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## The Paris Peace Conference and its consequences

**T**he First World War started in the summer of 1914 in the context of accumulating international tensions, especially due to the worsening of relations between the great powers, which led to the formation of two military and political blocs: the Triple Alliance (Central Powers) and the Triple Entente (the Entente). Thus, the fight between great European powers led to the First World War, also called the time, 'The Great War.' It caused immense destruction and an unimaginable level of human sacrifice. The state of war between the two camps persisted until 11 November 1918 when the truce demanded by Germany entered into force.

**A**fter Germany's capitulation, the victorious powers had the task of organising the Peace Conference which would redraw the world political map and solve the huge problems generated by the four years of conflict. The actual activities of the conference took place in the French capital from 18 January 1919 to 21 January 1920, resulting in the signing of treaties between Allies and the five defeated countries: Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria and Hungary. The Paris conference was encumbered by the fact that participating countries were divided in two categories: great powers, with unlimited interests, and small countries, with limited interests. Therefore, decisions were not taken by delegations of all participant countries but by the 'Council of Four,' made up of the US President Woodrow Wilson and the British, French and Italian Prime Ministers, David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau and Vittorio Orlando. The fifth victorious great power, Japan (considered the 'silent partner'), joined 'the four' only when issues regarding the Far East were discussed and which directly concerned it.



**T**his method of taking decisions was not regarded favourably by the small countries which had fought on the side of the Entente, such as Romania, whose delegation withdrew from negotiations from July to December 1919, unhappy with some clauses of the peace treaty with Austria.

**T**he main objectives of the Romanian delegation, led by Prime Minister Ion I.C. Bratianu, was a consecration of the union acts of 1918, as well as the elimination of all consequences related to the war, determined by occupation of national territory by the enemy. Thus, on 19 January/1 February 1919, the Romanian Prime Minister presented Romania's contribution to the war against the Central Powers and demanded international recognition of union acts from the previous year, a demand motivated by the history of the Romanian nation, the great sacrifices they had made during the war and the Romanians'

wish to live within the borders of the same state, expressed by decisions taken in Chisinau, Chernovitz and Alba Iulia.

**T**he mission of the Romanian delegation took place in difficult conditions, as the Entente considered that the treaty of August 1916 had lost its validity following the signature of the Peace of Bucharest, while the US refused to recognise any agreement concluded before their entry into the war in 1917. The atmosphere was also inflamed by the intransigent attitude of Ion I.C. Bratianu on several important demands such as the following: full recognition of the 1916 treaty, providing for the union of the whole of Banat (including the Serbian part); recognition of the participation of Romania in the military conflict with Hungary during the first half of 1919; imposing a right of international surveillance in concerns regarding the status of minorities, especially the Jewish minority and its relation to the recognition of Romania's independence (starting from the Berlin Treaty of 1878); financial burdens imposed on successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, etc.

**E**ntering an open conflict with 'the four,' the Romanian Prime Minister left the conference on 2 July 1919 and on 27 September also resigned in favour of a new government led by General Arthur Vaitoianu. Only after the formation of the Vaida-Voievod government on 1 December 1919 was the crisis between Bucharest and Paris defused and, by reaching a compromise formula, Romania signed the peace treaty with Austria, which had posed the main problems.

**U**ltimately, treaties with defeated countries were signed and new borders were established in Europe. Out of the ruins of Austria-Hungary new national states were born (Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Austria, Hungary), the Polish state was restored and Romania completed its unity. The treaties between Allied Powers and defeated countries were signed as follows: with Germany, in Versailles, on 28 June 1919; with Austria, in Saint-Germain, on 10 September 1919; with Bulgaria, at Neuilly, on 27 November 1919; with Hungary, at Trianon, on 4 June 1920; with Turkey, in Sevres, on 10 August 1920. It was also decided to establish an international organisation with the aim of defending the peace and preventing a new war, the League of Nations, with its headquarters in Geneva.

### **The treaty with Germany**

**O**n 28 June 1919 the Peace Treaty between Allied Powers and Germany was signed in Versailles. Germany lost all its colonies, had to return some territories to France (Alsace and Lorraine), Belgium, Poland (which was at the same time recognised as an independent state), etc. Concerning Romania, the treaty provided the end of German possession of the Constanta-Istanbul seaport. Germany was also obliged to give up gains from the Treaty of Bucharest of 24 April/7 May 1918. A commission, which did not include Romania, was to establish war compensations for all damages caused to the civilian population by the Entente countries. The treaty provided for the maintenance of the European Commission of the Danube and the establishment, for the portion between Braila and the Black Sea, of an International Danube Commission. Also, the Covenant of the League of Nations was signed, which made up the first part of all peace treaties with former enemies, as well as the statute of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Ion I.C. Bratianu and Constantin Coanda signed the treaty for Romania and it was ratified on 14 September 1920.

### **The treaty with Austria**

**T**he peace treaty between the Allied Powers and Austria was signed on 10 September 1919 in Saint Germain-en-Laye. In the treaty, Austria recognised the establishment of the countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Bukovina's union with Romania (article 59) and the union of South Tyrol, Trieste, Kraina, Istria and the city of Zara (Zadar) with Italy. Also, it was obliged to pay war compensations. Article 60 provided harsh conditions for Romania concerning its regime of minorities, transit and trade. At the same time, Romania was forced to take over a part of the public debt of the dual monarchy. Romania signed the treaty on 10 December 1919. For Romania, the peace treaty with Austria entered into force on 4 September 1920 after the submission of instruments of ratification.

### **The treaty with Bulgaria**

**T**he peace treaty between the Allied Powers and Bulgaria was signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine, on 27 November 1919. Bulgaria was forced to rectify its border in favour of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and of Greece (giving up western Thrace and thus losing access to the Aegean Sea). In a move that concerned Romania, the border established through the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 10 August 1913 was restored, by which Cadrilater was returned to Romania. Romania signed the Peace Treaty with Bulgaria on 10 December 1919, the great powers conditioning its signature with the acceptance of the peace treaty with Austria by the Romanian government.

### **The treaty with Hungary**

**T**he Budapest government did not recognise the union of Transylvania with Romania. This attitude was preserved even after the establishment of the Hungarian Republic of Councils (of a Bolshevik nature). The new authorities decreed mobilisation and on 16 April 1919 attacked Romanian troops in the Western Carpathian Mountains (by the Belgrade truce of November 1918, the Entente allowed the presence of the Hungarian army in Crisana). The attack was repelled and on 1 May 1919 the Romanian army stopped on the Tisa River, the border established by the Convention with the Entente of August 1916. The 'red' government in Budapest and the Bolshevik one in Moscow tried to coordinate in order to catch Romania in a pincer movement from east and west. On 20 July Hungarian troops attacked the Romanian lines on the Tisa River, but Soviet troops were blocked by the offensive of the 'white' General Denikin. The response of Romanian troops was stronger than the first time and ended with the occupation of Budapest on 4 August and the overthrow of the government led by Bela Kun. The offensive of the Romanian army took place in spite of the uncertain position of the allies' Supreme War Council in Paris, and of accusations especially from some Anglo-Saxon circles that Romania's intransigent attitude had led to the 'establishment of Bolshevism in Hungary.' Prime Minister Ion I.C. Bratianu rejected all these accusations and eventually Romania's position was accepted.

**O**n 4 June 1920 the Peace Treaty of Trianon was concluded between the Allied Powers and Hungary. It recognised the union of Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ukraine with Czechoslovakia, of Croatia, Slovenia, Vojvodina and Western Banat with Serbia, etc. Regarding issues affecting Romania, the Treaty recognised the historic act of Alba Iulia, of 18 November/1 December 1918, providing for the union of Transylvania, Crisana, Maramures and Eastern Banat with Romania and the fact that Hungary renounced all rights and titles to these territories. From the Romanian side the treaty was signed by Dr. Ion Cantacuzino and Nicolae Titulescu and entered into force on 26 July 1921.

## The Treaty of Paris

**T**he Treaty of Paris signed on 28 October 1920 represented the recognition by the main allied powers (France, United Kingdom, Italy, Japan) of the union of Bessarabia with Romania. Negotiations in Paris concerning international recognition for this act took place in difficult conditions and were faced with extremely strong obstacles. In the first place, the difficulties were influenced by Soviet Russia's hostile position towards Romania, as well as by anti-Romanian propaganda undertaken in Paris by some Russian emigre groups. The United States also invoked the fact that Russia was not present at the conference and refused to sign the treaty.

**R**atification was made after a delay (the United Kingdom in 1922, France in 1924, Italy in 1927), because signatory states did not want to prejudice their own relations with the Soviet Union. The United States only recognised the union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1933 and did so in an indirect manner by including this territory in Romania's immigration quota for the US. Japan did not ratify Treaty of Paris of 1920. A secret agreement concluded with the USSR in 1925 expressly provided that Japan would not ratify this treaty, thus making it inoperable.

**D**uring 1919, the Great Union was in a period of great danger, the borders of Romania being threatened by Hungarian and Soviet troops. At the same time, in Paris, Romanian representatives led a hard diplomatic battle for recognition of the acts of union from Chisinau, Chernovitz and Alba Iulia adopted in 1918. Ultimately, the concluded peace treaties recognised these decisions to unify the Romanian nation.

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