

WOODROW WILSON'S 'NEW WORLD ORDER' VS. 'OLD WORLD DIPLOMACY': THE STRUGGLE OVER THE APPLICATION OF THE MANDATE PRINCIPLE AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE OF 1919

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Karl Marx opened "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" as follows: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."¹ This observation reflects the role that Woodrow Wilson played at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. The rise of the United States to the status of world power at the end of World War I signaled the infusion into international politics of new principles of conduct that were hitherto absent. President Wilson articulated the new principles. Nonetheless, the settlement that Wilson presided over was a dismal failure. This flop can be attributed to a number of factors, the most prominent of which was the fact that the vision of world order that Woodrow Wilson took to Europe was greatly at variance with those of his European counterparts.

This paper is a study of the role played by Woodrow Wilson in crafting the mandates system for the former German colonies that were seized by the Allied Powers during the war. Focusing on the postwar status of the former German colonies in Africa, it will examine the confrontation between old and new diplomacy, and attempt to clarify some of the factors which compelled President Wilson to amend his initial stance during the negotiations on

the mandatar system. This is a case study of the broader failures of Wilson, his idealism and the Fourteen Points.

David Lloyd George, the prime minister and leader of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference exaggerate in his memoirs when he wrote: "The Treaties of Paris constitute the greatest measure of national liberation of subject nations ever achieved by any war settlement on record."² Although the system of mandates originated in these treaties, Lloyd George is not clear as to which subject nations the treaties granted "the greatest measure of national liberation." For the African subject nations, the treaties simply constituted a re-imposition of European domination, sanctioned by a new over-arching international order of European and American construction: the League of Nations.

As a result of military occupation during the war and because of Germany's unconditional surrender, the Allies gained control of all German overseas possessions.³ Thus, when the Peace Conference convened in Paris the Allies were virtually unhampered in affecting a colonial settlement in accordance with some of the principles that they had announced. There was, however, a great difference of opinion between statesmen and factions as to the future government of the territories seized from Germany. On the one hand, there were advocates of imperialism in the Allied countries who proposed annexation of the German colonies as had been the previous practice against a defeated power. On the other hand, some Allied statesmen had made repeated declarations during the struggle rejecting such annexation. President Wilson incorporated that proposition as one of the Fourteen Points on which the United States would insist in the terms of the peace.⁴

During the negotiations that culminated in the Armistice of 11 November 1918, the Allies agreed that the future peace would be based on the Fourteen Points of

Wilson's address of 8 January, and the principles subsequently enumerated by the president. The fifth of the Fourteen Points addressed the colonies as follows:

A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based on a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.⁵

At a pre-conference discussion held in London in December 1918, President Wilson explained that what he had in mind in the fifth of his Fourteen Points "was to make the former German colonies the common property of the League of Nations and to have them governed by small nations under specific international mandate and supervision."⁶

The Allied Powers' rationale for seizing the German colonies was at once humanistic and strategic. They argued that the Germans had maltreated the peoples of their various colonies. They also feared that German possession of submarine bases in many parts of the world would constitute a menace to the freedom and security of all nations. Consequently, the Allied and Associated Powers agreed that in no circumstances should any of the colonies be restored to Germany.⁷ Although President Wilson's original plan had called for small nations to govern the German colonies under specific mandate and supervision, this proposal ran counter to Britain's secret commitments to Japan in the Pacific, and the British Dominions of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. President Wilson thus found himself positioned against the combined forces of Lloyd George and the representatives of the Dominions.⁸ After having inspired the world with high

and lofty phrases, the American President came under the pressure of international political realism when he met America's allies at the negotiating table in Paris. This political reality can be traced largely to Woodrow Wilson's vacillation, abandonment of principle, and eventual compromise.

Fearing that the conference would stalemate if he insisted on self-determination for all, President Wilson compromised his initial plan of mandating the German colonies to small nations on the grounds that it was impractical, and accepted the necessity of a division on the basis of occupation. Notwithstanding, Wilson held firm to his objective that the governments to which the former German colonies were awarded would be administered under the specific mandate of the League of Nations.⁹ What needs to be explained is why President Wilson and the Allies granted national self-determination to the German possessions of Eastern Europe while the African colonies remained under European rule.

The outlines of the mandatory system were incorporated in a pamphlet by the South African Foreign Minister General Jan M. Smuts, entitled "The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion" (1918). In this pamphlet Smuts sketched out the plan of a power acting as a Mandatory or delegate of the international society and subject to the supervision of an international body.¹⁰ Although Smuts had intended the mandates system only for the countries detached from Russia, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, and did not intend it to include former German colonies in Africa, the scheme subsequently was accepted by the representatives of Great Britain and the American President.¹¹ It is particularly significant that General Smuts omitted the mention of the German African colonies in his plan, because, according to David Hunter Miller, the application of the mandate principle was not directed to "the

barbarians of Africa."¹²

Not knowing the intention of Smuts in so designing the mandate proposal, Wilson took the idea and consolidated it into his first and second Paris drafts of the covenant. The language was essentially Smuts's, but the president made some substantive changes by omitting the mention of Russia, and adding, "the colonies formerly under the dominion of the German Empire." Hence, by the revised Wilson version of Smuts's plan, the "fundamental principles" set forth were applicable to "the peoples and territories which formerly belonged to Austria-Hungary and to Turkey and ... the colonies formerly under the dominion of the German Empire."¹³ Ray Stannard Baker commented about the Smuts and Wilson plans:

General Smuts never thought of applying the principle to the former German colonies, but only to the old empires that were to be 'liquidated'. But the President perceived the direct annexation of these vast colonial territories in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, with their millions of population and their great strategic, political, and economic value, to be quite as dangerous in practice and as likely to be the cause of future wars as the annexation of parts of Turkey, Russia, or Austria. He clearly foresaw the difficulties which would later arise over control of the Pacific and China--if the new principle was not adopted at the start.¹⁴

The first of a series of meetings of the Council of Ten was held on Friday, 24 January at 3:00 p.m., with Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada; William A. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia; W.F. Massey, Prime

Minister of New Zealand; and Generals Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of South Africa, respectively, present.

At the outset of the deliberations Lloyd George informed the conferees that he thought it would be proper for each of the Dominions to present its own case as, since as far as Britain was concerned, most of the German colonies captured had been taken by Dominion troops.¹⁵ The British Prime Minister had held prior conversations on the matter in the Imperial War Cabinet with representatives of the Dominions and they had agreed that the Dominions were not prepared to give up any of the territories contiguous to their boundaries which they had conquered during the war.¹⁶

Although Lloyd George had earlier suggested to Colonel Edward M. House an eagerness to have America become a mandatarly power, there is hardly any indication that he told President Wilson of the Dominions' opposition to placing the German colonies under their occupation in the hands of the League of Nations. During Lloyd George's conversation with Colonel House, the American had responded in the negative, saying that "America could not run colonies. Their experiment with the Philippines had not been a great success."¹⁷ Failure to persuade America to become a colonial power might have caused the British Prime Minister to withhold crucial information from President Wilson. Fully aware of Wilson's position on the matter of disposing the German colonies, Lloyd George was now trying to agitate an already settled position—a clear indication of the manner in which old diplomacy was conducted.

Had Lloyd George told Wilson that the Dominions were adamantly opposed to his program of handing over the German colonies to the League of Nations' supervision, perhaps a *modus operandi* could have been reached and

the contentious moment of the deliberations averted. Lloyd George, however, failed to do so for reasons of his own. The British leader thus set himself the task of crafting a coalition of adherents to old diplomacy against the American architect of new diplomacy.

The beginning of the coalition can be illustrated the friendship that developed between William Hughes of Australia and French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau. Their friendship was the result of their mutual opposition, if not their simmering antagonistic attitude, toward the American President's program for the German colonies. Lloyd George recounted the events thusly,

When the question of the German Colonies came up for consideration, I arranged that the Dominion representatives should be present. When they appeared there was an amusing interchange of characteristic amenity between M. Clemenceau and Mr. Hughes. In pressing the claims of Australia to complete control of some of the islands she had conquered, I had dwelt on the savagery of the tribes inhabiting those islands. I stated that many of them were still cannibals. Announcing the decision of the Conference that the Dominions should be allowed to present their own case, M. Clemenceau turned to me and said: 'Bring your cannibals here this afternoon.' When the Dominion premiers arrived, M. Clemenceau went up to Mr. Hughes and, placing his hands on his shoulders, said: 'I hear, Mr. Hughes, that you are a cannibal.' Hughes merely retorted: 'M. Clemenceau, I can assure you the report is grossly exaggerated.' From that moment Hughes

and Clemenceau were fast friends.¹⁸

Georges Clemenceau, the French Premier and host of the conference, advised Lloyd George to "bring your savages,"¹⁹ knowing fully well what havoc the Australian and his New Zealand counterpart were planning to wreak at the negotiations over the disposition of the German colonies.²⁰

Clemenceau's characteristic gesture was a sign of approval of Hughes' position regarding the German colonies. Clemenceau thus nudged the Australian Prime Minister, while he watched gleefully as the drama unfolded. It is said that "Clemenceau would not have missed this meeting for the best *foie gras* in Strasbourg."²¹ The dirty work which Lloyd George could not bring himself to do, he paved the way for Hughes and Massey to perform. Such was the spirit in which the deliberations over the disposition of the German colonies took place as the British Dominions mounted the stage of international politics.

Consequently, after securing unanimous opposition to the restoration of the German colonies, Lloyd George outlined methods with which the colonies could be treated. The first was internationalization or control by the League of Nations, but he dismissed this in light of the fact that these territories could not be directly administered internationally.²² Secondly, Lloyd George outlined a system of trusteeship on behalf of the League of Nations as Mandatary. Thirdly, he pointed to direct annexation. Summarizing his case for the Dominions, Lloyd George asserted that "he would like the Conference to treat the territories enumerated as part of the Dominions which had captured them rather than as areas to be administered under the control of an organization established in Europe, which might find it difficult to contribute even the smallest financial assistance to their administration."²³

Next, Lloyd George opened the floor to the Dominions to state their preferences. Hughes was first to speak for Australian annexation of New Guinea. He had earlier warned the Imperial War Cabinet, of which he was a member, "that he had no intention of letting Wilson, whose contribution to the war effort was a tiny fraction of the British Empire's 'play god in the machine'." ²⁴ The Australian Prime Minister stressed security reasons for his country's desire to annex New Guinea as opposed to international control. Hughes stated :

Strategically the Pacific Islands encompassed Australia like fortresses. New Guinea was the biggest island in the whole world save Australia itself, and was only 82 miles from the mainland. South-East of it was a string of islands suitable for coaling and submarine bases, from which Australia could be attacked. It was obvious that 5 million people could not hold, against powerful enemies, a country larger than the United States, with a coast-line as long as the distance between Australia and England. If there were at the very door of Australia a potential or actual enemy Australia could not feel safe. The islands were as necessary to Australia as water to a city. ²⁵

Hughes opposed internationalization and, claiming that New Guinea was already under Australian administration, forcefully argued that if the mandatary were to exercise real authority, its policy would have to be directed presumably by the League of Nations. In this case the mandatary would be so overwhelmingly superior in power to Australia that Australian authority over New Guinea would be completely

overshadowed.²⁶ Hughes then asked whether any country represented at the meeting would consent to such a situation.

Next General Smuts, speaking for General Botha, presented the case for South Africa's claims to German South West Africa (contemporary Namibia). Smuts argued, "the question to be decided was whether the Union of South Africa should absorb this country, or should be appointed a mandatarly for its administration." Separating South-West Africa from the other German colonies, Smuts maintained that "the Cameroons, Togo-Land and East Africa were all tropical and valuable possessions; South-West Africa was a desert country without any product of great value and only suitable for pastoralists. It could, therefore, only be developed from within the Union itself."²⁷

South Africa and South-West Africa, in the thinking of Smuts, were geographically one. What had prevented South-West Africa from being annexed to the Union, Smuts asserted, was "the dilatoriness of the [British] Imperial Government." Smuts concluded that unlike tropical Africa, a good case could not be made for the adoption of the mandatarly system for German South-West Africa.²⁸

New Zealand's turn came and Prime Minister Massey spoke on behalf of his country. He appealed to President Wilson to view the New Zealand case from its standpoint. Asking Woodrow Wilson to recall the period immediately after the American War of Independence, Massey wanted to know what Washington and Hamilton and the others associated with them would have done or said had it been suggested that a mandatarly power, or even the colonists themselves as mandataries of a League of Nations, should be given charge of the vast territories in North America not at that time occupied.²⁹

Robert Borden of Canada spoke last. Noting that although the Dominion he represented had no territorial

claims to present, he still wished to say something on behalf of the other Dominions. Borden stated that those Dominions were autonomous nations within an empire which might more properly call itself a League of Nations. All cases advanced rested upon the plea of security, and he considered that the arguments put forward deserved the closest attention of the council.³⁰ With Borden's remark, the first discussion of the mandatory principle vis-a-vis the German colonies conquered by the British Dominions closed on Friday, 24 January 1919.

Discussion on the application of the mandates system resumed on 27 January. Following a short statement of claims by Baron Makino on Japan's behalf, President Wilson gave a statement in which he enumerated the application of principles. The president contended that the basis for proposing a trusteeship by the League of Nations through the appointment of mandataries was the feeling which had sprung up all over the world against annexation. Now that the colonies were not to be returned to Germany, a new basis for their disposition must be found to develop them and to take care of the inhabitants of these backward territories. It was with this objective that the idea of administration through mandataries acting on behalf of the League of Nations arose. Wilson then illustrated this point:

The case of South West Africa would be found a most favorable instance to make a clear picture. South West Africa had very few inhabitants, and those had been so maltreated, and their numbers had been so reduced under German administration, that the whole area was open to development that could not yet be determined. Therefore, either it must be

attached to its nearest neighbor and so establish what would seem a natural union with South Africa, or some institution must be found to carry out the ideas all had in mind, namely, the development of the country for the benefit of those already in it, and for the advantage of those who would live in it later.³¹

The president impressed upon his audience that whether it be South Africa or any other institution, what was intended was neither the exploitation of the people, nor the exercise of arbitrary authority, but the safeguard against such abuses as had occurred under German administration. "Further, where people and territories were undeveloped, to assure their development so that, when the time came, their own interests, as they saw them might qualify them to express a wish as to their ultimate relations--perhaps lead them to desire their union with the mandatary power."³²

Should South Africa assume responsibility as the mandatary of the League of Nations for South West Africa, the League of Nations would lay down the general principles of the mandate, such

that the districts be administered primarily with a view to the betterment of the conditions of the inhabitants. Secondly, that there should be no discrimination against the members of the League of Nations, so as to restrict economic access to the resources of the district. With this limitation, the Union of South Africa would extend such of its laws as were applicable to South West Africa and administer it as an annex to the Union... The expense of its administration would be met by fiscal arrangements, which, if they involved

customs duties, would be the same for all nations trading with South West Africa; all countries would pay the same duties, all would have the same right of access.³³

Wilson's explanation of how the mandate principle would operate, though couched in diplomatic circumlocution, was a spirited advocacy of the traditional American "open door" policy spiced with his own brand of idealism. As long as economic and commercial opportunities were equally open to all, South Africa could apply its laws as were applicable to South West Africa and administer it as an annex to the Union. Wilson then scrapped the three per cent (3%) preferential tariff South Africa gave Great Britain on grounds that, "with the elimination of that exception, there would be no administrative difference between his scheme and annexation."³⁴

Having stated the economic aspect of the mandatory principle, Wilson shifted gear to the political aspect asserting that

the fundamental idea would be that the world was acting as a trustee through a mandatory, and would be in charge of the whole administration until the day when the true wishes of the inhabitants could be ascertained. It was up to the Union of South Africa to make it so attractive that South West Africa would come into the Union of their own free will. Should that not be the case, the fault would lie with the mandatory.³⁵

Wilson's explication was quite a novelty which even the softspoken General Botha could not countenance. The

general, intervening for the first time, stated: "German South West Africa, as everybody knew, was part and parcel of South Africa.

It was a piece of land cut out of the Union. The Eastern and Southern frontiers of German South West Africa were merely lines drawn on the map."³⁶ Botha's resistance to President Wilson's plan was supported by Australia. Hughes launched an onslaught on Wilson's conception and surmised that there was nothing to be gained by the mandatary system that could not be achieved by direct government, except that the whole world was said to dread annexation. He was, however, positive that no one dreaded the annexation of New Guinea by Australia. Before the Council adjourned on 27 January, Lloyd George asked each of the representatives to consider and consult with their respective advisers "purely on the practical application of the principles of the mandatary powers, as laid down by President Wilson in his speech."³⁷

On 28 January, Lloyd George told the Council that he saw no insurmountable difficulty in reconciling the views of Great Britain with those of President Wilson. His French counterpart, Georges Clemenceau, then informed the council that the French Minister for the colonies would be ready to make a statement the next day. Introducing the subject of certain Franco-British Conventions relating to the captured German colonies, Clemenceau inquired whether they could be produced before the council.³⁸ At that point Massey of New Zealand presented his opposition to the president's plan of the previous day. Massey assured Wilson that although he did not quite take his point of view, he would speak in no spirit of opposition to the idea of the League of Nations. Recalling a precedent in history--the Congress of Vienna--when similar attempts were made to "frame universal peace," but the results of its labors had been a failure, Massey hoped that this congress would not

end in the same way. He concluded that "it was well to remember that history repeated itself."³⁹

Later that afternoon the French Minister for the Colonies, M. Simon, presented his case for French claims to the Cameroons and Togoland. After noting the decision against returning the colonies to Germany, Simon phrased the two questions to be decided as, "to whom should these colonies be given, and what should their form of government be?"⁴⁰ The French point of view turned out to be more honest than the others, as M. Simon showed no inhibition expressing its preference. Prepared to base the claims of France on the Franco-British secret agreements made during the war, the French minister offered to read them to the council, but Lloyd George interjected that he did not think it would serve any useful purpose just then.⁴¹ M. Simon then enumerated three possible solutions to the colonial question: internationalization; a mandate given to one of the powers by the League of Nations; annexation, pure and simple, by a sovereign power. Marshalling arguments against the first two solutions, he settled for the third, and firmly asserted that all France asked for "is to be allowed to continue her work of civilization in tropical Africa."⁴²

Although Lloyd George did not intend for the secret agreements to be injected into the discussion at that point, it soon became clear just how strongly the Allies were committed to the old diplomacy. When, for example, discussions on the Pacific Islands came up, Wilson soon discovered that he was arguing for the application of his new principles to an old situation, and against the secret agreements between Great Britain and Japan which provided for the division of the Pacific Islands among themselves. The islands north of the equator were to be British possessions, and those south of the equator Japan's.⁴³

President Wilson had been particularly incensed by M. Simon's speech which was, in essence, anti-mandate. Following as it did the criticisms of the Dominions, it provoked the president to issue a statement which Lloyd George characterized as one which threatened a break-up of the conference. According to Lloyd George, the president observed,

the discussion so far had been, in essence, a negation in detail—one case at a time—of the whole principle of mandatories. The discussion had been brought to a point where it looked as if their roads diverged. he thought it would be wise to discontinue the discussion for a few hours—say until the next day. as he feared that otherwise it might lead to a point where it would appear as though they had reached serious disagreement, and this he particularly wished to avoid.⁴⁴

The British Prime Minister tried to bridge the difference between Wilson's plan and the opposition's by saying that he had some discussion with the representatives of the British Colonial Department about mandatories, and they raised no objections or difficulties. "They thought the difficulties were more imaginary than real." Lloyd George then attempted to place the French position presented by M. Simon in a softer light, noting that he was struck by the fact that M. Simon's speech "in the beginning appeared to be bitterly opposed to the whole idea, but in the end he had detailed as acceptable to France the whole list of conditions proposed for a mandatory, except the name."⁴⁵

If Lloyd George's embellishment of the French position was intended to overcome the president's qualms, it did not succeed. For Wilson agreed with the view of the

Englishman, viz., that the difficulties were more imaginary than real, but disagreed with Lloyd George that there was no major difference between the mandatory system and M. Simon's plan of annexation. "The former," the president said, "assumed trusteeship on the part of the League of Nations; the latter implied definite sovereignty, exercised in the same spirit and under the same conditions as might be imposed upon a mandatory. The two ideas were radically different."⁴⁶ Given this difference, President Wilson was bound to assume that the French were unwilling to accept the idea of the mandatory.

French objection to the mandates system was based primarily on the fear that the new system might prevent France from raising troops in the countries under her administration. The Germans had recognized the importance of the support France had received from her colonies before powerful American troops came to her aid. France had resisted with the help of British forces, and "it was certain, but for the help they had received from their Colonial Possessions, the situation would have been very critical. It was necessary for them to be able to recruit not conscripts but volunteers from all colonial territories under French control,"⁴⁷ M. Pichon said.

President Wilson then reverted to idealism, referring to the sentiment of the civilized world which would be outraged by a wholesale annexation of the German colonies by the victorious powers. He entreated that there must be a League of Nations, and that they could not return to the *status quo ante*. The League of Nations would be a laughing-stock if it were not invested with the quality of trusteeship. He felt about this so strongly that, he hoped, those present would not think that he had any personal antagonism.⁴⁸

When it became clear that the president was unyielding and would not accept a vague promise of a

League with immediate settlement upon the basis of the old military and nationalistic interests, his opponents changed their method of attack. The French tried one method; the British another—each thoroughly characteristic of the attacking nation. The French were more outspoken and consistent, and one could tell where Clemenceau stood on issues. But one never knew exactly where Lloyd George stood, as he continuously shifted his position and never stood twice on the same place.⁴⁹

When the French could neither have their way nor convince the president of the correctness of their outright annexation idea in the secret meeting room, they took their attack to the press. Whereas the proceedings were supposed to be secret, the French papers were evidently well furnished with information about the discussions. Some British papers even published complete accounts of the controversy between President Wilson and the Australian Prime Minister Hughes. When Wilson protested against these attacks, they were immediately stopped. The French did not want Wilson to appeal to the public on the issue of their program of annexation. The opposition had a profound influence in making the president's task more difficult. These attacks forced some members of the American delegation to demand the removal of the conference to a neutral city like Geneva, to escape the "hostile" atmosphere.

The British and the Dominions had a more subtle scheme. If they were unable to move Wilson from his insistence that the colonies come under the mandatary system, they felt that they might succeed in having the distribution settled and the conditions defined well in advance and apart from the covenant of the League of Nations.⁵⁰ Wilson's refusal to proceed along this line greatly exasperated them.⁵¹ Their theory was that the League "had really been born," as Lloyd George expressed it, with the

passage of the resolution in the plenary session of 25 January. As Hughes of Australia put it, a "de facto League of Nations [was] already in existence in that room."⁵² This de facto League could therefore divide up the colonies as mandates or whatever they chose to call them but the conditions had to be agreeable to the recipients. What the British Empire and her Dominions wanted was de facto possession.⁵³

That same day Lloyd George held a separate meeting with the British Empire delegation. After exhaustive discussions, agreement was reached on a resolution defining the mandates system in such a way as to induce President Wilson to agree to immediate distribution. Lloyd George later circulated to the council a series of draft resolutions. In introducing them, he insisted on the need to recognize three classes of mandates for the cases of former Turkish territories, the tropical (African) colonies, and the countries whose territories adjoined the seized German colonies. The resolutions were generous in so far as the Turkish territories and the German African colonies were concerned. These constituted the first two classes of mandates. But the third class, consisting of German South West Africa and the Pacific Islands—the territories in which the British Dominions were interested—was defined in terms almost of outright annexation. These territories were to be "administered under the laws of the mandatory State as integral portions thereof," and the only restrictions imposed were "safeguards...in the interests of the indigenous population." "Equal opportunity for all trade and commerce of other members of the League of Nations," in essence, the "open door," stipulated for Central African territories, was conspicuously omitted here.⁵⁴

Although President Wilson pronounced the terms of the resolution "a very gratifying paper," he also made it clear that he would not be hurried into action on the basis of

it. The president further intimated that "he had been accused of being a hopeless idealist, but as a matter of fact, he never accepted an idea until he could see its practical application."⁵⁵ In other words, Wilson was saying that he was still opposed to the distribution of the colonies until he was sure of his fellow conferees' acceptance of the entire program. At long last the American President showed his counterparts that he was not what they had assumed. Although an idealist, Wilson was one whose idealism was tempered with pragmatism - a pragmatism uniquely American which the leaders of the old world could perhaps not fully grasp.

Lloyd George and the other conferees were taken aback. In the course of a long comment Lloyd George said that Wilson's statement filled him with despair, and noted that if every question was to be set aside for final decision until every other question was settled, the result would be disastrous.⁵⁶

On Wilson's insistence that the distribution of the colonies should wait, Lloyd George changed his mind and replied that Britain had deliberately decided to accept the principle of mandatariness. He revealed that the decision had not been wholly accepted by the Dominions but they had agreed to this compromise rather than face the catastrophe of a break-up of the conference.⁵⁷ Wilson replied that he was willing to accept the proposals made by Lloyd George on condition that they will be reconsidered when the full scheme of the League of Nations was drawn.⁵⁸ The discussion that followed occupied two sittings, and was the only unpleasant episode of the whole conference.

When the Council reconvened at 3:30 p.m., Massey of New Zealand reiterated his desire on behalf of his constituency and the other Dominions for direct annexation. He wanted the other conferees to know that he had not gone back in the very slightest on the opinions that he had

expressed on the first occasion when he addressed the Council but was prepared to accept the suggestions contained in Clause 8 of Lloyd George's resolution pertaining to the division of the mandates into three classes.⁵⁹ Massey's statement constituted an attempt at negating all that President Wilson had been stressing. The president inquired whether he was to understand that New Zealand and Australia had presented an ultimatum to the conference after joint discussions. Massey responded in the negative, adding that he thought he had made himself perfectly clear, and that he could speak for his colleagues from Australia. Hughes interjected that he did not know how he could put it better than he had done that morning. As Hughes began a second sentence, "I would like to say that Clause 8 of that proposal..." President Wilson cut him short, and asked whether Mr. Hughes had heard his question. The Australian Prime Minister responded that he had not, so Wilson repeated the question, slightly modified. Hughes replied that the president had put it fairly well, and, speaking for himself with great reluctance, agreed to the proposal in Clause 8 beyond which Hughes felt he ought not go.⁶⁰

At this point General Botha made a speech which eased the tension. Botha's speech, a moving piece of oratory, has to be read wholly to grasp fully the power of diplomatic parlance.⁶¹ "Behind it was the attractive and compelling personality of this remarkable man," Lloyd George wrote. "President Wilson was obviously moved. The friendliness and even deference of Botha's tone and manner won him a favorable hearing. The president told me immediately afterwards that it was the most impressive speech he had ever listened."⁶² General Botha thus saved the day by restoring order to the deliberations and, as the moment of imminent crisis evaporated, Lloyd George's proposal was adopted "subject to the right of

reconsideration if the Covenant of the League as finally drafted did not fit in."⁶³

But Lloyd George's proposal for the mandates system was a compromise with Wilson's original ideas, "a compromise between lofty idealism and naked imperialism."⁶⁴ It must be understood, however, that Lloyd George was actively behind the position of the British Dominions. In February 1919, a week following the departure of Wilson from Paris for a hurried trip to the United State, Lloyd George privately remarked to Lord Riddel that, while America had obtained a bundle to dubious paper money in the form of the League of Nations, he had "returned with a pocket full of sovereigns in the shape of German Colonies, Mesopotamia, etc. Everyone to his taste'."⁶⁵

Lloyd George thought he had duped the American President. He accused President Wilson of vagueness and of not having a plan. The idea was not worked out and he had therefore not submitted any detailed project to the congress. Rather, Wilson had vaguely indicated that what he had in mind was an administration of the German colonies by mandataries.⁶⁶ But an Englishman, A.G. Gardinier, who traveled through Paris during the course of the deliberations, sensed a different type of climate under the leadership of President Wilson. Gardinier wrote:

His serene and powerful personality is pervading the atmosphere of negotiation with the spirit of wisdom and urbanity and is providing a solvent for all types of difficulties. He has in a rare degree the faculty of winning the heart, as well as of convincing the mind, and the detachment of America from the old European tangle

and its freedom from any suspicion of self-interest adds a weight to his personal influence.⁶⁷

When the European allies and the British Dominions - especially Australia and New Zealand - banded together against Wilson, it was not so much a conspiracy as it was a conflict over national interests and whether a new form of diplomacy should substitute the old. Whether for security or economic reasons, the French, the British and some of the Dominions saw their immediate national interests being threatened by an untried principle of international relations. Imperialism was the principle and practice of the time. The new Wilsonian option of mandates posed a threat, real or imagined, to the customary usages, and none of the practitioners of old diplomacy was willing to take that risk. As a result, a spirited fight was waged against President Wilson's new vision of world order. In the end old diplomacy prevailed, the League of Nations never posed an effective deterrent, and a quarter century later the world gravitated into another global conflagration.

The failure of Wilsonian diplomacy at Paris can be attributed to a variety of factors. Whereas European and Dominion leaders were grounded in the past, where traditional diplomacy had produced concrete results, Wilson was futuristic and thus advocated untested principles of international conduct. Under pressure from a united opposition, President Wilson wavered from, and then abandoned, his initial position of mandating the former German colonies to small powers. Finally, Wilson failed to place the growing power of the United States on the line. For the mandatary system to have functioned as envisioned by the president, the United States had to become a mandatary power. Non-participation meant that America had reneged from exercising her responsibility to the

president's new world order. To have conceived of a world order in principle, and not act to ensure that the application of such principle conformed to its practical expression, was indeed a grievous mistake that contributed to the collapse of Wilson's new vision of the world. The defeat of Wilson at the Paris Peace proved Karl Marx's observation about historical actors correct. Men make their own history but not just as they please. They do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but rather under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (New York, 1968), 97.

2. David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, 2 (New Haven, 1939), 491.

3. H. W. V. Temperley, ed., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, 2 (London, 1924), 226; Norman Bentwich, *The Mandates System* (London, New York, and Toronto, 1930), 1.

4. Bentwich, *Mandates System* 1; Quincy Wright, *Mandates Under the League of Nations* (Chicago, 1930), 24-25.