

BORROWED TIME

The Story of Britain Between the Wars

ROY HATTERSLEY



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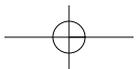
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PREFACE

Many of the families who, during the 1920s and 1930s, were buffeted about by the winds of fate had no idea that the uncertainty of their times was in any way unusual. Cynicism became fashionable and disenchantment was 'smart'. T. E. Lawrence (serving at the time as a private in the Royal Tank Corps) climbed on a ladder outside the front door of his cottage at Cloud's Hill and carved "*Ou phrontis*" (who cares?) into the lintel. It was the gesture of a generation – the claim not to care, made with such determination that it was clear that those who made it cared very much indeed. Between the wars, Britain was uncertain about most aspects of life other than the need to put on a brave face.

Some of the feelings of an anxious nation – hopes which were realised, ambitions which were unfulfilled and pleasures in the simple things of life which made it easier to bear the tribulations of those turbulent years – were recorded in diaries and letters. For permission to quote the emotion of the time I am grateful to Caroline Cudmore (Ethel Wood), His Grace the Duke of Devonshire (the Ninth Duke of Devonshire), Dr Richard Rowlatt (Mr Justice Rowlatt), Barbara Crowther (Anne Worth), Gillian Hall (Captain W. H. S. Hall), Sarah Gooderson (Doris Gooderson), Kathryn Hartley (William Hartley), Robin Constable (Daphne Thompson), Trevor Hopper (May Hopper), Judy Symonds, (Rosamund Lehmann), Hannah Smith (Canon Spencer Elliott), Peter Anderson (Anne Goodison) and Chris Furniss (Harry Furniss).

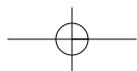
Anthony Howard read the manuscript and made both corrections and improvements – a generous use of his time and invaluable assistance for which I have been indebted to him during the preparation



Preface

of my last five books. Cynthia Shepherd corrected, improved – and typed. Richard Beswick (my publisher and editor) and Joe Merton (who read the manuscript on his behalf) suggested changes from which the final text greatly benefited. My sincere thanks to them all.

Of course, the errors and omissions are my sole responsibility.



INTRODUCTION

The Hush Before the Dawn

Oh what a day. Never to be forgotten. With what great enthusiasm we waited for the morning papers, but without the satisfaction of seeing that the Armistice had been signed. It was not until 11 o'clock that we knew. Then the guns boomed forth, the bells rung and the people cheered and cheered through the streets.

Ethel Wood – fashion illustrator, London

Age 26

Diary for 11.11.1918

Ethel Wood's diary reflected the feelings of the whole nation. For almost a week, it had been clear that the Germans were on the point of capitulation. David Lloyd George, speaking at his first Guildhall Banquet as Prime Minister, had made a joke to explain the delay. The Allied Forces were, he said, advancing so quickly that the Kaiser's emissaries – bound for the railway carriage in the Compiègne where Marshall Foch waited to receive the Central Powers' surrender – had lost their way. Heartened by the thought that the Berlin High Command could not even sue for peace with what the much-vaunted Prussian efficiency, the bankers and brokers stood and cheered. Ten years earlier the People's Budget had made Lloyd George a figure of hate and loathing in the City. Victory, like time, is a great healer.

By Sunday 10 November, the Archbishop of Canterbury was so confident that victory was near that he told the congregation in Westminster Abbey that they were 'waiting . . . in the hush before the dawn'. Next morning, according to *The Times*, 'London went to work early and settled down with what concentration it could muster'.¹ But several hundred impatient citizens made their way to Downing Street rather than to their offices and shops. They were rewarded first with the sight of the War Cabinet arriving at Number Ten one by one – General Smuts, Lord Milner, A. J. Balfour. Then the Prime Minister appeared. 'At eleven o'clock this morning,' he told the crowd, 'the war will be over. We have won a great victory and we are entitled to a bit of shouting.'

At eleven o'clock the capital erupted into a cacophony of rejoicing. The guns and bells which Ethel Wood heard were only the beginning. Soon the official signs that the war was over were joined by the people's contribution to the noises of victory. Policemen blew their whistles. Cabs hooted their klaxon-horns. Tram-cars clanged and buses hooted. In the East End, Boy Scouts who had been trained to cycle the streets, blowing warnings of air raids on their bugles, sounded what they knew to be the last 'All Clear'.

The Times reported 'Cheering Crowds . . . Rejoicing in the Streets . . . A Great Display of Flags'. Ethel Wood recorded the scene with a hand which trembled with emotion. 'The excitement was infectious . . . Everybody left their work and got on buses, taxis, wagons, sidecars of motor cycles – in fact any vehicle . . . Officers and nurses dashed through the streets of London, sitting on top of taxis . . . Flags were hung in all the windows . . . People draped themselves with them . . . Everybody was greeting one another like old friends.'

Parliament, as was only to be expected, received the news with more decorum. But even there the House of Commons defied convention with signs of celebration which were out of order by the rules of debate but were in keeping with the jubilant feelings of the time. When the Prime Minister entered the chamber, the whole House – including Mr Asquith, deposed by Lloyd George two years earlier – rose to its feet and cheered. From then on cheers punctuated almost every sentence as he read out the armistice terms one by one. The assurance that 'repatriation and restitution' were to be 'secured in

The Hush Before the Dawn

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full' – the policy which led to the collapse of the European currencies and sowed the seeds of the Second World War – was received with particular ecstasy.

The Prime Minister's statement ended with an explanation of its brevity. 'This is no time for words. Our hearts are too full of gratitude to which no tongue can give adequate expression.' The Commons, followed by the Lords, then marched in solemn procession to St Margaret's, the parish church of Parliament. Lloyd George and Asquith (who had led the nation during the first two years of the war) walked, side by side, at the head of the column. The service began with 'O God our Help in Ages Past' and included a reading from Isaiah: 'He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound . . . They shall raise up the former desolations and they shall repair the waste cities.'

In the West End the rejoicing went on throughout the afternoon and into the night – despite the steady rain. Street lamps, once blacked out as protection against enemy Zeppelins, had their covers torn away. Theatres and shops blazed with light. In places of entertainment the national anthem was sung with gusto. In the streets and squares it was augmented with choruses of 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'Rule Britannia'. One bookmaker pinned up a notice declaring Foch and Haig joint winners, with Allenby in third place and Hindenburg nowhere. Then, a little before midnight, the searchlights – stationed in London parks to help the artillery train its guns on German aircraft – were turned on and great beams of light illuminated the sky above the capital.

At two minutes after eleven, a copy of the Prime Minister's announcement had been hung on the gates of Buckingham Palace. By quarter-past an estimated crowd of five thousand cheering subjects had assembled to demand a sight of the King. Their wish was granted. The King – wearing the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet and accompanied by the Queen, the Duke of Connaught and Princess Mary – appeared on the Palace balcony. In the courtyard the band of the Irish Guards struck up the national anthem and, to the relief of the *Times* reporter on the spot, almost everybody behaved with complete decorum. 'Officers stood to attention, civilians removed their hats.

Men and women took up the refrain joyously.' But two men climbed the Victoria Monument. They were later identified as Australians.

Then, when the band played *Rule Britannia* an extraordinary thing happened. The King removed his naval cap and waved it to the crowd. Thus encouraged, the bolder spirits outside the Palace gates began to cry 'Speech!' The cries continued as the band – having brought tears to eyes with 'La Marseillaise' and a selection of Belgian airs – moved on to 'Tipperary' and 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'. Then, to delighted astonishment, the King spoke. The crowd had grown to ten thousand strong, so few of them heard what he had to say. But his words were printed in the following day's Court Circular. 'With you, I rejoice and thank God for the victories which the Allied Armies have won, bringing hostilities to an end and peace within sight.'

It was a day for the defiance of protocol. When the King visited the City to receive the salutations of the Mayor and Corporation he passed through Temple Bar without, as tradition required, receiving the permission of the City Fathers. At about the same time soldiers returning from the front arrived at Victoria Station. They seized bells, usually employed by porters to attract attention and clear their passage, and rang a joyous peal of victory. It was a day for breaking rules and defying conventions.

In the rest of the country local dignitaries led the rejoicing. In Bristol the Lord Mayor and the Bishop both read addresses from the steps of the Council House. The Lord Provost of Aberdeen spoke to a gathering of several thousand citizens and took the salute from a march past of Gordon Highlanders. The Mayor of Scarborough announced the news from a tram-car which, as part of a national savings campaign, had been converted to look like a howitzer. The Lord Provost of Edinburgh sent a telegram of congratulations to the Welsh Prime Minister and similar messages to two Scottish heroes – Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and Admiral Beatty. The Lord Mayor of Manchester declared (without any authority) that the rest of the day was a holiday. In Belfast and Birmingham work stopped even in the absence of a municipal announcement and in Plymouth the breweries – fearful that the navy would celebrate too enthusiastically – ordered the closure of their public houses.

There were some exceptions to the rejoicing. Duff Cooper – a

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Foreign Office civil servant who, in consequence, missed the war – ‘could not resist a feeling of profound melancholy, looking at the crowds of cheering people and thinking of the dead’.² At the time, no one knew how great the casualties had been. More than three quarters of a million British servicemen had died in France and Belgium. Twenty thousand of them had died in the Battle of the Somme – a pointless slaughter retained in the national memory as a major indictment of the generals who planned the ‘war of attrition’.

Field Marshal Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in France seemed, on the day the war ended, to feel no emotion at all. He told his subordinate generals to continue their advance and noted that ‘the state of the German Army is said to be very bad’. Then he lived up to his reputation as ‘the educated soldier’ by philosophising. ‘We hear this morning that the Kaiser is in Holland. If the war had gone against us no doubt the King would have had to go, and probably our army would have become insubordinate like the German Army of John Bunyan’s remark on seeing a man on his way to be hanged. “But for the Grace of God John Bunyan would have been in that man’s place”.’³

Back in London the jubilant people had no time for philosophical speculation. The King, accompanied by members of the royal family, attended an official service of thanksgiving at St Paul’s Cathedral. Once again the crowds were outside Buckingham Palace to see them come and go. Ethel Wood was just in time to glimpse the rear of the procession disappearing through the Palace gates. ‘Saw the Queen, Princess Mary, General French, the Duke of Connaught and other nobility return from a service.’ On the following day the excitement was ‘still going strong’. Indeed it was too strong to gain her approval. ‘Revelling in Trafalgar Square last night. The crowd lit a huge bonfire, burnt German guns (part of a display in the Mall), the watchman’s hut, wooden blocks out of the road and a side car. When the fire brigade came to put it out, two Australians cut the hose.’

Field Marshal Haig, writing on the same day, described the penalty of defeat. ‘Reports from Foch’s HQ state that . . . Germans pointed out that if the rolling stock and supplies of the Army . . . are given up, then Germans east of the Rhine will starve . . . Foch was rather brutal . . . and replied that was their affair.’⁴ It was not the first time

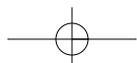
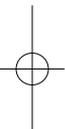
that what was left of the German High Command had raised the likelihood of mass starvation sweeping their country. In a message to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States – thought to be the least vengeful of the Allied leaders – the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Berlin had warned both of certain deaths and of their equally certain consequences. ‘After a blockade of fifty months, those conditions, especially the surrender of the means of transport and the sustenance of the troops of occupation, would make it impossible to provide Germany with food and would cause the starvation of millions of men, women and children. All the more if the blockade is to continue. We had to accept the conditions. But we feel it our duty to draw President Wilson’s attention most solemnly and with all earnestness to the fact that the enforcement of these conditions must produce among the German people feelings contrary to those upon which alone the reconstruction of the community of nations can rest, guaranteeing a just and desirable peace.’⁵

Ethel Wood grasped the point. ‘The German people,’ she wrote, ‘are taking the terms of the Armistice very badly.’ The generals and the politicians knew it too but did not care. So for almost twenty-one years Europe lived on borrowed time. Then the war between France and Britain, Germany and Austria broke out again.



PART I

Years for the Locusts to Eat



It was Stanley Baldwin – the avuncular pragmatist – who came to represent all the political failures of Britain between the wars. He failed to re-arm either because he did not recognise or feared to challenge Germany's aggressive intentions. Until then he had enjoyed a reputation for imposing his will – almost imperceptibly – on colleagues who were thought to possess both more courage and greater intellect.

Lloyd George – Prime Minister when the First World War was won – has escaped almost all blame for the catastrophes which followed. At Versailles he supported whatever terms were necessary for his survival as leader of the coalition government.

Four years later his lies to the leaders of the Irish national parties precipitated a bloody civil war. But the creation of the 'Free State' was the first tumultuous step towards independence. India made almost imperceptible progress along the same road. But most of the protests against the continuing Raj were peaceful – or at least began that way. Ghandi emerged from exile in South Africa as a leader whose almost mystical hold over his followers was matched by his unpredictable changes in the strategy he wished them to follow.

Winston Churchill – egocentric and irresponsible – contributed to most of the errors which he later condemned. His attitude towards Indian nationalism was as extreme as his language on the subject was intemperate and cost him a place in the Tory Party leadership. Indeed, until rejuvenated and rehabilitated by war, he assumed that he would never hold high office again.

The nadir of his fortunes came when, despite popular opinion and common logic, he continued to support the vain attempts of Edward VIII to defy Parliament and public opinion to retain both the crown and Mrs Simpson. But he ended a speech which condemned Baldwin's failure to improve air defences with a phrase which characterised two decades of disillusion and disappointment. 'These,' he said, 'were the years for the locusts to eat.'

CHAPTER ONE

A Child Weeping

Try to keep cheerful, dear lad, and think of the good times we all will have when this war is over and you are home.

Augusta 'Gus' Hattersley to her brother Bert,
private 2042 1st/7th Sherwood Foresters
Killed in Action 1 July 1916

Among all the leaders of the victorious allies who assembled in Paris on 18 January 1919, only President Woodrow Wilson of the United States thought of the Conference as the chance to build a lasting peace. And, according to John Maynard Keynes, the Treasury's representative in the British delegation, Wilson was a 'blind and deaf Don Quixote' who came to Europe with 'no plan, no scheme, no constructive ideas whatsoever for clothing with the flesh of life the commandments which he had thundered down from the White House' in the form of a fourteen-point plan.¹ But his aspirations were undoubtedly noble. The same could not be said of Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France, whose country's size and sacrifice allowed him to talk on equal terms to the leader of the most powerful country in the world. Between them they represented the politics of the two decades which followed. Good intentions were confounded by timidity and incompetence. Cynicism and self-interest triumphed as the allies of ruthless determination.

Reasonably enough, Clemenceau wanted a settlement which guaranteed that Germany would never again march west across the Rhine. But he also wanted revenge and the major share of the booty he regarded as the victors' due. To him, 'the idea that France, bled white in the fields of Flanders, should emerge from the Great War without her share of conquered territory was insupportable.'² When President Wilson urged moderation the French Prime Minister replied

If I accept what you propose as ample for the security of France, after the millions who have died and the mothers who have suffered, I believe – indeed I hope – that my successor in office would take me by the nape of the neck and have me shot.³

It was the French determination to exact recompense and revenge which inspired Will Dyson's 1919 cartoon. As Clemenceau leaves Versailles, he tells his colleagues, 'Curious, I seem to hear a child weeping.' The weeping child, hidden behind one of the pillars of the palace, is peace. Prophetically, the child is labelled 1940.

Even if a real weeping child had confronted Clemenceau it is unlikely that it would have caused him much anguish. He had made slow but decisive progress from the far left to the far right of the political spectrum – radical deputy in the National Assembly and supporter of the Paris Commune of 1870 to natinalistic Prime Minister in 1917. Along the way he acquired the nickname 'Tiger' – initially a tribute to his debating style. He had confirmed his reputation by prosecuting critics of the war for treason. David Lloyd George – who led the British coalition which, in his own estimation, had changed the course of the war – was of a less punitive disposition. But he was not a politician of high principle. And all the pressures upon him – some of them created by his own reckless populism – pushed him in the direction of imposing penalties on Germany which were both salutary and severe. Occasionally his radical conscience stirred and he argued for moderation. But he was determined that the country he led should obtain the lion's share of the spoils. So he hovered – often cynically – between the poles of reconciliation and retribution.

Emotionally he was in favour of the nationalities of Europe determining their own destiny. A nineteenth-century Welsh Liberal could

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not believe anything else. And he understood the dangers of humiliating Germany to the point at which resentment turned into revolt. But the self-interest with which he approached the Peace Conference was illustrated by his own account of a conversation which took place when Clemenceau visited London. 'He asked me what I particularly wanted from the French. I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul attached to the new state of Iraq and Palestine from Dan to Bersheba under British control. Without hesitation, he agreed.'⁴

Wilson would have reacted differently. He believed that 'people and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game' and he was irrevocably opposed to 'special, selfish economic combinations'. His ambitious rules for managing the dissolution of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian empires were set out in a speech to both Houses of Congress on 8 January 1918.

According to Woodrow Wilson's detractors, he had been persuaded to stand – first for the Governorship of New Jersey and then for the Presidency of the United States – by colleagues at Princeton who could no longer tolerate the pedantic and self-righteous certainty with which he led the university. His speech to Congress on 8 January 1918 portrayed all the qualities to which his critics objected. It came to be called 'The Fourteen Points' and was, in consequence, an easy target for derision. Clemenceau observed that 'the good Lord himself required only ten'.⁵ But, with all their faults, the Fourteen Points were a brave and honest attempt to find a better way than war for determining the future of the world.

Open treaties should be 'openly arrived at'. Freedom of the seas must be guaranteed. Trade barriers were to be eliminated. Rearmament was to be 'reduced to the lowest level consistent with domestic safety'. Russia, still convulsed with revolution and civil war, must enjoy 'an unhampered development . . . under institutions of her own choosing'. Claims to the possession of colonies should be 'adjusted' with due regard to the interests of the indigenous people. The occupation of Belgium was to end and its sovereignty to be restored. The wrong done to France over Alsace-Lorraine (by German annexation after the Franco-Prussian war) 'should be righted'. Italy's frontiers were to be adjusted 'along clearly recognisable lines of

nationality . . .’ The people of Austria-Hungary should ‘be accorded opportunity for autonomous development . . . Balkan relationships should be determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines.’ Nations under Turkish rule were to be afforded ‘unmolested opportunity for autonomous development . . . An independent Polish state must be erected which should include territories inhabited by indispensably Polish populations and should be afforded secure access to the sea.’ The fourteenth point was meant to secure a permanent peace after the new world, created by the other thirteen imperatives, had been put in place. It proposed ‘a general association of nations under specific covenants for affording mutual guarantees of political independence’. The association came to be called the League of Nations.

The precision of the Fourteen Points was matched by the piety of a series of subsequent speeches which Wilson called, with a magnificent disregard for ridicule, the Four Principles, the Four Ends and the Five Particulars. Each one emphasised a precept which, the President reminded America, was confirmed by the history of their own republic. ‘Self determination is no mere phrase, it is a principle of action which statesmen ignore at their peril.’⁶ It was a moral imperative to which the delegates to the Peace Conference responded – whenever it was not in conflict with their national interests.

Three months after Woodrow Wilson set out his plan for lasting peace Haig told the allied troops, ‘With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end.’ So it seemed that the President had spoken of peace too soon. But in one sense he was almost too late. David Lloyd George had anticipated many of the Fourteen Points in an address to British trade unionists and the President feared that, if he repeated them, he would seem to be limping along behind the British Prime Minister. But Lloyd George’s speech received little publicity and Wilson judged that peace proposals, backed by the authority of the President of the United States, would catch and hold the world’s attention. His judgement was vindicated. But the Fourteen Points received no more than a cautious welcome from European politicians. Only the European people showed real enthusiasm for Wilson’s hope that ‘war shall be no more’.

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It was not the dangerous nobility of Woodrow Wilson's proposals – or the President's transparent sincerity – which worried Europe's leaders. The Fourteen Points, by their nature, were an assertion of America's right to intervene in parts of the world well outside its traditional spheres of influence. Wilson had given notice that the United States proposed to play a dominant world role. The assumption that the President could draw lines on a blank map threatened the territorial ambitions of the European allies.

During the war, the European Allies had negotiated several of the secret treaties which the Fourteen Points specifically condemned. In London in 1915 Italy had been promised the Dalmatian Coast and Trentino as an inducement to declare war on Germany. In May 1916 the Sykes–Picot Agreement had arranged for the division of the Ottoman Empire between Russia, France and Britain with France controlling Syria and Britain dominating Mesopotamia. Then Italy, dissatisfied with the spoils of war she had been promised, demanded that Fiume (Hungary's outlet to the sea) should be added to her bounty. A binding commitment to self-determination would prejudice the prospect of expansion – even for the countries which won the war.

Great Britain was in specific disagreement with the second of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points – the freedom of the seas. For more than a hundred years the Royal Navy had exercised the dubious right to stop, search and, if necessary, sink any ship it regarded as either a threat to British interest or in contravention of various maritime laws which, from time to time, it unilaterally announced. Lloyd George was adamant. The Royal Navy's 'rights' must be preserved.

Woodrow Wilson had doubts about the constitutional propriety of leaving the United States to attend the peace conference. But Lloyd George sent a theatrical message to the White House. 'The President's presence is necessary for the proper organisation of the world which must follow the peace . . . If he sits in the conference . . . he will exert the greatest influence that any man has ever exerted in expressing the moral value of free government.'⁷ That did not mean that he endorsed the details of Wilson's plan. When Clemenceau, in a mood of European resentment, asked him 'Have you ever been asked by President Wilson whether you accept The Fourteen Points?', adding

'For I have not', Lloyd George replied, 'I have not been asked either.'⁸ Nor had either of them been asked to support the President's judgement on the treatment of defeated Germany. Wisely, Wilson had avoided discussing the subject, knowing that his formula would be regarded as unacceptably lenient.

European concerns about the American position were increased by the discovery that on 4 October 1918 – a month before the Armistice – the German High Command had asked President Wilson to negotiate a peace settlement based on the Fourteen Points. Wilson did not tell his allies of the approach until four days later. But the French had intercepted the German telegram. The discovery hardened Clemenceau's resolve to demand that Germany pay a harsh penalty for its aggression. When the allied leaders met at the Supreme War Council in Paris on 5 October, Marshal Foch – Commander-in-Chief of the Anglo-French army which had won the war – proposed final terms which amounted to unconditional surrender. The apparent conflict between American and French aims strengthened Lloyd George's conviction that Woodrow Wilson must be persuaded to travel to Europe and lead the Allies' peace treaty negotiations. Without Wilson to assist in restraining Clemenceau the French would almost certainly insist on such a punitive settlement that Germany, even though humiliated and emasculated, would rise up in revolt against the injustice it had suffered.

Woodrow Wilson, realising that he was wanted, perhaps even needed, by the allies, extracted a price for his participation. Lloyd George feared that, if the Peace Conference was held in Paris, the bitterness of a nation which had suffered so much – and the desire for revenge of a Prime Minister who had been the Mayor of Montmartre during the Prussian occupation of 1870 and 1871 – would prejudice its proceedings. So he proposed Geneva. But Wilson – for some reason fearful of a Bolshevik revolution in Switzerland – wanted Paris. So Paris it was. But when the work was finished the statesmen of Europe wanted a grander setting for their moment of history. They moved on to Louis XIV's palace at Versailles and signed the treaty in the shadow of the Sun King.

President Wilson could not leave the United States until the end of the year. Congressional elections were to be held in November 1918

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and Wilson was determined to play a major part in a contest which he said would enable the American people to give him 'a strong hand' to play in Europe. Wilson's Democrats lost control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives – leaving the President to travel to Paris in the knowledge that he needed Republican support to obtain the necessary ratification of the treaty he hoped to negotiate. A shrewder or more emollient man would have invited sympathetic Republicans to join him as senior members of his delegation. Woodrow Wilson took only friends and known supporters.

During the time which was wasted in waiting for the President, elections were also held in Britain. They could not have been postponed for long. The Representation of the People Act of 1918 had trebled the electorate by giving a vote to every man over twenty-one and every woman over thirty. There had been no general election since 1910. Lloyd George led a coalition which governed without an explicit mandate of the people and many, perhaps most, of the men who won the war had either been too young or unqualified to vote in the last peacetime election. Nor did Lloyd George wish to delay the poll. It was certain, in the glow of triumph, that the Prime Minister who had led the country to victory would win a 'khaki election'. So it turned out, but the campaign had disastrous consequences for the Peace Conference. Its proceedings were prejudiced as much by Lloyd George's victory in Britain as by the defeat of Woodrow Wilson's Democrats in America.

Inevitably the British general election campaign of 1918 was fought on the parties' rival ideas of post-war reconstruction. The Labour Party (with the exception of George Barnes, one of its nominees in the War Cabinet) withdrew from the coalition after the Armistice and was happily reunited with the pacifists who had refused to support Lloyd George's Government. 'Our battle cry, above all else,' said Jimmy Thomas, the railwaymen's leader, 'is "No More War".'⁹ That battle cry became the most popular slogan of the whole campaign. But other, less idealistic, demands were also included in the coalition's speeches. 'Make the Germans Pay' and 'Hang the Kaiser' were two of the most frequent. The politicians, as politicians often do, chose to identify with the lowest common denominator. F. E. Smith, the Attorney General, told the Cabinet that unless the Kaiser was put on trial it would be

impossible to indict anyone who was under his command and Eric Geddes, then Secretary of State for War, promised 'to squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak'.¹⁰ Lloyd George could argue that his election pledge was – as befitted a Prime Minister – more measured. But it encouraged the vengeful hope that the repatriations made by the vanquished to the victors would be punishment as well as compensation. The Germans, he said, would be required to pay 'to the limit of their capacity and we shall scratch their pockets for it'.¹¹ Thus began the process which amounted to competitive bids to determine how great a penalty could be exacted from Germany. The coalition won by a landslide.* Lloyd George was committed to imposing severe penalties on Germany. And another step had been taken towards the pauperisation of a nation and the creation of a country so resentful about its treatment that it was prepared to rally behind any rabble-rousing politician who promised to restore national self-respect. Lloyd George also became party to the imposition of economic sanctions which were so severe that they precipitated the greatest economic crisis of the twentieth century.

The two months between the Armistice and the opening of the Peace Conference should have been used to plan the way in which the formal proceedings would be organised. Sadly the Supreme War Council, which might have performed that task, was too preoccupied with managing Germany's capitulation to think about much else. The allied leaders assembled in Paris with conflicting ideas about what they had to do but united by the lack of any notion about how it might be done.

The European heads of government were continually irritated by Woodrow Wilson's unremittingly high-minded tone which, they feared, confirmed his commitment to a high-minded policy. France, as represented by its Prime Minister, wanted the emasculation and humiliation of Germany. That, in Clemenceau's judgement, required – in addition to the return of the territories annexed by Prussia in 1870 – the creation of either an independent or French state west of the Rhine, the expansion of Poland and Czechoslovakia at the

*The coalition won 484 seats, the Labour Party 59, Asquith Liberals 26, Irish Nationalists 6 and Sinn Fein 73.

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expense of Germany and repatriations so severe that the German economy would remain, for the foreseeable future, too weak to sustain any resurgence of its military aspirations.

The 'peace aims' of America and France were clearly at variance with each other. And Lloyd George – occasionally a statesman but always a politician – vacillated between the two positions but eventually, with his election promises in mind, moved closer to Clemenceau. The three leaders had no clear plan of how their differences were to be resolved. But some decisions were urgently needed. The desire to bring the troops back home – prompted more by cost than by compassion – meant that the naval blockade must be maintained as the only way of ensuring that Germany observed the terms of the Armistice which its leaders had signed on 11 November. But until the blockade was lifted Germany – women and children no less than soldiers – starved. Woodrow Wilson was reluctant to make progress towards a treaty which did not include the creation of the League of Nations. It seemed to him – wrongly, as it turned out – that the inclusion of his plans for world peace was the one way to ensure Congress ratified the eventual treaty.

The Armistice terms – as far as they went – had amounted to German surrender. All artillery, machine guns and aircraft were to be immediately handed over to the Allies. Submarines and ships were to be put under Allied control pending decisions about their eventual destiny. German troops were to withdraw from the right bank of the Rhine within thirty-one days. The Allies would occupy (without hindrance) the left bank of the Rhine and establish bridge-heads on the right. All German troops occupying or garrisoned in territory outside Germany – from Alsace-Lorraine in the west to Turkey, Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the east – were to be evacuated, with the exception of forces stationed in Russia.

Russia, an ally in the war against the Central Powers, posed a particular problem. In recompense for his support Tsar Nicholas II had been promised Constantinople and the Straits. But the Tsar had been deposed in 1917 and executed a year later. The Communists, who had become the Government in Moscow, had made peace with Germany and renounced, as a matter of principle, the annexation of territory. Decisions about what to do with Constantinople were, however,

dwarfed by the need to decide what to do about Russia. Tsarist forces fought on against the revolutionary government. In London, influential voices – chief among them Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War – were demanding that Britain intervened in the dying days of the civil war to secure the return of the *ancien régime*.

The Allies had a principled – that is to say ideological – antipathy to the new regime in Russia. But the antagonism was fuelled by fear. There had been abortive Communist uprisings in Munich and in Budapest and, even in Britain, Bob Williams (the secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union), had expressed the hope that he would soon 'see the Red Flag flying over Buckingham Palace'.¹² King George urged his ministers to do all they could to destroy the Bolsheviks who had murdered his cousin, the Tsar. Dealing with the Communists was complicated by the part their country had played in the war.

Tsarist Russia had held back half the forces of the Central Powers. Indeed, had Lenin not signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, the war might well have ended earlier. The peace treaty, if it was to conform to the Fourteen Points, would require independence for the Ukrainian. The west had long-term worries about the security of Caspian and Ukraine oil and the Allies were uncertain about how to respond to the determination of three Tsarist generals – Kornolov, Nexerev and Denikin – to ignore the Armistice and fight on against Germany, as they saw it, for Imperial Russia.

The Allies were committed to the Tsarist 'White Russians' both materially and emotionally. Millions of tons of stores had been landed at Murmansk and at Archangel. Bases had been established at Vladivostok and in distant Siberia. British troops, no longer needed in Mesopotamia, had occupied Batum on the Black Sea and Baku on the shores of the Caspian. Allied expeditionary forces were sent to Vladivostok, Murmansk and Archangel with the theoretical task of protecting the armaments and supplies which had been stored there. The real purpose was the encouragement of the faint hope that the Tsarist cause might prevail.

In the month before the Armistice was signed, Clemenceau had set out to his general staff his policy towards Communist Russia.

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The main line of the plan of action (which should be adopted) is not only to continue to struggle against the Central Powers but to encircle Bolshevism and bring about its downfall.¹³

The French had a vested interest in saving the *ancien régime*. Tsarist Russia's pre-war debt to France was 25,000 million francs (£1000 million) to which had been added half as much again in Allied war loans. None of that would be repaid by the Bolsheviks. And France's substantial investment in Russian banking, oil, coal and railways would all be expropriated if Lenin remained head of state and government.

Winston Churchill – the chief British advocate of military intervention – was motivated by aristocratic, rather than economic, fears about the Soviet regime. According to Lord Curzon, 'his ducal blood revolted against the wholesale slaughter of Grand Dukes' and he was a major factor in his hope that the Government in which he was Secretary of State for War would consider 'whether we should . . . bolster up the Central Powers (that is to say defeated Austria and Germany) if necessary to stem the tide of Bolshevism.'¹⁴ The failure of Tsarist Admiral Kolchack – who had assumed command of the White Russian forces in Siberia – to link up with General Denikin in the south cooled the ardour of some anti-Bolshevik crusaders. But the more militant Tsarist sympathisers, led by Churchill himself, continued to campaign for intervention in a way which complicated an already confused attempt to re-draw the map of the world and guarantee lasting peace.

When the formal conference got underway it followed a plan of procedure which the French had drafted two months earlier.¹⁵ The 'Big Four' – Britain, America, France and Italy – would dictate the preliminary terms to Germany without any discussion with the Berlin Government. The smaller Allies would be consulted when decisions affecting their frontiers were taken. At a second stage all the Allies would join with both neutrals and enemies to discuss the new world order. The early exclusion of some affected powers was not to Wilson's liking. When he landed in Europe, from the USS *Washington*, he determined that the French scheme should be 'quietly disregarded' while Clemenceau was making clear (equally quietly) that the Fourteen Points 'were not sufficiently defined in their character to be taken as

a concrete basis for a concrete settlement of the war'.¹⁶ The result of the different views on procedure combined with the absence of any effective machinery for discussion resulted in the official meetings being downgraded, leaving the real decisions to cabals of the most powerful ministers. Paul Gambon, a veteran professional French diplomat, complained, 'Nobody knows anything because everything happens behind the scenes.'¹⁷

International conferences make politicians believe they have become statesmen – a transformation which they attempt to make public by surrounding themselves with clear evidence of their world status. The size and composition of the Paris delegations did nothing to help the expeditious conclusion of business. Wellington and Castlereagh took a staff of seventeen to the Congress of Vienna. Lloyd George and A. J. Balfour, his Foreign Secretary, took 750 civil servants and expert advisers to Paris. The American party was just as large, and every delegation included men and women of personal brilliance but unpredictable temperament. Keynes represented the British Treasury. Colonel T. E. Lawrence, technically advising Lloyd George on the Middle East, became the confidant and spokesman for Prince Faisal, son of Emir Hussain, the 'Guardian of the Sacred Cities of Arabia'. Both men predicted that disaster would follow the implementation of those parts of the Treaty on which their advice was offered but not taken. Both men were proved right.

Harold Nicolson recorded in his diary the account of the proceedings which he had given to Marcel Proust (who 'lunched in white gloves') over dinner at the Paris Ritz. 'So I tell him everything. The sham-cordiality of it all; the handshakes, the maps; the rustle of papers; the tea in the next room; the macaroons.'¹⁸

When the Peace Conference began its work its effective executive was the 'Council of Ten', to which Great Britain, the United States, France, Italy and Japan each contributed two ministers. Clemenceau's original intention was that its decisions would be at least ratified by plenary sessions of the Conference which all participating states would attend. But the plenary sessions were only convened on eight occasions, while the Council of Ten met seventy-two times and much of the work, after the first week, was done in 'special commissions'.

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Clemenceau grew tired of even pretending that every nation represented in Paris influenced events with equal weight. 'I make no secret of it,' he told one meeting of the plenary session, 'There is a conference of the great powers going on in the next room.'¹⁹

Although all the heads of government participated throughout the days of early meetings, the major players were distracted by events at home. In Britain a nation tired by war witnessed, with some sympathy, a series of minor mutinies in the armed forces. In early January 1919 troops at Folkestone and Dover refused to embark for France. Royal Army Service Corps drivers took a 'protest convoy' from Osterley to Whitehall. At Grove Park and Kempton 'soldiers' councils' demanded the right to be consulted about accommodation, pay and rations. And at Rosyth the crew of a minesweeper refused to obey orders. Weeks of industrial unrest followed, with some trade unions threatening a general strike if Britain attempted to restore the House of Romanov to the throne of Holy Mother Russia.

During the third week in February an attempt was made on Clemenceau's life. He survived but his wounds kept him out of action for several weeks. President Wilson returned home to begin his campaign to convince the United States Senate and the American people that his plans for 'a general association of nations . . . formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small nations alike' was worthy of their support.²⁰ When he returned to Paris he was adamant that there could be no preliminary treaty that redrew the map of Europe unless it also created an international agency which secured a permanent peace. America would only sign an agreement which included the creation of the League of Nations.

Faced with the need to deal with both the complicated long-term question of a League and the immediate problems of borders and repatriation, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Colonel Edward House (representing the absent Woodrow Wilson) began to meet informally to chart the route along which the Council of Ten should be steered. Gradually the meetings evolved into a Council of Four – or sometimes Five – representing Great Britain, America, France, Italy (except when Vittorio Emanuele Orlando withdrew in protest against the rejection of his claim to Fiume) and occasionally Japan. The leaders of

government met in private with, at first, only an interpreter present. Then Sir Maurice Hankey, from the British Cabinet Office, was appointed official secretary of the group. Woodrow Wilson's hopes of open treaties were not realised. But at least the Peace Conference had evolved a mechanism which allowed it to make progress. Lloyd George began to wonder if the progress would be in the right direction. Perhaps it had been a mistake to persuade Wilson that Clemenceau must be accommodated.

During the third week of March 1919 the British Prime Minister retired to Fontainebleau where – with Sir Henry Wilson (the Chief of the Imperial General Staff), Jan Christian Smuts (South African defence minister and member of the Imperial Cabinet), Maurice Hankey, John Maynard Keynes and Philip Kerr (his private secretary) – he drafted a memorandum setting out 'the kind of Treaty of Peace to which alone we [are] prepared to append our signature'.²¹ France must be prevented from insisting on a settlement so brutal that Germany would 'throw in her lot with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains and her vast organising power at the disposal of the revolutionaries whose dream is to conquer the world for Bolshevism'.²² Perhaps Germany could be persuaded to see the justice of a settlement which was punitive but not vindictive. 'Our terms may be severe. They may be stern and even ruthless. But at the same time, they can be so just that the country on which they are imposed will feel in its heart that it has no right to complain.'²³ Germany's obligation to pay reparations should end with the passing from power of the generations which had been responsible for the war. It would obviously be unreasonable 'to cripple [Germany] and still expect her to pay'.²⁴ So the defeated enemy must, out of necessity, be allowed access both to world markets and raw materials. Britain would not agree to 'transferring more Germans from German rule to some other nation' than was necessary to draw new boundaries which, by and large, represented the ethnic composition of the majority within them. Lloyd George concluded, 'If we are wise, we shall offer Germany a peace which, while just, will be preferable to all sensible men to Bolshevism.'²⁵

Had Lloyd George's revised position been accepted the Peace Treaty would have been quite different from what was eventually

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agreed. The new state of Czechoslovakia would not have included the Sudetenland and France would not have been given a ten-year suzerainty over the Saar. The boundary between Poland and Germany was modified at Lloyd George's insistence. But Germany's loss of part of East Prussia – the heartland of the federation and the home of the Junkers who dominated the Berlin Government – was remembered long after the concessions which Lloyd George had negotiated had been forgotten. And reparations were set at a level which was far too high for Germany to pay. It was not to Bolshevism that Germany turned. But in 1919 that was the threat which preoccupied the leaders of the western democracies.

President Wilson – true to character – hoped that the 'Bolshevik threat' could be eliminated by convening a conference at which the still-warring factions within Russia would meet to resolve their differences. He invited 'every organised group that is now exercising, or attempting to exercise, political authority or military control anywhere in Siberia or within the boundaries of European Russia, as they were before the war just concluded (except Siberia), to send representatives to the Princes' Islands in the Sea of Marmara'.²⁶ Lenin agreed. The Tsarist White Russians did not.

Although Lenin's willingness to discuss the future might have been taken as evidence of the Bolshevik wish to work with the Allied Powers, the opponents of Soviet Communism insisted that the collapse of the Conference was conclusive proof of the need for military action. Chief among the British advocates of intervention was again the Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill.

Lloyd George complained that, while he was away in Paris, Churchill had exercised a powerful and 'exceedingly pernicious influence in Cabinet'.²⁷ When the Prime Minister returned to London Churchill 'very adroitly seized the opportunity . . . to go over to Paris and urge his plans, with regard to Russia, upon the consideration of the French, American and British delegations'.²⁸ The freedom with which Churchill pursued his anti-Bolshevik obsession illustrates more than his cavalier approach to the collective responsibility which usually constrains a Cabinet. It confirms that Lloyd George – feeling insecure in the leadership of a coalition which was dominated by his historic opponents – was reluctant to impose his will on a minister

who, although technically still a Liberal, remained close to the Tory Party, which he had deserted, and to which nobody doubted he would return. The messages with which he responded to news of Churchill's free enterprise were more entreaties than instructions. 'I am very alarmed at your . . . telegram about planning a war against the Bolsheviks. The Cabinet has never authorised such a proposition.' He went on to 'beg' his Secretary of State for War 'not to commit the country to what would be a mad enterprise, out of hatred of the Bolsheviks'.²⁹

Lloyd George was not, by nature, the man to steer a steady course. Distracted by London intrigues when he was in Paris and by Paris machinations when he was in London, his capacity for consistency was further limited by the rival pressures of domestic politics and what he knew to be right for the future peace of Europe. Georges Clemenceau was ruthless in his determination to secure a single objective. France must be strengthened and Germany weakened to the point at which the territorial ambitions of Berlin could never be realised. When Lloyd George recognised the folly of humiliating Germany it was too late. He had supported Clemenceau's punitive approach and persuaded Woodrow Wilson to at least not veto the French Prime Minister's proposals.

To his horror, Mr Lloyd George, desiring at the last moment all the moderation he knew to be right, discovered that he could not in five days persuade the President of error in what it had taken him five months to prove to him to be just and right. After all, it was harder to de-bamboozle this naïve Presbyterian than to bamboozle him.³⁰

There was no difficulty in the Allies agreeing to what Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson called righting 'of the great wrong of 1871'. So Alsace and Lorraine were, after some minor dispute about where the frontier lay, returned to France. But Clemenceau regarded that as only the beginning. Initially he hoped to annex the whole left bank of the Rhine – thus reversing the decision taken by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when the object was to protect Germany against France, not France against Germany. Lloyd George was dubious about the

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proposition and Woodrow Wilson was categorically opposed. Colonel House, Wilson's alter ego, told A. J. Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, 'The French have but one idea and that is military protection. They do not seem to know that to establish a Rhenish republic against the will of the people would be contrary to the principle of self determination.'³¹ The result was the sort of compromise which satisfies no one. The Allies would be in technical occupation for fifteen years though – if Germany fulfilled its other treaty obligations – troops would be withdrawn after five or ten. In the meantime French security would be guaranteed by an Anglo-American non-aggression pact.

The French approach to the future of the Saar was wholly materialistic. Whatever the inclinations of its population, France was entitled to its coal in compensation for the destruction of the mines in its north-western *départements*. Wilson rejected the notion outright. There followed an episode in the continuing pantomime in which, at various intervals, each man threatened to abandon negotiations and bring the Peace Conference to a crashing end. Clemenceau walked out. Wilson told the USS *Washington* to prepare for the voyage home. The inevitable result was a compromise. The Saar would be under French control for fifteen years, during which it would be obliged to supply France with thirty million tons of coal. A referendum would then decide whether or not the people of the Saar were French or German.

Belgium failed in its attempt to annex Luxembourg – part of Bismarck's empire and clearly sympathetic to the Central Powers during the war. The French wanted to give Denmark more of Schleswig-Holstein than the Danes felt able to accept. A plebiscite – a concession to Wilson's demand for self-determination – solved the dilemma by confirming that half of Schleswig wanted to remain German. Poland acquired 260 square miles of what had been German territory. Hungary – being in partnership with Austria, a defeated power – was emasculated by the creation of new nations. Yugoslavia was made up of 7 per cent of the old empire. Czechoslovakia encompassed 22 per cent – including the Sudetenland in which the population was almost entirely German. Romania, although not a new creation, was rewarded for its support of the Allies with 39 per

cent of old Austria-Hungary. All the new nations were required to sign 'minority treaties' promising the full rights of citizenship and freedom of language and religion to their whole populations. Only Woodrow Wilson had much confidence in them being observed.

Poland, oppressed by Russia and Germany for two hundred years, demanded recognition as a great power and borders which confirmed that status. Dissatisfied with their proposed frontier in the east, it invaded the Ukraine. The Red Army drove the Ukrainian army back almost to Warsaw. But a counter-attack succeeded in saving the city. The result – a combination of Polish courage and Russian moderation – was the expansion of Poland a hundred miles to the east. Originally Woodrow Wilson – in fine disregard of his Fourteen Points – agreed to a settlement in east Germany which Lloyd George claimed would 'hand over millions of people to a distasteful allegiance.'³² The initial plan was modified to make Danzig a free port under League of Nations protection rather than part of Poland. But the 'Polish Corridor', by which it was connected to the sea, split East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Upper Silesia was to determine its future by plebiscite and was eventually divided between Poland and Germany. Lloyd George accepted that 'it was hardly possible to draw any line which would not have Germans on both sides of it.'³³ When the allies knew that frontiers could not be drawn along ethnic boundaries, they always made sure that Germany and the Germans came off worst.

The emasculation of Germany and its allies was intended to be the long-term protection against a resurgence of Prussian militarism. Short-term security was to be guaranteed by limitation of the German military capability. The army was to be limited to 100,000 volunteers – all of whom, to prevent the recruitment of a large reserve, were to serve for at least twelve years. The navy was to consist of no more than six battleships, six cruisers and twelve destroyers. Germany was to possess no military aircraft or submarines. President Wilson insisted that Part V of the eventual treaty which imposed the limitation should begin with a statement which asserted that the intention was pacific rather than vindictive. 'In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation on the armaments of all nations . . .' Nobody was deceived.

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It would have been impossible to justify the Middle East settlement with any such principled declaration. The future of Syria and Mesopotamia was determined by the crudest sort of power politics. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 which had made clear that the British Government 'viewed with favour the establishment, in Palestine, of a Jewish national home for the Jewish people' had little influence on the proceedings. Prince Faisal, the son of Emir Hussein, who had led the 'revolt in the desert' against the Turks, had written (with the assistance of T. E. Lawrence) to the *New York Times* to welcome the idea of 'Jews and Arabs working together for a reformed and revived Middle East'. The letter ended with the assurance 'the Jews are most welcome here. There is room in Syria for both of us.' The question which hung over the Peace Conference was could Syria accommodate both British and French aspirations?

In May 1916, conscious that the Turks were being driven out of Arabia with the assistance of British army officers, Clemenceau had begun to fear that Lloyd George planned to dominate the whole region. It was not a moment for disagreement between the Allies. So an accommodation was necessary. The Sykes–Picot Agreement decided, bilaterally, that France would control Syria, Britain Mesopotamia. Tsarist Russia would be given Armenia. The Arabs would be allowed to maintain control over those parts of Arabia which the Great Powers did not claim as their own.

The Arabs complained but were ignored. However, with British encouragement, Faisal and Lawrence captured Damascus from the Turks and made clear that they regarded it as the Hashemite capital. More important, Lloyd George could not see why the French, who had made no contribution to the Turks' expulsion, should be handed land that had been won by the leadership (and the gold) had Britain supplied to Emir Hussein and the thousand horsemen who followed his war-like sons.

In Paris Faisal argued the case for Arab autonomy – though it was later suggested that he did no more than read passages from the Koran while Lawrence, officially providing the translation, offered his improvised view on the proper disposition of power in the Middle East. It did not matter. The speeches on behalf of the Hashemites counted for nothing. Lloyd George was always determined to keep Iraq under

British 'protection'. The Royal Navy needed the oil. If that required him to agree to France gaining effective control of Syria it was a price he was prepared to pay.

Lawrence, believing that the Arabs had been betrayed, sent his medals back to the War Office. Hussein and his sons accepted – with undisguised bitterness – the kingdom which the Treaty offered them. Other Arabs were less willing to allow their fate to be decided in Paris. Ibin Saud invaded the Hizeaz and was almost annihilated by the force which was sent by Hussein to repel him. The British intervened to protect their nominee – by threatening to send Whippet armoured cars from Palestine. But the price which Lloyd George, and Hussein, had to pay was the creation of a new Arab state to satisfy Ibin Saud's claims. Saudi Arabia became one of the countries of the Middle East which, directly or indirectly, owe their existence to the Paris Peace Conference.

The division of Asia Minor between the Great Powers was only one of the problems created by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Constantinople had been promised to the Tsar. As a result it could not be offered to Lenin who, in any event, had foresworn the acquisition of territory outside Russian borders. It was eventually agreed that America would take responsibility for free passage through the Straits. But Woodrow Wilson could not accept 'the mandate' without the approval of Congress. While the world waited, Greece agreed to act as 'bailiff' in return for the acquisition of Smyrna, a town on the Turkish mainland with a substantial population which was ethnically, if not legally, Greek. The Sultan capitulated. But the Turkish people did not. The Sultan was repudiated and Mustafa Kemal – leader of the Turkish National Movement and Commander-in-Chief of the forces which had driven the Allies out of Gallipoli – seized power with popular support if not a democratic mandate. In September 1922 he reoccupied Smyrna. The invasion was followed by a massacre of (it was claimed) 100,000 Greek and Armenian settlers. The international community watched from afar.

Now it seems incredible that politicians as sophisticated as Lloyd George, high-minded as Woodrow Wilson and experienced as Georges Clemenceau could have believed that a series of meetings in

Borrowed Time is a 2015 American animated western drama short film directed by Pixar artists Andrew Coats and Lou Hamou-Lhadj. In the Old West, a sheriff and his young son are traveling on a wagon trail. The sheriff gives his son his own pocket watch and his hat for good luck. During their trek, their stagecoach is attacked by bandits. While the sheriff attempts to fend off their attackers, the son drives the wagon, but loses control when it collides with a rock, breaking a wagon wheel, and causing Definition of borrowed time in the Idioms Dictionary. borrowed time phrase. What does borrowed time expression mean? Definitions by the largest Idiom Dictionary.Â borrowed time. An uncertain length of time that may end soon or suddenly, bringing any activity, situation, or fortunes associated with it to an end as well. Usually refers to the final period of one's life, in the form "living on borrowed time." In the scope of the planet's history, human existence is a tiny blip and unlikely to last foreverâ€”just borrowed time, really. "Borrowed Time" is an animated short film, directed by Andrew Coats & Lou Hamou-Lhadj.Â It's here! The Oscar-nominated short film Borrowed Time is available to stream and download on Vimeo and iTunes TODAY! Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/100733> iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/movie/borrowed-time/id1201735068> Thank you for watching and for your continued support of the film! #Animation #Oscars17 ShortsHD Vimeo. Critic Reviews for Borrowed Time. There are no critic reviews yet for Borrowed Time. Keep checking Rotten Tomatoes for updates! Audience Reviews for Borrowed Time. There are no featured reviews for because the movie has not released yet (). See Movies in Theaters. Borrowed Time Quotes. There are no approved quotes yet for this movie. Movie & TV guides. Best Horror Movies. Top 200 of all time. 150 Essential Comedies. The funniest movies ever.