

The Frustrated Peace? The Political, Social and Economic Impact of the Versailles Treaty

Václav Horčíčka – Jan Němeček – Marija Wakounig –
Vojtěch Kessler – Jaroslav Valkoun (Eds.)



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Table of Contents

Preface, Introduction

EDITORS

Preface	11
-------------------	----

ERIK GOLDSTEIN

The Enduring Contributions of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919	15
--	----

Political, Social and Economic Impact on Europe

The “New” European States

ANDREJ RAHTEN

“Nothing but a Hope”: The Slovenes between Wilsonian Idealism and Post-War Reality	29
---	----

JERZY GAUL

Józef Piłsudski’s Attitude towards the First World War Peace Talks in Paris, the Versailles Treaty and the Polish Borders in the East 1918–1921.	41
---	----

MILADA POLIŠENSKÁ

Diplomatic Relations of Czechoslovakia and the Paris Peace Conference: Twenty-Four Countries of Three Continents	61
---	----

SORIN ARHIRE

The Election Law of 27 March 1926 and Its Impact on Romanian Political Life, 1926–1937	79
---	----

The “Danube” and the Economy

ROMAN HOLEC

The Danube and the Economic and Political Consequences of the Versailles Treaty	89
--	----

IVAN JAKUBEC

Brachte der Versailler Frieden tatsächlich Veränderungen im verkehrstariflichen und Außenhandelsbereich? Die tschechoslowakisch-deutschen Beziehungen in den 1920-er Jahren	107
---	-----

The Elites and the Nobility

MARIJA WAKOUNIG

- Nachteile und Chancen der Pariser Friedensschlüsse
für den Adel (Ost-)Mitteleuropas 123

VÁCLAV HORČIČKA

- The First Czechoslovak Land Reform on the Estates
of German State Nationals, 1918–1939. 139

Global Political, Social and Economic Impact

Canada and USA

JAROSLAV VALKOUN

- The Canadian Attitude to Article X
of the Covenant of the League of Nations 151

NATALIIA ZHUKOVSKAIA

- “Diplomatic Sovereignty” or “United Diplomatic Front
of the British Empire”: Finding a Balance in Relations
with the Dominions at the Paris Peace Conference 159

DARIA POKROVSKAIA

- Canada after Versailles: Searching for a Place
in the New World Order 169

The Global South and the Colonies

HERMANN J. HIERY

- The German Colonies and the Treaty of Versailles 179

JINDŘICH DEJMEK

- Establishment of the League of Nations Mandate System in Paris
and Its Development in Reference to Africa (1919–1922) 189

TILMAN LÜDKE

- The Disastrous Peace: The Effect of the Versailles Treaty
and Its Successors on the Middle East 207

OTIS ILLERT

- Reclaiming the Empire: The Colonial Movement’s Quest to Recover
the German Colonies during the Weimar Republic and Third Reich 229

Global Consequences and Obligations

FLORIAN RUTTNER

“Carthaginian Peace” or Nationalistic Bugbear? Assessments of
the Versailles Treaty in the German Speaking Exile during World War II. . 251

JAN SLAVÍČEK

Constitutional Comparative Politics of Central and Eastern Europe
after the Great War 263

Sources and Literature 279

Authors 303

Name Index 307

Preface, Introduction

Preface

The Paris Peace Conference put the First World War in the past. Signatures of individual peace treaties with the defeated countries Germany, Austria, Hungary and their allies Bulgaria and Turkey put an end to one of the cruelest conflicts of all time, which is rightfully often referred to as the Great War.

With its multifaceted repercussions, the First World War certainly represented one of the most crucial breaking points in the development of modern Europe. For many countries and nations, it was the actual start of the 20th century.

However, it also signaled the climax of a pretty short dominance and the beginning end of the old continent, which continued in the second global conflict, the Cold War between the superpowers as well as the dissolution of the global empires of the European superpowers.

The end of the Great War and its impact, including the unequivocally democratizing but also socially revolutionary waves, was an attempt at a new, fundamentally changed organization of international life and its current established order. The Parisian aftermath radically transformed the composition of the face of Europe: it resulted in the dissolution of the monarchies – the Ottoman Empire, the German Empire, Tsarist Russia and Austria-Hungary – and laid the foundation for a new European continent, which basically exists to this day despite the changes caused by the Second World War.

The events following the signature of the Paris Peace Conference, the destruction of the Versailles peace system in the 1930s, and the Second World War, led to discussions regarding the meaning of these treaties and the significant impact they had on the post-war organization of Europe and the world.

Were the conditions of the victors too cruel or justified? Was the Second World War the result of the conditions of the Versailles Peace Treaty? Such questions have been posed, are still being posed and will always be posed. The negative view of the defeated, and sometimes even the victorious, countries on the peace settlement always came head-to-head with the effort of the victors to maintain it. Ever since the beginning of the 20th century, the Paris Peace Conference, its mechanisms and most importantly its causes, inspired political debates, arguments and conflicts as well as serious interest of historians, whose studies on the Parisian meetings (whether official or otherwise) certainly contributed to the development

of diplomatic historiography and later to the creation of a specific area of study in international relations. There are only a few historical topics that have given rise to so many contradictory and often implacable opinions.

This is why the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Institute of World History at the Philosophical Faculty at Charles University organized the international conference *The Frustrated Peace: The Versailles Treaty and Its Political, Social and Economic Impact on Europe* together with the kind support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and under the auspices of Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček and Chairwoman of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Eva Zažímalová and with assistance from the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of Austria. The conference was used as a basis for this collective monograph. The aim of the conference was to focus on the causes of the Paris Peace Conference with participation of leading Czech and foreign experts. Causes, which changed the face of Europe after the First World War and affected various other parts of the world for many years after.

Dozens of leading experts from Europe and overseas took part in the two-day long meeting, which took place in September 2019 in Prague. There were of course many experts from the host country, which was the Czech Republic, as well as historians from Central Europe (Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovakia). Historians from the United States, Great Britain, Slovenia, Romania, Russia and Latvia showed a distinctive approach to interpreting development following the First World War.

This collective monograph compares the structures created by the Paris Peace Treaties, which remained largely effective in the 20th century and in some cases even to present day. The innovative global historical approach (European development compared with it in Africa, the Middle East, Canada and other parts of the British Empire) requires further research and in-depth studies, i.e. in the direction of post-colonial studies.

The major questions related to the interpretation of the significance of the Paris Peace Conference were outlined in the key note speech given by prof. Erik Goldstein from Boston University in the United States. He focused especially on the question of to what extent the Paris Peace Conference and the changes it directly brought to the organization of the world, affect the current world order. He demonstrated that the peace organization after the First World War did not only have a temporary validity and was not entirely broken in the new war configuration but rather brought permanent changes to the organization of the world, e.g. in the area of international finance as well as the protection of minorities and human rights in general. Specific examples supported his generalizing conclusion that, even if many ideas of peace makers did not work in practice, the Paris Peace Conference became the basis for the current organization of international relations.

The contributions of the individual participants were heard in seven sections organized by topics. Part of the presentations were dedicated to non-regional impacts of the peace conference. These for example concerned the protection of minorities, application of the rights of nations to self-determination, the development of po-

litical systems, the issue of nationalism or international trade. Much attention was also paid to the application of the peace organization principles in specific regions. Most of the contributions focused precisely on local contexts. The significance of the peace conference, especially for Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe, was much discussed in these contributions as well as during the discussions that followed. Participants also showed a strong interest in non-European matters, e. g. the fates of former German colonies or developments within the British Empire.

The conference therefore brought several new impulses for research on the history of inter-war Europe and the world. The individual contributions reflected key directions of current research. The presented collective monograph aims to introduce to the general public the current status and interpretation of the monitored phenomenon.

This collective monograph has undergone the process of anonymous international peer review. For the (also linguistically) proofreading we are thankful to Kira Almudena Zoé Edelmayer and Martin Lee Randolph Kramesberger.

Václav Horčíčka, Jan Němeček, Marija Wakounig, Vojtěch Kessler
and Jaroslav Valkoun

The Enduring Contributions of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919

ERIK GOLDSTEIN

The Paris Peace Conference was the largest diplomatic gathering the world had ever seen, convened to negotiate the peace treaties which would mark the end of the most destructive war in history. The objective was not just to settle the immediate issues arising from the war, but to lay the basis of a new international order. Many of the diplomats who journeyed to Paris were imbued with a sense of mission, as the young British diplomat Harold Nicolson noted: “We were preparing not Peace only, but Eternal Peace.”¹ This would entail considering a much wider array of topics than peace conferences traditionally covered, in order to build a new international relations structure that would be more resilient than the one that had recently gone up in flames. The Paris gathering was seen an opportunity, with a willingness to explore new ways of thinking on international relations. As Thomas Masaryk observed, Europe was, “a laboratory sitting atop a vast graveyard”, and this laboratory was in fact more than Europe but also global.² The failures of the Paris Peace Settlement have received a great deal of attention, mostly those aspects seen as leading to the Second World War, and this has overshadowed the substantive achievements of Paris, which saw many innovations in international relations. The topics that received attention ranged from the grand and broad sweeping, such as the creation of the League of Nations, to the highly technical, for example the principles for the protection of cultural heritage, as well as matters only recently recognized as requiring international cooperation, for instance rules for civil aviation.

Five peace treaties were agreed at Paris, of which four were ratified, taking their names from the various locales around Paris where they were signed. The one most often commented upon was the first, the German treaty of peace signed at Versailles on 28 June 1919. It has been observed that: “No treaty in history has produced so much comment, has been so freely criticized, and possibly so little read

¹ Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, London 1933, 32 f.

² Masaryk as cited in Maurice Baumont, *La Faillite de la Paix, 1918–1919*, Paris 1946, 8 f.

and understood as the treaty of peace signed at Versailles.”³ Reference is often made to a “Versailles system” and of its subsequent collapse, but if we look at the conference as a whole we could speak of a “Paris system”, parts of which have proven durable and form part of the architecture of the current international system. In the Versailles Treaty’s 440 clauses there is a vision of a new international order, and as the conference stretched into the summer of 1920 there was a creative learning curve with further innovations and refinements appearing in the later treaties. In all the five peace treaties comprise 1,814 clauses, not counting the various ancillary agreements agreed at Paris.

The settlement with Germany was dealt with as the first priority of the peace conference, with its object being to constrain German power in the future, just as the Congress of Vienna in 1814 started from the premise of constraining France in the future, and in the process evolved the Concert of Europe.⁴ Indeed the British delegation had a specially commissioned study on the Congress of Vienna, prepared by C. K. Webster.⁵ Just as the Concert helped create a century of relative peace in Europe, so the peacemakers of 1914 were hoping to create a new and stable international system. They were certainly not plotting to plant the seeds of another world war. In the process of thinking how best to constrain Germany, in the pursuit of that sought after stability, the conference came up with a number of innovations, including demilitarized zones, alongside arms control and reduction regimes, with verification through inspection. This would lead to the establishment of the first international arms inspectors.⁶ Such innovations, with many discussed and a significant number implemented, at the peace negotiations held during 1919–20, provide some sense of the more positive legacies of that peacemaking effort.

International Finance

One of the most controversial aspects of the Versailles Treaty were the financial reparations assessed upon Germany. Determining the final sum owed by Germany proved too contentious to be decided at Paris, and was left to be determined by a Reparation Commission, which only reported in 1921. It was in the implementation

3 The Treaty of Versailles and After. Annotations of the Text of the Treaty, Washington 1947, iii–iv.

4 There are many works on the system developed at the Vienna Congress, one which covers this point with great effectiveness is Edward V. Gulick, *Europe’s Classical Balance of Power*, Ithaca 1955.

5 C. K. Webster, then serving in the Directorate of Military Intelligence, was seconded to the Foreign Office to write this study. It was considered important enough for its immediate printing to be ordered in the middle of November 1918, as useful reading for those about to meet at the first major conference for reordering the international system since Vienna. This would later result in his book, *The Congress of Vienna, 1814–1815*, London 1934. See Erik Goldstein, *Historians Outside the Academy*. G. W. Prothero and the Experience of the Foreign Office Historical Section, 1917–1920, in: *Historical Research* 63/151, 1990, 195–211.

6 Erik Goldstein, *Disarmament, Arms Control, and Arms Reduction*, in: Michael Hennessey – Brian J. C. McKercher (Eds.), *War in the Twentieth Century: Reflections at Century’s End*, Westport 2003, 45–64.

of reparations payments where severe problems with the settlement first arose. Germany soon defaulted on its payments, leading France, acting like a bill collector, to occupy the Ruhr in 1923. This proved to be the last gasp of an approach to national financial defaults that had long been the response of the Great Powers in the century before the war, when a defaulting state would have key economic assets occupied until its debts were settled. The Ruhr occupation was unquestionably an action from which flowed much of the subsequent negative political consequences, and contributed to the radicalization of Germany politics. Such an enforcement action had not been contemplated in the settlement, was not supported by France's key ally Great Britain, and its ultimate failure proved a turning point in the handling of international financial defaults.⁷ The gradual move away from the tactics of the old diplomacy begun at Paris is evident in the resolution of this crisis. The sum owed by Germany was subsequently renegotiated twice, in the Dawes and Young plans, reducing it to one-third of the original sum. The necessity of managing such large transfer payments led to new international financial mechanisms and institutions being developed which ultimately led to the creation of the Bank for International Settlements, at Basle, in 1930. This central bank for Central Banks is now a key part of the global financial system. The lessons learnt from this crisis and the necessity to assist states in danger of default were part of the impetus behind the later creation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.⁸

War Crimes

An area of international governance that saw an advance as part of the peace conference was the concept of international war criminality. The crimes alleged ranged from the leaders of the Central Powers for having brought about the war, to accusations of the maltreatment of prisoners of war on the part of local figures. There was a desire to punish these "war criminals", and for the first time the concept of war criminality on the part of political leaders was elevated to the level of significant great power discussion.

In Article 227 of the Versailles Treaty the victors publicly charged the exiled German Emperor, Wilhelm II, "for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties." It called for him to be tried before a court composed of judges from each of the five great Allied powers: The United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Japan. Article 228 further provided for the trial before military tribunals of "persons accused of having committed acts in violation of the laws and customs of war". This was a dramatic development in international gov-

⁷ On Britain's policy see D. G. Williamson, *Great Britain and the Ruhr Crisis, 1923–1924*, in: *British Journal of International Studies* 3/1, 1977, 70–91. On the overall crisis see Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis, 1923–24*, Oxford 2003.

⁸ Beth A. Simmons, *Why Innovate? Founding the Bank for International Settlements*, in: *World Politics* 45/3, 1993, 361–405.

ernance, whereby the leader of a country was named as a potential war criminal to be tried for his indicted offenses by the international community. The other peace treaties included clauses dealing with war crimes, though Wilhelm II was the only leader identified by name in the treaties.

These efforts to establish a war crimes judicial regime proved largely ineffective, and no international tribunal was ultimately convened. The neutral Netherlands refused to surrender the Kaiser to stand trial. In response to an Allied list of 855 suspected war criminals made public in February 1920, the German government provided a partial response by offering trials in front of a German court. Eventually this would result in four convictions with light sentences.⁹ A similar list was produced by the British of Ottoman officials to be handed over for trial, for offences which included cruelty to British prisoners, cruelty to native Christians, and breaches of the armistice or other reasons.¹⁰ The potential Ottoman defendants who were arrested were taken to Malta, but they many subsequently escaped from their imprisonment, and with the collapse of the Sultan's government at Constantinople at the lapsing of the Treaty of Sèvres, the matter receded. Nonetheless the idea that leaders and senior officials could be held responsible for their actions by the international community had begun to achieve acceptance. While the effort to hold those responsible for what were considered war crimes ultimately produced a meager result, the legacy of this aspect of the Paris system can be seen in the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes tribunals after the Second World War, the various United Nations war crimes tribunals, and the International Criminal Court.

Arms Control Regimes and Demilitarization Zones

The Versailles Treaty was a landmark in disarmament negotiations. It was the first time that technical advisers assisted in the negotiations, and their imprint is to be found in the treaty's detailed limitations on all dimensions of the future German military establishment. One historian has observed that, "every essential problem connected with military power and armaments was covered in detail, including the question of conscription, the size of armies and navies, the problems of communication and blockade, the use of new instrumentalities of war, such as airplanes, wireless telegraph, poison gases, and submarines, as well as the principles of executing arms limitation".¹¹ Verification of the Versailles obligations was to be accomplished through Inter-Allied Control Commissions supervising the military, naval, and air clauses. By Article 213 of the Versailles Treaty Germany undertook "to give every facility for any investigation which the Council of the League of Nations, acting if

⁹ James F. Willis, *Prologue to Nuremberg: The Politics and Diplomacy of Punishing War Criminals of the First World War*, Westport 1982.

¹⁰ De Robeck (Constantinople) to Lord Curzon (Foreign Office), 1920 February 12th, The National Archives, London-Kew (TNA), Foreign Office Papers (FO) 371/5089/E1346/37/44.

¹¹ Gerda R. Crosby, *Disarmament and Peace in British Politics, 1914-1919*, Cambridge 1957, 104 f.

need be by a majority vote, may consider necessary". The League of Nations body for dealing with such matters was its Permanent Advisory Committee for Military, Naval, and Air Questions. By a resolution on 14 March 1925, commissions of investigation, which were always to be made up of experts of three different nationalities, were given extensive rights of entry and search and full diplomatic immunity and privileges. This regime, however, was the interwar apogee of attempting a rigorous verification regime, and after the 1925 Locarno pact was concluded it was allowed to lapse. International arms inspectors are, however, now a part of the international machinery of governance.

Linked to arms control was the demilitarization of the Rhineland.¹² Most of the Rhineland had been under Allied military occupation since the end of the war. These troops were meant to remain until the Allies were fully assured of Germany's compliance with the disarmament clauses of the treaty, and the area was placed under the Inter-Allied Rhine Commission.¹³ In the aftermath of the Locarno Pact, with the "spirit of Locarno" now animating international relations, a partial evacuation of these forces began. Full evacuation was, however, not completed until 1930 when, for the first time, the Rhineland was truly demilitarized, with no military forces of any country present. In 1936 Germany unilaterally re-militarized the zone. Although this aspect of the Versailles Treaty's efforts at minimizing the risk of future war through a demilitarized zone failed, others did prove successful and long-lasting.

One instance of an effective demilitarization was that of the Åland Islands, which had historically formed part of Finland but with a population that was largely Swedish. Under a treaty of 1856 the islands were permanently demilitarized. The status of the islands arose again when Finland became independent in 1917, as a consequence of the Russian revolution, and the Åland islanders, claiming the right of self-determination, demanded annexation to Sweden. The Finnish government granted the islands autonomy in May 1920, but separatist agitation continued and, in June, the secessionist leaders were arrested and charged with treason. This brought about Finno-Swedish tension and later that same month the matter was brought before the League Council. With the consent of the disputants a League Commission of Jurists was established which recommended, after investigation, that the islands remain within Finland, with a special status and that a new neutralization and demilitarization convention be agreed. This was accepted by Finland and Sweden and came into effect in 1922, providing the League with its first significant success at resolving international tension.¹⁴ The Paris conference also took the opportunity to resolve the status of the islands of Spitsbergen, which was

¹² Earlier efforts at demilitarized zones included a 1 kilometer area each side of the Swedish-Norwegian border after the separation of the kingdoms in 1905, which was abolished by mutual consent in 1993.

¹³ A civilian body located at Coblenz, the capital of western Prussia. After the United States rejected the Versailles Treaty it continued to send an observer to the commission until American troops were withdrawn, on the eve of the Ruhr crisis.

¹⁴ James Barros, *The Åland Islands Question: Its Settlement by the League of Nations*, New Haven 1968.

now placed under Norwegian sovereignty, but to be free of naval bases and fortifications, and determined that the islands, “may never be used for warlike purposes”.¹⁵ The resolution of these issues are illustrations of how the new approaches developed at Paris did indeed provide mechanisms for a more stable international system. Demilitarized zones came back into vogue after the Second World War. One has been in place between the two Koreas since 1953 and has helped to keep the peace. Similar demilitarized zones, now watched by peace keeping forces, exist elsewhere as an evolution of the concept.

Minority Protection and Human Rights

As a result of the war and the Paris conference the frontiers of Europe had been redrawn, so far as was practical, on grounds of ethnic national identity. It was thought that this would provide greater stability in the future by removing possible areas of friction. Given the complexity of the ethnic geography of Europe, the peace settlement inevitably left some ethnic minorities in countries dominated by other groups. To protect the rights of minorities in fourteen countries, these states were required to sign minority protection treaties. Rather than leave the protection of minorities to the domestic law of states, the peace settlement internationalized this protection by making it a treaty obligation. The treaties contained a general statement of underlying principles and specifics on the granting of citizenship, aimed at preventing discrimination against the minorities. To provide for enforcement of these commitments, members of minorities could appeal to the League of Nations, which established a special Minorities Commission. In the event of differences of opinion, the newly created Permanent Court of International Justice could make a binding ruling. In their actual application during the interwar period the effectiveness of these minority protection agreements varied from state to state, but it was a significant step forward in the recognition of human rights. By placing Minority rights under both an international organization and international judicial oversight it was another step in global governance. Today the phrase that would be applied to these measures would be “human rights” rather than “minority rights” and are the precursor of the various conventions covering human rights today, for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992). In 1992 the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) (later the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) established the office of High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM).¹⁶

¹⁵ Art. 9 of the 1920 Treaty on the Status of Spitsbergen (Svalbard), which entered into force in 1925. See also the definitive study Geir Ulfstein, *The Svalbard Treaty. From Terra Nullius to Norwegian Sovereignty*, Oslo 1995.

¹⁶ Carole Fink, *The Minorities Question at the Paris Peace Conference. The Polish Minority Treaty*, June 28, 1919 in: M. Boemke et al., *The Treaty of Versailles. A Reassessment after 75 Years*, Cambridge

New International Organizations and Internationalizations

A key part of the new system was the League of Nations, the Covenant of which formed the first twenty-six articles of all five peace treaties. The League was embedded at the heart of the Paris system and was intended to provide the mechanisms that would be available to adjust aspects of the system as time passed and circumstances altered. The League of Nations has been much criticized for its inability to halt the aggressor states of the 1930s, yet the need for such a body was recognized in its reincarnation at the United Nations organization at the end of the Second World War.

Within the League of Nations concept were embodied many of the principle of a new international system. One of the most significant of these was how the non-European territories removed from the sovereignty of the Central Powers would be governed. In line with the aspiration articulated by Woodrow Wilson in his speech of the Fourteen Points was the concept that future questions of sovereignty would take into account “the interests of the populations concerned” there developed the Mandate system. While Britain and France certainly entertained imperial, acquisitive ambitions in respect to these lands, these conflicted with the American president’s views. A compromise solution was reached, whereby these territories would be overseen by the League of Nations, but administered under a “mandate” to govern them given to a government capable of providing the necessary “tutelage” to prepare them for future statehood. In the early discussions over mandatory assignments there was some idealistic discussion of a number of states being given mandates. In the end there could be little surprise that the Allied Supreme Council, which made the decision on this ahead of the League assuming its role, awarded all the mandates to Britain, British dominions, and France, with Belgium receiving two micro mandates for Burundi and Rwanda, abutting its vast Congo colony. The mechanism for overseeing this innovation was the Permanent Mandates Commission, established by article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant, to which the mandatory powers would have to report, a departure in international governance. The Permanent Mandates Commission comprised seven members, appointed by their governments but otherwise independent, supported by a staff. It was through such activities at the League that the development of a professional international civil service, not representing national interests, began to emerge. There were many imperfections in the actual application of the mandates scheme, but it did mark a first, tentative, step towards decolonization. While the mandatory powers undoubtedly hoped to keep control indefinitely, the road to ultimate independence had at least begun to be marked out. The imperial powers now had to account to a forum

1998, 249–274; Carole Fink, *Minority Rights as an International Question*, in: *Contemporary European History* 9/3, 2000, 385–400; Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others. The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938*, Cambridge, 2004; Carole Fink, *The League of Nations System of Minority Protection, 1920–1939*, in: M. Petricoli (Ed.), *Pour la paix en Europe. Institutions et société civile dans l’entre-deux-guerres*, Brussels 2007, 41–56.

in which their performance as responsible governments could be discussed. The populations governed now had an international venue in which to express their grievances, and even if they seldom found legal relief, they at least had the benefit of publicity. The experience of the mandates had an impact in other imperial territories, and the later wave of decolonization movements has its roots in this period. In the most idealistic interpretation of the mandates experiment can be seen an effort at proper preparation of states for sovereignty and the hope of avoiding what are now termed “failed states”.¹⁷ Other institutions were also established by the peace treaty, such as Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ, now the International Court of Justice). The PCIJ was first permanent international judicial tribunal with general jurisdiction, and through its judgements and advisory opinions contributed to the development and clarification of international law.¹⁸ The International Labour Organization was given an innovative membership system, with each country being represented by four delegates, two appointed by governments, and one each from employers and from workers. This gave a voice for non-state actors at the international level.¹⁹ These were significant innovations that have endured.

The Paris Peace Conference also witnessed an effort to extend the concept of internationalizing Europe’s main rivers used for transnational shipping. Here the Paris conference built upon the experience of the 1815 Congress of Vienna’s internationalization of the Rhine, which had been placed under a Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine, and the 1856 Congress of Paris establishing a regime for the Danube. The Paris conference set new rules for the Rhine commission, and extended the regime on the Danube.²⁰ The Paris treaties also internationalized the other great European waterways, the Elbe, Oder, and Niemen, placing them under individual international commissions.²¹

A further area of innovation was establishing a system for international civil aviation. The war had taught Allies of the need for cooperation in matters relating to the new field of aviation, which had seen significant development because of the war. Building on their wartime experiences, among the commissions of the peace conference was an Aeronautical Commission. One of the many agreements reached by the Paris Peace Conference, not directly related to the peace treaties,

17 Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, New York 2015.

18 The PCIJ in its sittings 1922–40 heard 29 cases between states and delivered 27 advisory opinions. Lorna Lloyd, *Peace through Law. Britain and the International Court in the 1920s*, Woodbridge 1997.

19 Antony E. Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organization*, London 1971.

20 The Netherlands, having been neutral during the war, was not directly involved with the drafting of the Versailles Treaty, but agreed to adhere to the clauses of the treaty that pertained to the Rhine. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 declared the principle of freedom of navigation of the river, but it was not until the 1831 Treaty of Mainz that a Central Commission was established. The Rhine commission is now the oldest European organization still functioning, and provided an early effort at the objectives of European integration. Joseph P. Chamberlain, *The Regime of the International Rivers. Danube and Rhine*, New York 1923 provides a useful account of the situation at the time. It originated as one of the reports for the America Inquiry.

21 Hitler repudiated the authority of the various river commissions to which Germany had been committed by the Versailles Treaty in 1936.

was the Convention Relating to the Regulation of Aerial Navigation (commonly referred to as the Paris Convention), supported by an International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN), with a secretariat in Paris. This institution was able to facilitate such things as procedures for overflight of other countries by civil aircraft. This again illustrates how Paris 1919 was about more than the Peace Treaties. After the Second World War ICAN was superseded by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).²²

Cultural Heritage

In the area of restitution of cultural objects, not just wartime removals, the Paris conference made significant strides on a subject that would continue to grow as a matter of international interest in the ensuing decades.²³ The matter came before the conference, in part, because it had to deal with the disposition of state owned objects claimed by successor states in a Europe of new borders. There were also legacy claims from earlier eras that the conference provided claimant states with an opportunity to reassert. In some of these areas of cultural dispute the conference again showed a willingness to innovate. In the Treaty of St Germain with Austria the numerous claims for objects moved to Vienna, over many decades, by the Habsburgs were sent to be adjudicated by a Committee of Jurists. In their findings, although Allied dominated, the jurists usually focused on the integrity of the collections and took the view that breaking up collections would diminish their cultural contribution. Perhaps this may foreshadow an international tribunal which can deal with the claims for cultural restitution that have proliferated a century after the conference, and the St. Germain *ad hoc* experiment of tribunals for such issues may now be worth revisiting.

The conference also dealt with the issue of the disposition of human remains that had become trophies or museum objects. Article 246 of the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to hand over the British government, as the new government in Tanganyika, the skull of the “Sultan Mkwawa which was removed from the Protectorate of German East Africa and taken to Germany”. It was believed to be in a Berlin museum but could not be located. Eventually after the Second World War it was found in Bremen and returned in 1953 where it was placed with the rest of the Sultan’s remains. It was the last clause of the 1919 Versailles Treaty to be fulfilled. In more recent years the issue of human remains has become a major topic in discussions on repatriation of objects, and the Paris settlement at least provides some precedent.

²² The Convention was signed on 13 October 1919. A contemporary account of the creation of ICAN that provides a good sense of its origins and aspirations is Arthur K. Kuhn, *International Aerial Navigation and the Peace Conference*, in: *American Journal of International Law* 14/3, June 1920, 369–381.

²³ Erik Goldstein, *Cultural Heritage, British Diplomacy and the German Peace Settlement of 1919*, in: *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 30/2, 2019, 336–357.

The Paris Peace Conference proved a hotbed for new ideas and approaches. When considering the fate of the venerable Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which was attracting much debate, Arnold Toynbee, then working in the British Foreign Office made the imaginative suggestion that: “Would it not be possible, while leaving the religious status quo in S. Sophia, to give it the status of an ‘international monument’ from the archaeological point of view.”²⁴ This was one of the earliest proposals for the concept of an international heritage site, presaging the development of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites scheme after the Second World War. In many ways the concept of World Heritage Sites has its inception in the era of the Paris conference.²⁵ The Treaty of Sèvres did require the Ottoman government to legislate for the protection of archaeological sites. Although that treaty never came into force these rules were nonetheless incorporated into the laws of the post-Ottoman Middle East mandates, administered by France and Great Britain, which in turn placed reporting on their implementation through the League of Nations Mandates’ machinery. As a result, this introduced a degree of international governance to the protection of archaeological sites.

The Sèvres Treaty addressed the claims of individuals for abandoned property in the Ottoman Empire, an issue which concerned primarily the many displaced Armenians and Greeks. The treaty provided that claims could be heard by an arbitral commission appointed by the Council of the League of Nations. These commissions were composed of a Turkish representative, one appointed by the community of the claimant, with a chair appointed by the Council. None of the eventual arbitral proceedings dealt with cultural property, but these provisions foreshadowed similar issues that arose with the Second World War. Although the Sèvres Treaty never came into force, the thinking begun at Paris was continued in post-1945 actions on similar problems.

Conclusion

The complexity of the task confronting the peacemakers in 1919 was immense. There was a need to settle the immediate issues of the war, but the opportunity was simultaneously taken to address wider issues. Paris witnessed an effort to create a system aimed at bringing a greater degree of governance to international relations. The system evolved at Paris had many flaws, and to return to Thomas Masaryk’s analogy that Europe was “a laboratory sitting atop a vast graveyard”, much of the work done at Paris was experimental and perhaps only a tentative, or even faltering, step toward greater international stability, but it was nonetheless an important step on the road to that goal. The legacy of Paris 1919 remains much disputed, but it lies very much at the foundation of contemporary international relations

²⁴ Minute by Toynbee, 1919 March 6, TNA, FO 608/82/342/4/2/3507.

²⁵ Erik Goldstein, *Redeeming Holy Wisdom. Britain and St. Sophia*, in: Melanie Hall (Ed.), *Towards World Heritage. International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870–1930*, London 2011, 45–62.

**Political, Social and Economic
Impact on Europe**

The “New” European States

“Nothing but a Hope”: The Slovenes between Wilsonian Idealism and Post-War Reality

ANDREJ RAHTEN

At the end of the Paris Peace Conference, there were two places in the world called “Wilsonia”. The first place named after the American President Thomas Woodrow Wilson was a mountain community in California. The decision was taken by its inhabitants because they believed that during the election back in 1916, their few hundred votes had decided the tight contest between Wilson and his Republican opponent, Charles E. Hughes.¹ The second place called Wilsonia was situated in the then Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in the Upper Carniola region belonging today to the Republic of Slovenia. It was actually a large estate near Bled which belonged to the former Austro-Hungarian Consul Ivan Švegel (Hans Schwegel). He participated at the Paris Peace Conference as an expert in the Yugoslav delegation and managed to organize two meetings of his Slovene countrymen with Wilson personally. The decision to rename his estate after Wilson was a sign of his gratitude for all the endeavours of the US President to find a rightful solution regarding the Slovene national demands.²

Already at the beginning of the last year of the Great War, Wilson was the most powerful statesman globally. He proclaimed his Fourteen Points as a collection of principles which should prevail in search for the new international order. Among them, he vehemently advocated the creation of a system of collective security which should replace the old balance of power.³ His idealistic goal of creating a new world order of democratic states, which should be peaceful already by definition, attracted many national leaders which were still under the control of the Central

1 Andrea Kannapell, *The Election; Any Votes for Bushberg? Goreville?*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/12weekinreview/the-election-an>, 16 December 2016.

2 Andrej Rahten, *Med Kakanijo in Wilsonio. Poklicne in politične preizkušnje Hansa Schwegla alias Ivana Šveгла [Between Kakanien and Wilsonia. Professional and Political Tests of Hans Schwegel Alias Ivan Švegel]*, Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien 2018, 9 f.

3 More about the ideological foundations of the new world order Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton 2009.

Powers. There was a high number of Slavic politicians in Austria-Hungary, including those who left the country during the Great War, trying to combine Wilsonian high-sounding principles with their ambitions for national self-determination.⁴

At the Paris Peace Conference, the Slovenes were unlikely to assert their demands against the opposition of their powerful historical rivals – Italians in the territory of the former Austrian Littoral and Germans in the territory of Carinthia and Styria. The fact is that the small Slovene nation, which had lived in the Habsburg crown lands (Carniola, Styria, Carinthia, Gorizia-Gradisca, Trieste, and Istria) for hundreds of years, went completely unnoticed by the majority of the international public and politics also at the beginning of the 20th century. Even Robert William Seton-Watson, the leading British authority on Southern Slav nations in the years prior to the Great War, accorded little attention to the Slovenes in his analyses of the “Southern Slav question”, rather focusing on the Croats and the Serbs.⁵ But after the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy and on the eve of the establishment of the SHS-Kingdom, they immediately took their place in the diplomatic records of the Great Powers.⁶

Italy, in fact, already arrived in Paris with a victory in its pocket, when, after its initial manoeuvring at the outbreak of the Great War and defecting from the Triple Alliance to join Great Britain, France and Russia, it secured the signing of the Treaty of London on 26 April 1915. The document stipulated that, in case of victory, Italy was to be granted a vast portion of the former Habsburg provinces: Trento, Southern Tyrol, Gorizia-Gradisca, Trieste, Istria, the Kvarner Islands and Dalmatia. At

4 The last Habsburg Emperor Karl wanted to neutralise them with a combination of internal reforms and peace proposals through different mediators. However, his noble endeavours were stopped due to the impossibility of achieving a general peace settlement which would include his German allies, too. As it is well known, the final blow to the initiatives of Karl was the “Sixtus Affair”, which ruined credibility of the young Emperor abroad and damaged his reputation at home. Nevertheless, the affair was not only the result of rigidity of the Central Powers, but also a good indicator of the strength of militarist mentality within the Entente. Same was the fate of initiatives of Pope Benedict XV and the Holy See. He tried to turn back time to the pre-War international conditions, but eventually he had to recognize the new political realities in Central Europe. In Vienna some influential parts of civil society were very active, such as the catholic-conservative *Para Pacem* and the liberal group around Julius Meinl, but they were not able to get enough support from the governmental circles. The same goes for the feminist movement led by charismatic personalities such as Rosa Mayreder, which was closely connected to the pacifist ideas, but again without any chances to be heard in the Viennese corridors of power politics. The nomination of Heinrich Lammasch, perhaps the most prominent advocate of Wilson and his principles in the Habsburg Monarchy, for the Austrian Prime Minister, came much too late. More about the peace movement in the times of the last Habsburg Emperor: Peter Broucek, Karl I. (IV). *Der politische Weg des letzten Herrschers der Donaumonarchie*, Wien/Köln/Weimar 1997.

5 Robert W. Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy*, London 1911; Stjepan Matković, Ivo Pilar and Robert William Seton-Watson: Two Political Points on the Southern Slav Question, in: Pilar – *Croatian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, Zagreb 2006, 17–42.

6 Ernest Petrič et al. (Eds.), *The Slovenes in the Eyes of Empire. Handbooks of the British Diplomats Attending the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, Mengeš 2007. The book contains a manual describing the traditional Habsburg crown lands of Carniola, Carinthia and Styria, as well as a manual dedicated to the Austrian Littoral. In addition to two manuals dedicated to geography, the book also contains two studies with a pronounced political dimension: *The Slovenes* and *The Yugoslav Movement*. An identical methodological approach has been applied to the four manuals, with the authors using both British and local sources. As Dimitrij Rupel points out in the preface to the book, these manuals are “written in the best British tradition” since “they seek to be neutral and objective and avoid making harsh judgements”.

the end of the Great War, it became clear even to the most optimistic Slovene politicians that the Treaty of London would weaken their influence on the establishment of the western Slovene border or, rather, the border between the new SHS-Kingdom and Italy – albeit the Allies utterly failed to appreciate the fact that a substantial part of the Slovenes and the Croats would fall outside the borders of the Yugoslav state.⁷ The Slovenes could only helplessly observe while Italy was grabbing their ethnic territory piece by piece, in line with the Treaty of London. Both the Council of Ministers in Belgrade and the Provincial Government in Ljubljana were thus forced to concede to the fact that the question of the western border of the newly constituted state based exclusively on negotiations between the Entente Powers at the Paris Peace Conference.⁸ The Slovene politicians reiterated in their public statements that Gorizia and Trieste, two largest cities of the former Austrian Littoral, should belong to the Yugoslav state, but nevertheless dreaded that the Paris Peace Conference would respect the arrangements of the Treaty of London of 1915 between Italy and the Entente Allies. Having their hands tied in the face of Italy, Slovene politicians applied themselves with greater assiduity to settling the border questions in Carinthia and Lower Styria.⁹

But even with respect to this question, it soon became clear that the Slovene representatives, who came to Paris as part of the delegation of the Kingdom of Serbia (given Italy's opposition, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was yet to win recognition), were facing an arduous task. The entire Yugoslav delegation had around 100 members, embodying all the diversity of the Balkan reality regarding its religious, cultural, as well as political divisions. It was headed by the most influential Serb politician Nikola Pašić.¹⁰ In addition to three Serbs and two Croats, the delegation also included two Slovenes: former Minister Dr. Ivan Žolger and former deputy Dr. Otokar Rybář. Of the two, Žolger, an authority in constitutional law, was higher in rank and the only Slovene to have held a ministerial position in Imperial Austria, being a member of the government back in 1917–1918. Prior to that, he had made an astonishing career as civil servant and scholar, being author

7 More on the problem of determining the Yugoslav borders at the Paris Peace Conference: Fran Erjavec, *Slovenci na mirovni konferenci l. 1919–1920* [Slovenes at the Peace Conference 1919–1920], London 1960; Ivo J. Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference. A Study in Frontiersmaking*, New Haven/London 1963; Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira 1919–1920* [Yugoslavia at the Peace Conference 1919–1920], Belgrade 1969; Fritz Fellner, *Die jugoslawische Frage auf der Pariser Friedenskonferenz*, in: Helmut Rumpler (Ed.), *Kärntens Volksabstimmung. Wissenschaftliche Kontroversen und historisch-politische Diskussionen anlässlich des internationalen Symposiums Klagenfurt 1980*, Klagenfurt 1981, 90–100.

8 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World*, New York 2002, 279–305.

9 For a fuller insight into the policy of the Slovene Provincial Government on the Carinthian question, see: Bogo Grafenauer, *Slovenska Koroška v diplomatski igri leta 1919. Vprašanje jugoslovansko-avstrijske meje na pariški mirovni konferenci* [Slovene Carinthia in the Diplomatic Game of 1919. The Question of the Yugoslav-Austrian Border at the Paris Peace Conference 1919–1920], in: Janko Pleterski – Lojze Ude – Tone Zorn (Eds.), *Koroški plebiscit* [Carinthian Plebiscite], Ljubljana 1970, 295–378; Tamara Griesser-Pečar, *Die Stellung der slowenischen Landesregierung zum Land Kärnten 1918–1920*, Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien 2010.

10 Dejan Djokić, Pašić and Trumbić. *The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*, London 2010.

of many standard works, such as the studies on Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 or Austrian House law.¹¹ And it was precisely due to the fact that he was a former Minister of the “defeated state” that several members of other delegations treated him with reserve. Especially Italians objected to Žolger’s appointment because of his membership in the Imperial Austrian Government. Nevertheless, because of his workaholic habits, excellent knowledge and polite manners, he soon gained respect among his colleagues at the Paris Peace Conference. The Slovene members of the Yugoslav delegation were well-organised and disciplined. Žolger established his own, separate secretariat. Its members worked tirelessly, a large number of experts supported Žolger with different documents, analysis and statistics. His good knowledge of French proved to be useful in communication with the French diplomats, who were the most loyal supporters of the Yugoslav claims. Particularly good cooperation developed between Žolger and André Tardieu, president of the territorial commission dealing with the Romanian and Yugoslav questions.¹²

The Yugoslav delegates had different views on the priority of demands to be presented at the Peace Conference. Those who came from the former provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy above all endeavoured for a favourable determination of borders with Austria and Italy. On the other hand, the delegates from Serbia proper were willing to conclude compromises in the Adriatic and in the North in exchange for concessions on the eastern borders of the new state. Such inconsistent positions naturally led to tensions within the delegation, which nevertheless remained under the steadfast direction and authority of Pašić. The negotiating power of the Slovene part of the delegation, however, was further curtailed by the absence of Anton Korošec, the leading Slovene political authority during the transition from the Austro-Hungarian to the Yugoslav state.

Following the unification of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs with the Kingdom of Serbia on 1 December 1918, the Slovene politicians speculated that Serbia’s reputation as an Entente Ally would give them the leverage to exert their national demands. Austria was to represent a defeated state, while the Slovenes and the Croats, who just months before had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Austrian Germans against the Entente, would automatically obtain the status of “victors” through their unification with the Serb Monarchy. They furthermore believed that the Peace Conference would, also in the Slovene case, adhere to the principles proclaimed by Wilson, who attended the Conference as an advocate of the right of nations to self-determination. They anticipated that the authority of Wilson and his ideas would prevail over the methods of the “Old Diplomacy”.¹³

¹¹ See Ivan Žolger, *Der staatsrechtliche Ausgleich zwischen Oesterreich und Ungarn, Vienna 1911*; *Ibidem, Der Hofstaat des Hauses Oesterreich, Wien 1917*.

¹² Andrej Rahten, *Diplomatska prizadevanja Ivana Žolgerja za Slovensko Štajersko in Prekmurje* [Diplomatic Endeavours of Ivan Žolger Regarding the Slovene Styria and Prekmurje], in: *Studia Historica Slovenica* 18/2, Maribor 2018, 489–528.

¹³ Uroš Lipušček, *Ave Wilson. ZDA in prekrajanje Slovenije v Versaillesu 1919–1920* [United States and the Remaking of Slovenia in Versailles 1919–1920], Ljubljana 2003.

However, the other Great Powers which directed the current of negotiations regarding the new borders in Central Europe, were not willing to accept the territorial demands regarding the western and northern borders of the SHS-Kingdom. During the negotiation talks, the top British political representatives showed little interest in the situation in the Balkans. Even though Serbia also had its "fan club" in London, which was largely owing to its resistance against the Central Powers during the Great War, the Yugoslav question was not a matter of priority for British diplomacy. And at least initially this was also the attitude taken by the French leadership which was focussed mainly on the German problem.¹⁴ The eyes of the Yugoslav delegates were therefore fixed, in particular, upon Wilson, of whom the British Prime Minister Lloyd George said that he had come to Paris like a missionary to rescue the heathen Europeans.¹⁵ Wilson at first genuinely opposed the fulfilment of Italian claims against the Yugoslav state, as the United States was not a signatory of the Treaty of London. But since his principal plan was to establish the League of Nations, he was compelled to make concessions in other issues if he was to win the widest possible diplomatic support for the realisation of his major project: to establish a system of "collective security".¹⁶

All attempts to nullify or at least to correct the stipulations of the Treaty of London of 1915, which provided a large share of territory of the former Austrian Littoral for the Italian Kingdom, were unsuccessful. Even though at first, in the name of the principles of the "New Diplomacy", Wilson firmly rejected the argument of his French and British colleagues that the Treaty of London with Italy should be respected in its entirety, he was eventually forced to concede to the majority of Italian claims. Italian diplomacy naturally made every effort to weaken the young Yugoslav state. Its aim was to establish hegemony in the Balkans and its main obstacle was none other than the SHS-Kingdom. In addition to their tenacious insistence on the extensive territorial stipulations contained in the Treaty of London, the Italian delegates also supported claims made by Yugoslavia's neighbouring countries Rumania, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria.¹⁷ In order to avoid the implementation of the Treaty of London, the Slovene delegates and politicians demanded a referendum in the area of the former Austrian Littoral. This demand was rejected by all Great Powers, including the United States. On the other hand, Wilson was ready to support the plebiscite in Carinthia, although there was a strong opposition by the

14 France was the most determined ally of Yugoslavia during its founding years. See a detailed analysis of Stanislav Sretenović, *Francuska i Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918–1929* [France and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 1918–1929], Belgrade 2008.

15 Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World. Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West*, New York 2006, 160 f.

16 David Armstrong – Lorna Lloyd – John Redmond (Eds.), *From Versailles to Maastricht. International Organisation in the Twentieth Century*, London 1996, 13–18.

17 Tanja Mljač, *L'Italie face à la naissance de la Yougoslavie*, in: Andrej Rahten – Janez Šumrada (Eds.), *Les Cinq Grands et la création du Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes*, Mengeš/Ljubljana 2011, 291–322.

Yugoslav delegation to such a solution.¹⁸ In this case, a substantial part of the Slovenes would be left outside the borders of the SHS-Kingdom, and all their endeavours, based on the Wilsonian Idealism, would fail.

It is well known that in making his evaluation of the Carinthian question, Wilson relied heavily on the report prepared by the American Lieutenant Colonel Sherman Miles.¹⁹ At the Graz negotiations between the Representatives of the Carinthian Provincial Government and their counterparts from Ljubljana in mid-January 1919, Miles offered to act as a mediator in the Austrian-Yugoslav dispute. The decision was made amidst heightened tensions on the Carinthian front. Miles proposed to travel through Carinthia and assess the atmosphere among its population in the company of one representative from either side in the dispute. The resulting assessment would provide the basis for the demarcation line between the Austrian and Yugoslav armies. The Miles Commission carried out its work within the framework of a wider American study group for Central Europe, led from Vienna by a distinguished professor of history at Harvard, Archibald Cary Coolidge, who travelled to Europe at the end of 1918. Although he was officially appointed chair of the American study group in Vienna, Coolidge's competences were not entirely clear, as his mission had an official status, but not also a diplomatic one. Coolidge sent some of his colleagues to the capitals of countries that emerged in the territory of the defunct Habsburg Monarchy. The commission thus obtained branch offices in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, and Zagreb. Coolidge collected the reports from the branch offices and forwarded the selected information to the American delegation in Paris. The command of the branch office in Zagreb was taken over by Miles.

The mere announcement that Miles was to conduct an inquiry into Carinthia instilled new hope in the ethnic German population of what was then Lower Styria. In their eyes, the American commission was one of the last – if not the last – opportunity to neutralize the activities of the influential Slovene General Rudolf Maister, who had taken over military power in Maribor already back in November 1918. At

¹⁸ Thomas Mack Barker, *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia*, New York 1984, 141.

¹⁹ For a detailed presentation of Miles Mission, see: Martin Wutte, *Die amerikanische Kommission 1919*, in: *Carinthia I* 125, Klagenfurt 1935, 189–205; Claudia Fräss-Ehrfeld, *Die Berichte der Miles-Mission bezüglich der endgültigen Grenze in Kärnten*, in: *Carinthia I* 165, Klagenfurt 1975, 255–266; Siegfried Beer – Eduard G. Staudinger, *Grenzziehung per Analogie. Die Miles-Mission in der Steiermark im Jänner 1919. Eine Dokumentation*, in: Stefan Karner – Gerald Schöpfer (Eds.), *Als Mitteleuropa zerbrach. Zu den Folgen des Umbruchs in Österreich und Jugoslawien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Graz 1990, 133–152; Alojz Kuhar, *Poglavje iz tragedije koroških Slovencev [A Chapter from the Tragedy of the Slovenes]*, in: Tone Sušnik (Ed.), *Zbornik o dr. Alojzu Kuharju [A Collection of Papers about Dr. Alojz Kuhar]*, Kotlje 1993, 94–155; Ulfried Burz, *Historiografische Bruchlinien zwischen Wien und Kärnten – Dokumente zur „Abwehrkampf“-These*, in: Hellwig Valentin (Ed.), *Die Kärntner Volksabstimmung 1920 und die Geschichtsforschung*, Klagenfurt 2001, 113–149; Christine M. Gigler, *Die Berichte der Coolidge-Mission im Jahr 1919. Die mitteleuropäischen Interessen der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Klagenfurt 2001; Martin Moll, *Die „blutende Wunde“ im Süden: Eine neue Grenze entsteht*, in: Alfred Ableitinger (Ed.), *Bundesland und Reichsgau*, Wien 2015, 289–316; Andrej Rahten, *„Šampanjec v Gradcu in nemške demivierges“ – ocena delovanja podpolkovnika Shermana Milesa na Štajerskem leta 1919 [“Champagne in Graz and German demivierges” – Evaluation of the Activities of Lieutenant Colonel Sherman Miles in Styria in 1919]*, in: *Studia Historica Slovenica* 19/3, Maribor 2019, 781–814.

the request of the Styrian Provincial Government, Miles first set out to Maribor on 20 January 1919 and also scouted its surroundings. Before his second visit, the German inhabitants of Maribor already started to organize a plebiscite for Austria. When in Maribor on 27 January 1919, the Miles Commission ran into riots, which erupted when German protesters, led by the former Mayor Johann Schmiderer, tried to hand over to the Americans improvised ballots demanding for the city to be incorporated into the Republic of German Austria. The tensions culminated in shooting, which claimed several casualties.²⁰ Therefore, the tragic incident was named “Bloody Sunday of Maribor” (although it actually happened on a Monday) and caused major indignation among the German Austrians.

After the Maribor tragedy, Miles continued to Carinthia to carry out the arbitration. The commission passed through Carinthia in two automobiles in a journey that lasted from 28 January to 6 February 1919. During their fact-finding mission in Carinthia, the American officers compiled extensive documentation, in which they primarily presented proposals for drawing the demarcation line in Carinthia. The Austrians made a shrewd move by appointing to the Miles Commission Commander Albert Peter-Pirkham, who was deft at winning the sympathies of American officers. Apparently, there were two candidates for the function on the Yugoslav side. Ivan Švegel, who would certainly be able to make good use of the experience that he had gained as a long-standing Austro-Hungarian consul in the USA, and the Carinthian priest Lambert Ehrlich. The latter prevailed, because he was supported by Janko Brejc, head of the Provincial Government for Slovenia.²¹ Miles wrote in his report that it was precisely the cloth that secured Ehrlich a very favourable position to draw pro-Yugoslav opinions out of the Slovene inhabitants. Another question is, however, what impression the ascetic Catholic priest made on the Protestant US officers, who most likely preferred the company of the refined Austrian officer to his. What should also not be disregarded are accounts contained in some memoirs that Miles was far less captivated by Ehrlich’s dry lectures on the situation in Carinthia than by the flattery which Austrian aristocratic ladies lavished on him in Klagenfurt. With the exception of Professor Robert J. Kerner advocating a demarcation line on the Drava/Drau River, other American members of the Commission proposed that the border should follow the Karavanke (Karawanken) Mountains. Later, attending one of the political gatherings, Brejc’s fellow Government official Vladimir Ravnihar made the following sarcastic comment on the American arbitration: “Champagne in Graz and German *demivierges*, so much for hard-fought German victory!”²²

²⁰ Ivan Senekovič, Sedemindvajseti januar 1919 v Mariboru [27 January 1919 in Maribor], in: Kronika slovenskih mest 3/1–2, Ljubljana 1936, 59–64, 110–114, here 60.

²¹ Albin Prepeluh, Pripombe k naši prevratni dobi [Comments on the Times of Overthrow], Ljubljana 1938, 213.

²² Andrej Rahten, Pozabljeni slovenski premier. Politična biografija dr. Janka Brejca (1869–1934) [The Forgotten Slovene Prime Minister. Political Biography of Dr. Janko Brejc (1869–1934)], Klagenfurt/Ljubljana/Wien 2002, 218–219.

It took Brejc great pains to prevent at least the formal reading of the arbitration decision of the Miles Commission in Paris.²³ Finally, at the beginning of March French Foreign Minister Stéphane Pichon protested to the Americans against “the actions of a certain Mister Coolidge”. Yet even though the US Administration officially renounced Miles’s report, Wilson was later very apt to draw on it in treating the Carinthian question at the Peace Conference, even using it as a reference.²⁴ He maintained the thesis that it was necessary, irrespective of the national boundary, to preserve the economic integrity of the so-called “Klagenfurt basin”, while the question whether the latter should belong to the Yugoslav or the Austrian state was to be determined by the Carinthians themselves at a plebiscite. And so, the Slovene politicians had their initial demand bounce back to them like a boomerang, where in the case of Carinthia they consciously trampled upon the principle of nationality, citing economic reasons to justify the annexation of German Klagenfurt to the SHS-Kingdom. From a fear that the outcome of the referendum might not be in their favour, the Slovene members of the Yugoslav delegation at the Peace Conference started to push for a compromise division of the Klagenfurt basin. But now they were in a quandary as to how to demonstrate the reasonableness of such a division to the American delegation, since they themselves initially opposed compromises, pointing to the economic integrity of the Klagenfurt basin, which they firmly believed would be granted to the Yugoslav state in its entirety.²⁵

What is less known is that the members of the Miles Commission also brought forth a solution for the delimitation of the border in Styria, where its southern part with centre in the city of Maribor was claimed both by the Austrians and Slovenes. The idea of plebiscite was supported by the Italian diplomacy which wanted to help the new Austrian Republic. Although Miles conducted a less extensive field research in Lower Styria, his assessment of the situation rested heavily on the analogy with Carinthia.²⁶ Whereas Wilson heeded Miles’ opinion regarding Carinthia and championed the Carinthian plebiscite, he listened to the Yugoslav arguments regarding the demarcation of the Styrian border. However, if the American president had followed the pro-Austrian recommendations of the Miles Commission on the Styrian issue as well, Maribor might have well met a different fate. Consequently, the Italian last-minute attempt to provoke a referendum regarding Maribor on the eve of the signing of Treaty of St. Germain remained just a threat, although from the Yugoslav perspective a very serious one.

On 27 May 1919 Wilson presented the Peace Conference with his expose on the Klagenfurt basin, wherein he warned that the economic boundary was not in agree-

23 Prepeluh, Pripombe, 214.

24 Kuhar, Poglavlje, 151–153.

25 Janko Brejc, *Od prevrata do ustave* [From the Overthrow to the Constitution], in: Andrej Rahten (Ed.), *Avstrijski in jugoslovanski državni problem. Tri razprave Janka Brejca iz prelomnega obdobja narodne zgodovine* [The Austrian and the Yugoslav State Problem. Three Studies of Janko Brejc Regarding the Turning Points of the National History], Ljubljana 2012, 21–74, here 38–40.

26 Beer – Staudinger, *Grenzziehung*, 147–148.

ment with the ethnic one. In his opinion, the Slovene part in the south ought to constitute an economically inseparable whole with the German part in the north, for which reason the plebiscite had best take place for the territory of the entire basin. On that same day a special Slovene deputation arrived in Paris headed by Bishop of Ljubljana Anton Bonaventura Jeglič and Janko Brejc, who kept all the crucial political decisions regarding Carinthia strongly in his hands. The visit of the French capital was made on the initiative of Švegel, who was invited to participate in the delegation of the SHS-Kingdom as an expert. Brejc, who upon his arrival in Paris acquiesced to the compromise proposal for the border demarcation following the "Green line", soon discovered in astonishment that the main opponent to the Yugoslavs on the Carinthian question was, in fact, Wilson. This is also evident from his letter of 1 June to his deputy Gregor Žerjav, wherein he provided an interesting evaluation of the situation at the Paris Peace Conference: "Dear Doctor! Even if I intended to offer You a most sketchy outline of the dealings here, I would have to write an extensive brochure. The situation is changing by the hour. Therefore, what was still current yesterday is now obsolete. Today we know the following: Our adversary in Carinthia is none other than Wilson himself, who says (as is established) that he personally ordered an investigation of Car[inthia], that he was well informed about it, that he was cognizant of the Slovene population there, but that these Slov[enes] desired nothing else than to become Austrians. This he stated in the very presence of Tardieu!"²⁷

In most border issues exposed at the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson was rather a disappointment to the Austrians. Carinthia was an important exception. In the words of Thomas M. Barker: "Only to the Carinthian Germans was Wilson a knight in shining armor – and that solely in retrospect. His doctrine of self-determination fitted in perfectly with the situation in Carinthia, whose German inhabitants had unconsciously been preparing for the plebiscite since 1848."²⁸ Thus the Slovene politicians which made the last-minute visit to Paris fought a diplomatic battle already lost in advance.

On 5 June 1919, after the decision on the plebiscite was already made, the US President finally received the Slovene deputation. The audience, which Švegel aptly negotiated owing to his excellent American connections, lasted thirty minutes. On this occasion Brejc also uttered the famous greeting: "Ave, Wilson, Sloveni morituri te salutant!" Through Švegel, who served as an interpreter, Brejc informed the US President as to what "was the reason for our mission at the eleventh hour". He warned "of the unjust fate imposed upon our nation, which might be divided among four states and destroyed in the new lasting European order, whereas even before – under Austro-Hungarian dominance – we were, albeit without any political rights, united in one single state and thus able to promote our cultural development and self-preservation." Much of his speech Brejc devoted to the Carinthian question,

²⁷ Brejc an Žerjav, 1919 June 1st, Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 1655, Gregor Žerjav Fund.

²⁸ Barker, *The Slovene Minority*, 142.