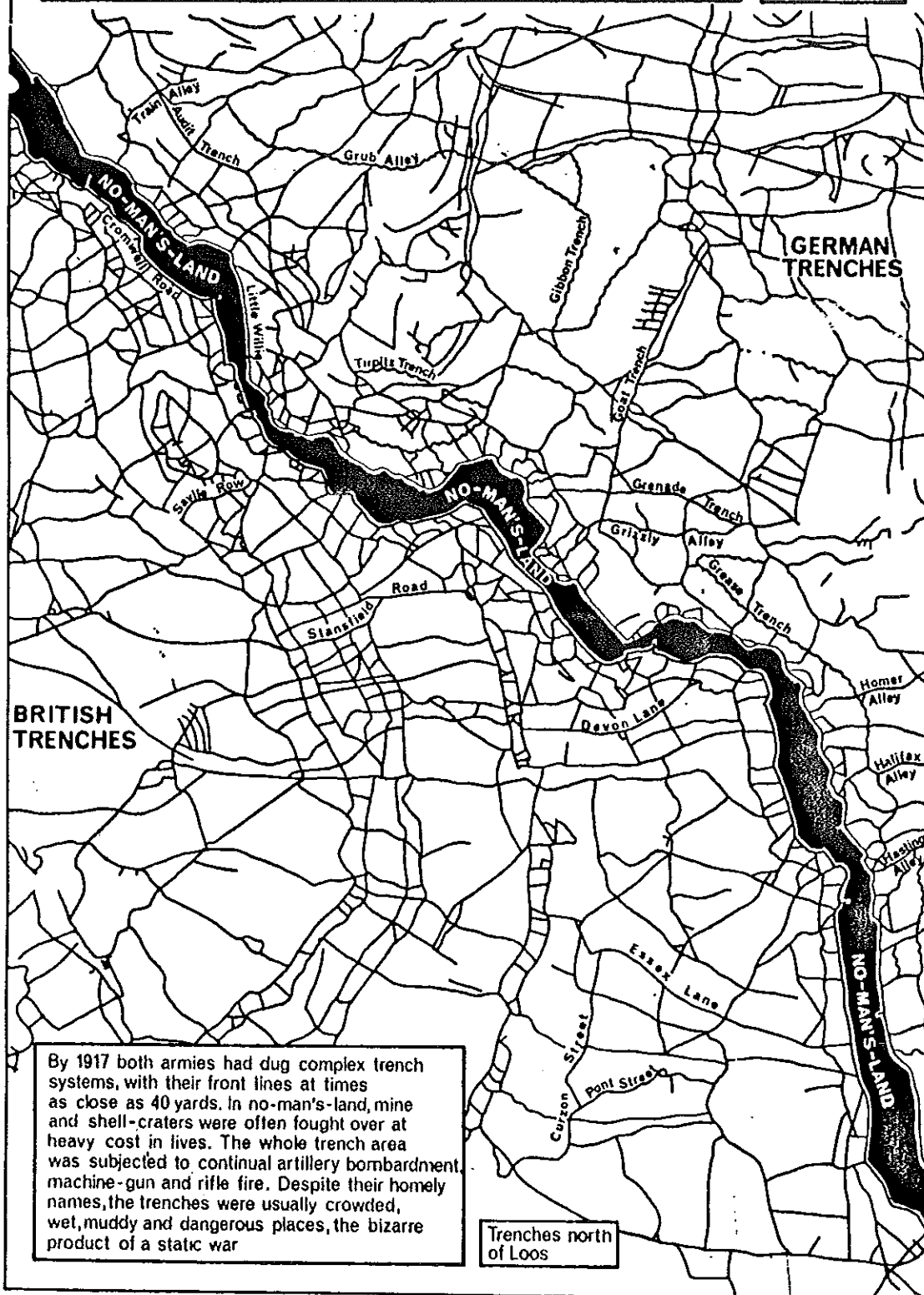
# THE CONVOY SYSTEM 1917-1918





# TRENCHES ON THE WESTERN FRONT 1917

0 400  
Yards



## ATTRITION: 1916

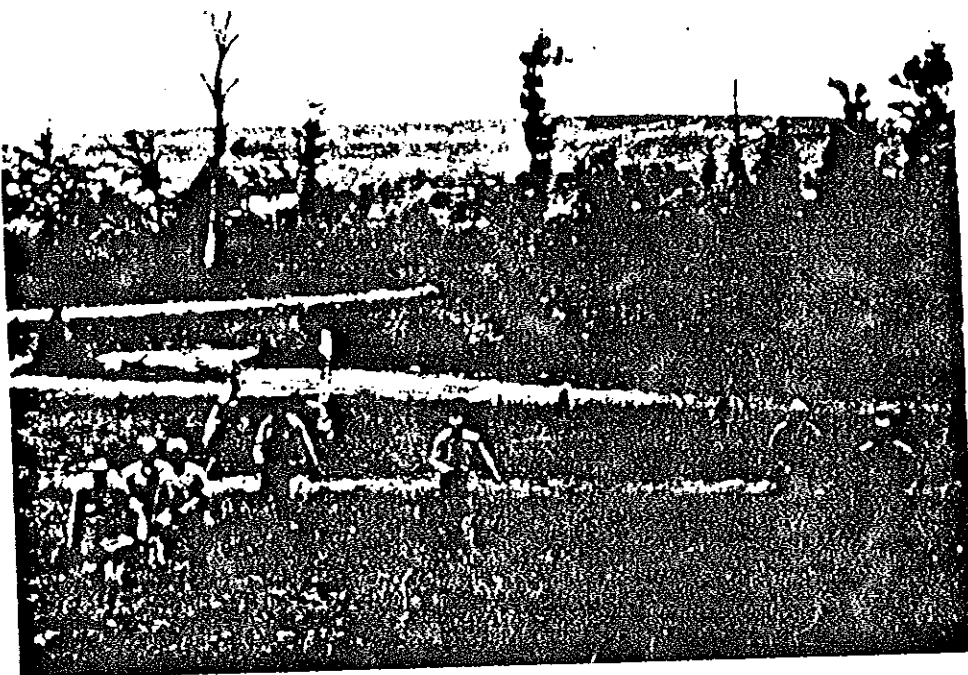


IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON

"Humanity . . . must be mad to do what it is doing," a young French lieutenant wrote in his Verdun diary on May 23. "What scenes of horror and carnage! . . . Hell cannot be so terrible." Although the fighting dragged on for another two years, nothing in the war ever equaled or surpassed the slaughter at Verdun and the Somme. The statistics for these two battles can only be given in round numbers: 900,000 Germans and French killed, wounded, or taken prisoner at Verdun; 1,250,000 for Britain, France, and Germany at the Somme. (All British Empire casualties during World War II barely match the toll of the three nations at the Somme, in which the maximum Allied gain was eight miles over a twelve-mile front.) Generals spoke loftily of attrition or wearing the enemy down. Winston Churchill knew better, describing the blood-letting as "merely exchanging lives upon a scale at once more frightful than anything witnessed before . . . and too modest to produce a decision." Above is a German skeleton, still unburied on the Somme battlefield at year's end.

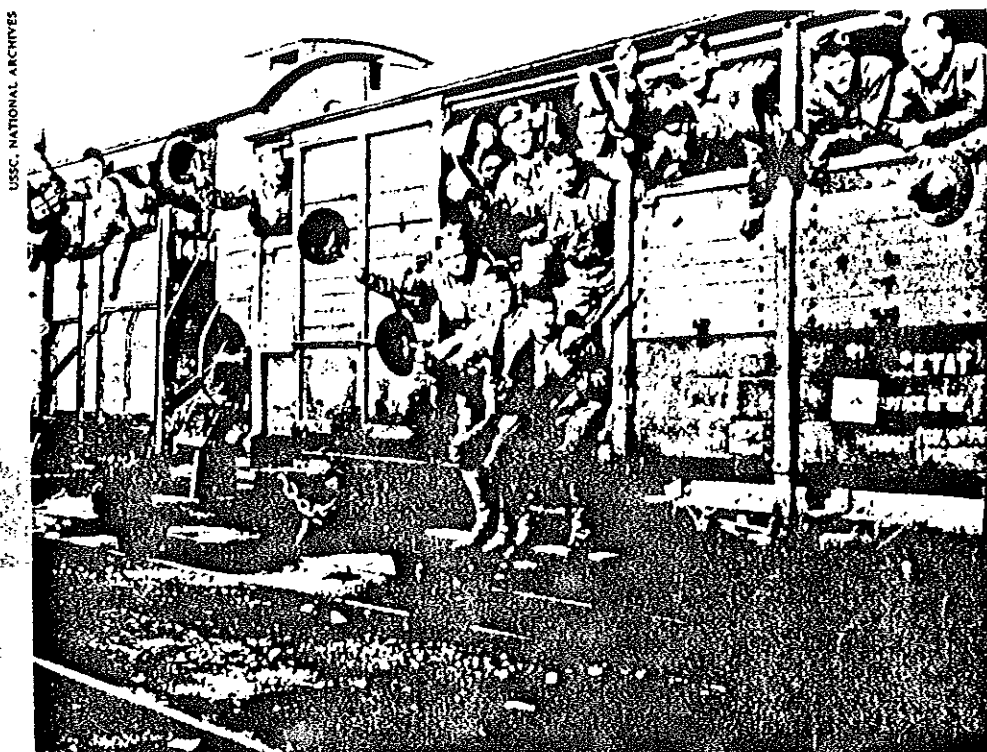
## CRITICAL YEAR: 1917

RADIO TIMES HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY



"The world does not yet understand what a dark moment that was in the history of the Allied cause. . . . It is only when we recall that the Germans were attaining the high peak of success with the U-boats at the very moment that General Nivelle's offensive had failed on the Western Front that we can get some idea of the real tragedy of the Allied situation in the spring of 1917." The writer was Rear Admiral William Sims, who had come to London in April and was "astounded" by the true extent of British shipping losses, which were some four times as large as the publicized figures. Another crisis of 1917, not publicized at all, was the widespread mutiny among French troops in May and June. The Frenchmen in the rare photograph above are running from their lines; others baa'ed like sheep going to slaughter as they were marched up to the trenches. Governments were acting in ways destined to change not only the face of the war but of the century. In March, revolution broke out in Russia, and in April, the United States declared war on Germany, crossing the Atlantic for the first time in history to involve itself in the affairs of Europe.

## NEW BLOOD: 1918



At midnight on December 31, 1917, the poet Edmund Blunden, serving as an officer in the Royal Sussex, stood with some friends overlooking the Ypres battlefield. "All agreed that 1917 had been a sad offender," he later wrote. "All observed that 1918 did not look promising at its birth." Such pessimism about the new year was not confined to the men in the lines, who had been fighting for so long with such small results; most Allied generals expected that 1919, and not 1918, would be the year of decision. Ludendorff was planning an early strike before the Americans arrived in full force, and his 1918 spring offensives did achieve greater gains on the Western Front than any since the beginning of the war. But final victory eluded Ludendorff, for he failed to take into account two crucial things: an inadequacy of reserves to hold the ground that his first waves overran; and, more important as the year progressed, the power of the newly arrived American forces, which even he underestimated. Above, doughboys cheer for the camera from "40 and 8's," small French boxcars that could transport, if not very comfortably, forty men or eight horses.

### *THE COST OF WORLD WAR I*

"Not until our children's time," said one general after the war, "can the former joy of life come into the world."

During the four years of World War I about ten million men died in action or of wounds. Think of this! That was twice as many men as were killed in all the major wars from 1790 to 1913.

And that was not all. More than twenty-one million men were

War brought starvation to these children. Here they are receiving soup and doughnuts from a relief agency



wounded, about a third of them permanently disabled. Six million men were taken prisoners, or were reported as missing. No record was ever kept of the number of war orphans, widows, and refugees. You can well imagine the effects of this mass tragedy — disease, epidemics, starvation, and the loss of young manhood.

Human casualties cannot be replaced. You cannot reckon human life in terms of money. Think of the great material losses — damage to property, the cost of munitions and weapons of war, and losses in shipping. This amounted to ~~more than \$300 billion~~. That was five and a half times as many dollars as the number of seconds which had passed since the birth of Christ!

This was an enormous amount of money, even in terms of 1918 dollars. Let us do some figuring with it. Do you know what it could have bought? (From *Scholastic*, November 10, 1934)

1. It would have given *every family* in England, France, Belgium, Germany, Russia, the United States, Canada, and Australia a \$2,500 house on a \$500 one-acre lot, with \$1,000 worth of furniture, *and*
2. It would have given a library worth \$5 million to every community of about 200,000 inhabitants in those countries, *and*
3. It would have set up a fund that would yield enough interest to pay \$1,000 a year to 125,000 teachers and 125,000 nurses for an indefinite period, *and*
4. It would still leave enough to replace the entire wealth of France and Belgium.

Instead of this, World War I scraped Europe bare. No wonder intelligent men, horrified by the costs, said, "It must not happen again!"

## THE PEACE OF VERSAILLES, 1919

"*Vive Vil-son!*" cried the French in Paris.

"Hurrah for Wilson!" shouted the crowds in London.

"*Viva Voovro Veelson!*" screamed the mobs in Rome.

Everywhere it was the same — endless cheers and cries that seemed to come from the heart of humanity. For the first time in American history an American President had traveled to Europe during his term of office. He had come to lead the world to a just peace. He told the cheering multitudes:

"The cause being just and holy, the settlement must be of like quality. A supreme moment of history has come. The eyes of the people have been opened and they see. The hand of God is upon the nations."

The terrible war was over. Europe was a shambles. The people were exhausted and insecure. They looked upon President Wilson as a messiah to lead them from a world of decay.

Things went wrong from the start. Thirty-two Allied nations gathered to dictate terms to the defeated Central Powers. There was a bad omen in the very place they picked to make the treaty. It was the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, near Paris. Here, forty-eight years earlier, the Germans, after defeating the French, had proclaimed their German Empire. Already there was revenge in the air at Versailles.

The "Big Three"\* were President Woodrow Wilson, Premier Georges Clemenceau of France, and Prime Minister David Lloyd George of

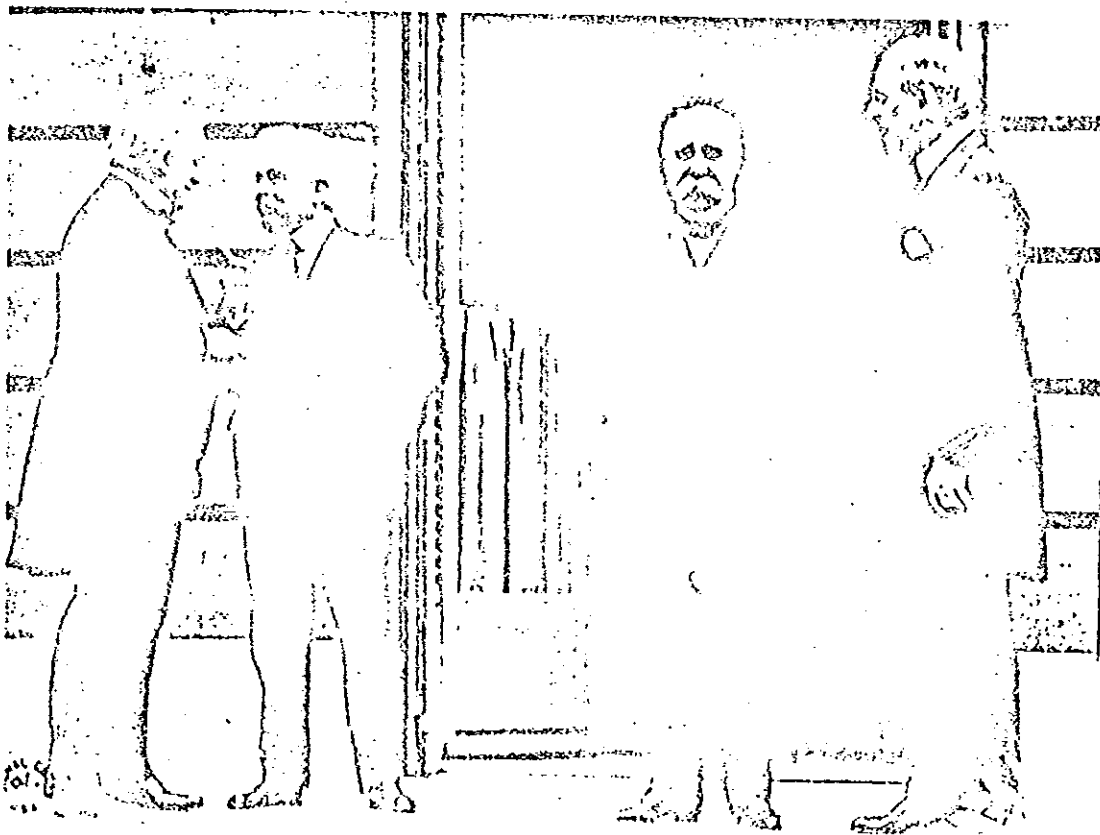
\* most sources refer to the 'Big Four'  
Italy: Vittorio Orlando  
who wanted Austrian territory

Alfred Stieglitz and a group of modern painters  
of whom was the King of Spain in  
Barcelona

England. Clemenceau was called the "Old Tiger of France," although he looked more like a walrus than a tiger. He hated Germany, which he regarded as a sinful nation. "When I die," he said, "bury me deep, standing up, marching toward Germany." The Germans could expect no mercy from him.

Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, had just been re-elected to office on the slogan, "Hang the Kaiser!" He promised his people that he would collect from Germany the costs of the war, "shilling for shilling, and ton for ton."

David Lloyd George (England), Vittorio Orlando (Italy) Georges Clemenceau (France), and Woodrow Wilson (United States) at the time of the signing of the Versailles Treaty





The conference at Versailles was called "a riot in a parrot house." There were battles galore between the Big Three. Clemenceau was bored by Wilson. Of Wilson's Fourteen Points he said, "Wilson has Fourteen; the Good Lord Himself had only Ten!" The constant bickering shattered Wilson's nerves. He caught cold from Clemenceau, who coughed all the time. And Lloyd George was disgusted. "What am I to do," he asked, "between a man who thinks he is Jesus Christ and another who thinks he is Napoleon?"

Wilson had one first aim in mind — there must be a League of Nations to prevent another world war in the future. He reluctantly accepted some of the harsher terms of the treaty in return for support of his League of Nations.

And a hard peace it was! At Versailles the Allies stripped Germany of all her colonies in Africa and the Far East. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France. The new state of Poland was created, part of it running in a corridor right through old German lands. The Saar territory, sometimes called the Pittsburgh of Germany, with all its coal mines and factories, was placed under French control for fifteen years. The German Rhineland was occupied by the victor powers for the same period.

Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, the famous war-guilt clause, formally blamed Germany and her allies alone for causing the war. On the basis of this clause, the Germans were required to pay an enormous amount of money and goods, called reparations. They did not want to pay and they could not pay. Reparations were stopped at the Treaty of Lausanne in 1932 by the Allies and never resumed.

The Allies made sure that Germany would be too weak to fight another war. Her army was limited to one hundred thousand men. Her navy was cut to six battleships, six light cruisers, twelve destroyers, and twelve torpedo boats. She could no longer have any submarines or make poison gas. She had to demolish all her fortifications.

Wilhelm II, the German Kaiser, who had abdicated and escaped to Holland, and other major German leaders were to be tried as war criminals (they never were). Everything possible was done to humiliate the defeated country.

The Germans protested heatedly against this treaty, but they could do nothing about it. On June 28, 1919, a reluctant German delegation signed the document.

The Germans took their loss with great bitterness. On June 21, 1919, they sailed their fleet of warships into Scapa Flow, the British naval base in the Orkneys, where it was to be surrendered. The German sailors opened the sea-cocks of their ships. Some fifty-three vessels went to the bottom. This was the German way of showing their contempt for the victors.

The Germans were also supposed to return to France the French flags captured in battle in 1870-1871. A group of officers and students in Berlin burned these flags before the statue of Frederick the Great, the Prussian hero-king of the eighteenth century.

Harsh treaties similar to that of Versailles were also imposed on the other losers — on Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey.

So it went. Crowns rolled in the gutter, ancient tyrannies were broken. Four imperial governments were swept away — Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Turkey.

At the same time a wave of republicanism washed over Europe. In 1914 there were only five republics — France, Switzerland, Portugal, San Marino, and Andorra. Eighteen years later there were sixteen republics on the continent.

Even though people hoped that the world really would be made safe for democracy, this was not the case. In healing the old scars, the peacemakers made new wounds. New military alliances were formed. Europe was divided once more into hostile camps.

Three new political experiments got under way — Bolshevism in Russia, Mussolini's Fascism in Italy, and Hitler's Nazism in Germany. Each one was a new deadly danger for an unhappy world.

## THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The Treaty of Versailles had many failures, but it contained one thing which promised to bring justice among peoples, and might some day end all wars — the League of Nations.

The League of Nations was a kind of parliament or Congress of the whole world. It aimed to promote co-operation among nations, and to achieve peace by bringing relations between nations into the open, by enforcing international law, and insuring respect for all treaty obligations.

From its very beginning the League of Nations faced many difficulties. One of the most important reasons for this was that the United States would not join it. When President Wilson returned home from Paris he fought hard for the League, but the United States Senate would not support it. Even though the United States had just fought in what had started as a European war, a group of Senators called "isolationists" insisted that she must keep out of European affairs.

President Wilson traveled through the country, begging the American people to support him. "If we do not join the League," he said, "I can predict with absolute certainty that within another generation there will be another world war."

After delivering his fortieth speech at Pueblo, Colorado, he collapsed from nervous and physical exhaustion.

Wilson was absolutely right. Twenty years later began an even greater and more horrible World War.

After World War I, a famous British writer, G. Lowes Dickinson,

said, "This much is certainly true, that until men lay down their arms, and accept the method of peaceable decision of their disputes, wars can never cease."

He, too, like President Wilson, was right. What he meant was that *all* nations must lay down their arms.

It is a most important lesson. All the nations of the world must get rid of their selfish national feelings and work together in the interests of a common humanity. This is our only hope.

But remember that the Fourteen Points were *American* aims. Unfortunately, America's Allies had other plans. After the war, the Russian Bolsheviks, who were anxious to embarrass the capitalist powers, revealed the existence of secret treaties among the Allies (America did not make any of these treaties). Russia was to get Constantinople and the territory on the Straits. Italy was promised chunks of Austria. Russia, England, France, and Italy were to split Turkey among themselves. The German colonies were to be divided.

There was going to be great trouble in making a peace for a war-torn world. On the one side were the Fourteen Points with their aim of making a better world. And on the other were those secret treaties which could only lead to further war.