

## **International Online Conference: *Treaties of the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920) – Second edition, 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Romania***

For many countries and nations, First World War was the actual start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Paris Peace Conference inspired political and economic debates, as well as interest of historians, whose studies certainly contributed to the development of diplomatic historiography and study of international relations.

This is why The Alba Iulia National Union Museum and the University of Alba Iulia organized the international online conference *Treaties of the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920)* with the support of the Alba County Council. This conference held between 4 and 5 June 2021. There were many leading expert from Europe and Asia. Researchers from Charles University of Prague, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Prague University of Economics and Business and Palacký University Olomouc participated from the Czech Republic. Involment of almost forty historians, from the young to the past masters, assured the high scientific level. The content diversity as well as the generation diversity of contributors is one of its main qualities. The papers were organised along the same principles as the Paris Peace Conference itself, taking in view territorial issues and the drawing of new frontiers, national minorities and their status, war reparations, railways and waterways, war criminals, harbours, and

the establishment of the League of Nations. They were not left out either the perspectives of the participant states and the attitudes of the defeated states that did not participate (Germany, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey) and those which were not invited, such as Russia.

At the beginning of the conference was introduced the book called *The Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920) and Its Aftermath: Settlements, Problems and Perceptions* by editors Sorin Arhire and Tudor Roșu. This volume of studies comes into being as a result of the international conference, an academic event which brought together 28 participants from 11 countries (also from the Czech Republic). This symposium, held in Alba Iulia between 3 and 7 June 2018 by the Alba Iulia National Union Museum and the University of Alba Iulia with the financial support of the Alba County Council. This book offers a number of perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and its fallout, providing new insights from the perspectives of the Great Powers and the small countries struggling for independence, looking at the winners, the losers and the neutral parties. The members of the delegations honestly thought they had ended all wars, but in reality Europe was just two decades away from a new world war that was to be even more destructive than

that of 1914 to 1918. The mistakes made in Paris in 1919 and 1920 were paid for through the outbreak of the Second World War and through the war in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s which, with its mass executions and ethnic cleansing, brought us once again all too close to the horrors committed in Europe in the early 1940s. The content will be of interest to historians and students of international relations and political science, as well as anyone who wishes to gain a broader perspective on this crucial moment in twentieth-century history.

The contributions of the individual participants from 10 countries were heard in four sections. That shows extraordinary extent of conference. We can find papers on various themes. Most of them focused precisely on local contexts. The significance of the peace conference, especially for Europe and The United States of America, was much discussed. In many cases the authors added their own observations and opinions. The Peace Conference in Paris transformed the composition of the face of Europe. As a result of the dissolution of the monarchies laid the foundation for a new European continent, which basically exists to this day in spite of 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.

The first part of the presentations by historians from Italy, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania was devoted to a public discussion on the eastern borders, the position of the Transylvanian Saxons on the Paris Peace Conference or Romanian administration in Oradea in 1919–1922. They also concerned the protection of minorities, the exercise of nations' rights to self-determination or international trade on the example of shipping companies and ports in Austria. Unique paper based on new archival materials pointed out the decision of Hungarian government in the matter; how will sign the Peace Treaty in 1920.

The second part of the papers by experts from Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland focused on the Romanian propaganda at the Paris Peace Conference, historiographical perspectives on the Treaty of Trianon during communist regime in Romania or reflection Paris Peace Conference in the Slovak periodical press. They were detailed analysis of importance of Polish countries in the concepts of the German military leadership and message of the Moravian Germans to the Paris Peace Conference. The economic view offered contribution about Czechoslovak political-economic interests at the conference.

The third part of the presentations from Poland, Germany, China and Russian Federation dealt with mutual repatriation of citizens, features of the implementation of the linguistic and information model of the "Soft Power" policy in the White Guard Press of Siberia in the 1920s or the experience

of the loss of the motherland by representatives of the tsarist army in the Chinese provinces in the cinematic and newspaper discourse of Harbin in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The attention was also paid to First World War in testimonial perceptions migrants of Armenian press in Russian and Armenians' languages.

Participants of the last session from Italy, Czech Republic, Romania, Ukraine and Russian Federation showed an interest in Woodrow Wilson's attitude towards the Zionist project for constituting a Jewish homeland in Palestine and his image in Transylvania around the 1st of December 1918. The views and reactions of selected British politicians and the British press to the establishment of the League of Nations were also detailed. Taking into consideration the principles set out by Woodrow Wilson in 1918, the representatives of the participant states established new frontiers in Europe, relying on the principle of national self-determination. The dismantling of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire led to the establishment of nation states in Central-Eastern Europe, some appearing for the first time on the map, although all took on important national minorities. The end of the Great War and its impact, including the unequivocally democratizing and socially

waves, was an attempt at a new, fundamentally changed organization of international life and its current established order. The principle of balance of power, which had assured peace in Europe for several centuries, was replaced with the principle of collective security, a change of perspective that brought about the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920. The opinions of American experts on Russian question, Lonhyn Tsehelsky's diplomatic and financial missions in the USA and Canada in 1920–1921 and of course the importance of American projects in the development of social infrastructure of the New World Order were also discussed.

This online conference brought several new impulses for research on the history of inter-war period. This international symposium was unique in the extent and content. Presentations of high scientific value revealed the knowledge of various fields, not only modern diplomatic history and international relations. Conference papers and the following discussion reflected key directions of current research and make a significant contribution to our understanding of subject and period analysed, a time fraught with difficulty not just for Europe.

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