

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 175

### “The Paris Peace Conference”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

*After expending the greatest effort and suffering the greatest sacrifices in blood in all history, we must not compromise the results of our victory...if the League of Nations cannot buttress its orders with military sanctions we must find this sanction elsewhere...I beg you to understand my state of mind just as I am trying to understand yours. America is far away and protected by the ocean. England could not be reached by Napoleon himself. You are sheltered, both of you; we are not.*

French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, speaking at the Paris Peace Conference.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 175. The Paris Peace Conference.

Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan, in the opening pages of her book *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*, argues that the closest our divided and conflicted little planet ever came to having a unified world government was in the first half of the year 1919. Its capital was Paris. It consisted of an executive council of four national leaders and a supreme court of the same four leaders. These four took on no less a task than arbitrating all outstanding international disputes and laying out a set of rules for how the nations of the world would henceforth conduct their relations with one another.

I should note that *Paris 1919* was a major resource for this episode and for several more to come. I should also mention that MacMillan's book *The War That Ended Peace*, her account of the events that led to the Great War was also a valuable resource to me back in the days of the Belle Époque. Fun fact: Margaret MacMillan is a great-granddaughter to British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Huh.

The closest historical precedent for the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 is the Congress of Vienna, held in 1814 and 1815. The Congress of Vienna met in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and set out the framework that kept Europe at peace—or at least we can say, kept Europe’s wars small and short—for the following 99 years, until the July Crisis of 1914. The absence of any major conflict surely contributed to the unparalleled progress and prosperity many Europeans enjoyed over those years.

You might want to conclude the Congress of Vienna was a smashing success and think that the Paris Peace Conference should consider itself the same should it be able to match that record—spoiler alert: it won’t—but before you start praising Metternich and Talleyrand, make sure you also consider what a reactionary regime the Congress of Vienna imposed on Europe, with its insistence on crowned rulers for every nation and its attitude of indifference or often outright hostility toward liberal values of freedom and democracy and republicanism and nationalism. At the Paris Peace Conference, these liberal values were ascendant, along with the newly minted “self-determination,” which holds that peoples themselves, and not a salon full of lords, should determine the destinies of their nations. So the task facing world leaders in 1919 was very different and in many ways much more challenging.

In 1815, the most powerful nation in Europe was France, defeated in a long and debilitating series of wars, but not broken. One of the Congress of Vienna’s principal concerns was bringing France back into the community of nations while also keeping its military might in check. France was grudgingly given a seat at the Congress. Germany, by contrast, was not even a nation at that time. It was Prussia, an important regional power, plus a hodge-podge of lesser states ranging in size from small to miniscule to comic opera.

One hundred and four years later, the most powerful nation in Europe was Germany, defeated in a long and debilitating war, but not broken. The Great War had wrought immense death and destruction, but only along the front lines. Virtually no combat had taken place on German soil. Germany retained her size, her population, her advanced industry. One of the Paris Peace Conference’s principal concerns was bringing Germany back into the community of nations while also keeping its military might and its economic clout in check. Germany was not given a seat at the Paris Peace Conference. I’ll have more to say about that later on.

The task of the Congress of Vienna was to restructure Europe. The only action it took that looked beyond the continent was a nonbinding resolution in opposition to the slave trade. In contrast, the task of the Paris Peace Conference was nothing less than restructuring the entire world.

It took more than two months after the armistice for the Paris Peace Conference even to assemble, and by then people were already asking what was taking so long. Part of the delay can be attributed to the British general election we looked at two weeks ago. The UK had to work out who its government would be before it could proceed to the conference. But the broader truth is that the end of the war caught the Allies by surprise. The war had festered for so long and the

outcome had remained doubtful for so long, that little thought had been given to arranging the postwar peace talks before the war abruptly ended.

This is not to say that the Allied governments had given no thought to their postwar vision. All three major Allies, Britain, France, and the not-officially-one-of-the-Allies USA had all assembled committees of experts to ponder the shape of the postwar world, like The Inquiry in the United States. The numbers of experts involved was a sign of how serious and complex was the undertaking. The British delegation to the Congress of Vienna numbered 15. The British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference numbered almost 400.

Other preliminaries needed to be dealt with. Where was the peace conference to be held? Woodrow Wilson thought it should be held in a neutral location. He suggested Geneva. Lloyd George seconded the idea, but Georges Clemenceau was adamant that the conference be held in Paris. And he got his way, partly because of overblown reports that Switzerland was a hotbed of German spies and Bolshevik agitators who would be leading a revolution in the Alps any day now, and partly out of sheer stubbornness.

Then came the question of what would be the official language of the conference. To the French, the answer was obvious. Centuries of diplomatic tradition had made French the language of international relations, and for a very good reason. French is a language of precision and also of nuance; it is ideally suited for diplomacy. But the British and the Americans demurred. English had far and away the most speakers of any language among the Allied nations. More than all the other Allied languages put together, in fact. They wanted English and French to be the two official languages of the conference.

Clemenceau yielded on this question, to the dismay of his own officials, one of whom sent a memo to explain that the British and the Americans were being so unreasonable due to the chaotic thought processes of the Anglo-Saxon mind, unable as it was to grasp all that nuance and precision that came so easily to the Latin mind. The Italian prime minister, Vittorio Orlando, asked for Italian to be included as a third official language, lest anyone conclude Italy was a junior partner among the Allies. Lloyd George asked him if he was prepared to include Japanese as a fourth official language, and that settled that.

Remember that Georges Clemenceau lived in the United States for many years, and he could speak English pretty well, for someone with a New York accent. The Italian foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, also spoke English reasonably well, and so English would become the working language these leaders would use in discussions among themselves.

They also agreed that before the Central Powers would be invited into the peace talks, the Allies would have to meet among themselves to hammer out a common negotiating position. Woodrow Wilson took exception to this. In his view, all the belligerent nations on both sides of the conflict had already agreed to his Fourteen Points as the basis for the peace agreement, and everyone had also agreed that the peace negotiations would be limited to the nuts and bolts of implementing

the Fourteen Points. Thus the Allies had already agreed to a common negotiating position, and indeed, the Central Powers had agreed to same position as well. So let's get on with mutual peace talks. Wilson also worried that to put off the Germans and the other Central Powers while the Allies negotiated among themselves would turn the peace treaty into something like an ultimatum, in which the Allies would merely hand the Germans a proposed treaty and tell them, "Take it or leave it." And in fact that is how it's going to happen, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

David Lloyd George believed in the value of these pre-negotiations among the Allies. Yes, everyone had accepted the Fourteen Points as a peace framework, but each government had its own interpretation of the Fourteen Points. That was quite true, and a good example can be found between the US and Britain. One of Wilson's Fourteen Points was a call for freedom of the seas, even in time of war, unless the League of Nations said otherwise.

Remember that during the period of American neutrality, the US had as big a legal dispute with the British over their blockade as they had with the Germans over their submarine rules of engagement. The US had swallowed its pride and allowed the Royal Navy to board US ships and blockade US trade with the Central Powers, but Wilson wanted an international commitment never to allow any such blockade again. But in the British view, this was what the Royal Navy was for. This was why Britain had always made its navy its first priority. A Royal Navy blockade had been instrumental in defeating Napoleon. It had played a critical role in the war just ended; you could argue it played the decisive role. To give up such a valuable weapon voluntarily would be insane.

British reservations over the American doctrine of freedom of the seas had been a stumbling block to British acceptance of the Fourteen Points last fall and had delayed the Armistice. The British had offered qualified support for the principle that proved to be no support at all. In the early days of the peace conference, a frustrated Colonel House warned Sir William Wiseman that if the British did not agree to freedom of the seas, the US would enlarge its own navy to match the size of the Royal Navy. Sir William replied that the British were willing to pay any price to ensure that their navy remained the largest in the world.

So yes, the Allies have crucial disagreements among themselves, and so Wilson was persuaded that, okay, maybe a few brief meetings to work out Allied differences would be okay, just so long as it didn't get out of hand.

But there were practical reasons why you would want the Allies to move quickly. Just now, at the beginning of 1919, the major Allied nations: Britain, France, the United States, Italy, and Japan, collectively represent a military force no other power in the world could hope to stand against. This provided a golden opportunity to impose the Allied vision for a fair and lasting peace. But this moment would not last forever. All the Allied nations were tired of the war. Allied soldiers wanted to go home. Allied taxpayers wanted to stop paying the stiff tax rates

needed to support those soldiers. The remarkable transport system that had been depositing 2-300,000 American soldiers in France every month was now operating in reverse, shipping them back to America at a comparable rate. As the Allies' collective military might dwindled, so did their power to impose their will. Whatever needed to be done needed to be done quickly.

Nevertheless, the Allies would spend almost six months, from January to June 1919, negotiating among themselves the fate of the world. The preliminary talks did indeed get out of hand.

[music: Ravel, *Rapsodie espagnole*]

The French complicated the peace talks even further by inviting every nation in the world that even arguably was a member of the Allied coalition to have a seat at the talks, including nations as small and distant as Liberia and Siam, both of which had sent small expeditionary forces to the Western Front.

And before I go any further with this, I should pause here for a moment to talk about the name of Siam, or Thailand as we call it today. Since I made such a big deal out of "Persia" vs. "Iran" back in episode 155, I should be consistent and pause for a moment here to note that we have a parallel situation; that is, in 1919 everyone in the English-speaking world called this nation "Siam," just as they called Iran "Persia." But like the name "Persia," the name "Siam" comes from neighboring peoples. The people who live in the country call themselves "Thai" and call their country "the land of the Thai." In 1939, four years after the Iranian government began asking everyone to call their country Iran, the Kingdom of Thailand began asking everyone else to call their country Thailand, which has since become universal. In the case of Iran, the word "Persian" is still sometimes used to describe the language and culture and cuisine, but in the case of Thailand, *everything* is called Thai these days. We speak of the Thai language, for example, and we may have Persian restaurants, but we don't have Siamese restaurants, we have Thai restaurants.

I owe you some clarification on this point because I looked back over past episodes and discovered I have been inconsistent, using Siam sometimes and Thailand other times. But from now on, I am going to use Thailand as the name for this country, though this will not become the common usage in English until the middle of the century. This is partly because of the Iran precedent and partly because the words "Siam" and "Siamese" seem very strange and have all but disappeared in modern English.

In our time, when you hear the word "Siamese" in English, the next word is probably going to be "cat" or "fighting fish" or "twins." The expression "Siamese twins" is a synonym for "conjoined twins," and it came into use because of a famous 19<sup>th</sup> century case of conjoined twin brothers born in Thailand who later became naturalized US citizens. They died in 1874 at the age of 62. And if you recall from episode 172, modern medicine eschews names for medical conditions based on places, because these can give a false impression that the condition is associated with the place, like "Spanish flu." So it might be better if we all used the term "conjoined twins"

rather than “Siamese twins,” although “Siamese cat” and “Siamese fighting fish” are still perfectly okay, and may I say they are both extremely cool members of the animal kingdom.

The question of which nations should be represented at the peace conference became a sticky one for David Lloyd George. The British Empire included five more-or-less self-governing dominions: Canada, Newfoundland, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. These five dominions collectively contributed over a million soldiers to the war effort. They’d also provided immense quantities of loans, arms, munitions, and foodstuffs to the cause. And then there was India, not a dominion although many people by now are thinking it’s about time India got more in the way of self-government. India contributed more troops to the war than the five dominions combined.

The dominions have been feeling their oats for some time now, beginning with the Boer War, really. When Lloyd George had become prime minister, he had instituted the Imperial War Cabinet, a body composed of representatives of the British government and the governments of the five dominions and India, to coordinate war policy across the Empire. Naturally, the dominions were pleased with this innovation. The days when a Canadian or a New Zealander visiting the mother country was treated as an uncouth rustic from some colonial backwater appeared to be past.

Then came the final days of the war, when the British negotiated the terms of the Armistice with only limited input from the dominions, agreed to Mr. Wilson’s Fourteen Points without any consultation whatsoever, and then expected the dominions to fall in line with those decisions. The last straw came when the dominions discovered that the British government were taking it for granted that the dominions and India would participate in the Paris Peace Conference only as part of the British delegation. Seriously? Thailand gets a seat at the table and we don’t? Lloyd George offered a compromise: one of the five principal British representatives at the peace conference could be a prime minister of one of the dominions.

Well, that didn’t fly, either. Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes pointed out that Australia had suffered more combat deaths in the war than America had and voiced the possibility that maybe the next time Britain went to war, Australia might decide to stay neutral. Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden told British officials that if Canada didn’t get a place at the table, he’d pack his bags, return to Ottawa, and put the question of further participation in the conference to the Canadian Parliament.

And so Lloyd George relented. Then he had to explain all this to the Americans and the French, who were suspicious that this was some kind of ploy to enhance British leverage at the conference, although the French were wily enough to pick up on the diplomatic possibilities of playing the dominions against the mother country.

Then there was the question of the five principals of the American delegation. Woodrow Wilson always intended to lead the US delegation himself, although there were those who didn’t want

him to, including his Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, and his informal foreign policy advisor, Colonel House. Some thought Wilson's prestige would be enhanced if he remained aloof from the day-to-day negotiations.

Recall that at this time, it was still considered very unusual for a President of the United States to leave US territory while in office. Theodore Roosevelt had been first, when he spent a few days inspecting the Panama Canal, and that created some controversy from people who wondered if it were even constitutional. William Howard Taft had crossed the border long enough to spend an afternoon with Porfirio Díaz in Ciudad Juárez in 1910, but Wilson proposed to leave the country for a much longer time than either of his predecessors, and an uncertain length of time at that.

This decision drew surprisingly little pushback, at least compared to Wilson's decisions on who the other four Americans would be. That Colonel House should be one was a no-brainer, at least as far as Wilson was concerned. Lansing, the Secretary of State should be another. The fourth seat he gave to Tasker Bliss, the general who had represented the US at the Allied Supreme War Council.

But what about the fifth seat? Everyone agreed the fifth seat should go to a Republican, and probably a Republican Senator, in view of the fact that the treaty would have to be approved in a Republican-controlled Senate. There was precedent for something like this. The last time the US had sent a delegation to a peace conference, back in 1898, William McKinley had included two Republican Senators and one Democratic Senator in the delegation. But if a Republican Senator was to be included, the obvious choice was Henry Cabot Lodge, a senior Republican who had also been Wilson's harshest critic in the Senate and who was on the record opposing any league of nations. Lodge's eleventh-hour attempts to undermine Wilson's peace negotiations last November were a mark against him, in Wilson's book. The Senate being the Senate, though, to pass over Lodge and choose some other Republican Senator would likely be taken as a snub.

So no Senator then. What about William Howard Taft or Charles Evans Hughes? These were the two Republicans Wilson had run against in the past two Presidential elections, so Wilson wasn't keen on either of them, remarking that the room in which the negotiations would be held wasn't big enough. This in spite of the fact that Taft had publicly broken with the Republican Party and accepted the leadership of the League to Enforce Peace, a US organization created to support the league of nations concept.

But instead Wilson went with the 68-year old Henry White, a retired US diplomat with a distinguished record. He had served under Roosevelt as ambassador to Italy and then France. Roosevelt had once called him "the most useful man in the entire diplomatic service." White accepted the appointment after discussing it with Roosevelt and Lodge, both of whom expressed their approval.

The Republican view of this delegation was that it consisted of Wilson, three Wilson yes-men, and White, who would surely be overruled any time he disagreed with the rest of them.

Republicans were particularly incensed by the presence of House, who had no formal position in the US government and was seen by Republicans as mostly a political crony.

Wilson and his entourage traveled to France aboard the SS *George Washington*, a luxury passenger liner built by Norddeutscher-Lloyd that had carried passengers across the Atlantic for many years before the war. It had been seized by the US government in 1917 and used as a troop transport. *George Washington* arrived at the French port of Brest, escorted by an international battleship squadron on December 13, 1918. Wilson considered the date auspicious. He believed 13 was his lucky number, because it was the number of letters in his name. He got a hero's welcome in Brest and another when he reached Paris the following day. It must have been exhilarating, although Wilson admitted privately that Europe's problems couldn't be solved with a wave of a hand and wondered whether the outcome of the peace conference would prove disappointing to the people of the continent.

In Paris, Wilson met with House, who was already in Europe. The two of them agreed to make the League of Nations the first order of business at the conference. House hoped this might mean Wilson would be content to negotiate that part of the treaty and then return home, leaving the rest of the work to others. Wilson met with Clemenceau and they hit it off pretty well. The previously doubtful French prime minister declared afterward he was glad Wilson would be part of the negotiations.

And speaking of the negotiations, when are we going to get started? Wilson wanted to begin at once, but he was told that delegations from all over the world were pouring into Paris from old nations, like Greece and Japan, new nations like Czechoslovakia and Lithuania, and wannabe nations like Ireland and Armenia. The French foreign ministry would need time to sort it all out and get the talks organized. In the meanwhile, Wilson was urged to visit Britain and Italy, which he did. He spent the period between Christmas and New Year's in Britain, where he stayed at Buckingham Palace, met Lloyd George, and took a side trip to Carlisle, the birthplace of his ancestors. Then it was on to Rome, where Wilson addressed the Italian Parliament and became the first US President to meet with the Pope, Benedict XV.

It was during his sojourn in Italy that Wilson received the news of the death of Theodore Roosevelt. He released a statement saying, "As President he awoke the Nation to the dangers of private control which lurked in our financial and industrial systems. It was by thus arresting the attention and stimulating the purpose of the country that he opened the way for subsequent necessary and beneficent reforms."

But we might ask, what effect will Roosevelt's death have on Wilson's efforts in Europe? On the one hand, Roosevelt was one of Wilson's most outspoken critics and likely would have advocated for a punitive peace. On the other hand, Roosevelt had supported the concept of international arbitration since before anyone ever heard of Woodrow Wilson, and Roosevelt could have been counted on at least to back the US taking on a larger role in world affairs,



although it was also true that he'd spoken against Wilson's concept of a League of Nations. On balance, it's difficult to say whether Wilson's cause was strengthened or weakened by Roosevelt's passing.

[music: Ravel, *Rapsodie espagnole*]

The day after Wilson returned to Paris, January 12, 1919, the peace conference began. Most of the work of the conference was done by Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Orlando, their foreign ministers, and two Japanese representatives, making a Council of Ten. Later in the process, the Ten would be whittled down to the Big Four. Most of their time was spent hearing pleadings from representatives of other states or would-be states, asking for their rights and interests to be acknowledged in the treaty.

I don't intend to give you a blow-by-blow account of the proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference. They were long and complex and would take many episodes and it would in good measure duplicate the work of Zack Twamley over at *When Diplomacy Fails*. Zack did a day-by-day account on the hundredth anniversary of each day. I mean to approach the treaty differently, and I'll explain what I intend to do later, but before that, I do want to cover the topic that Wilson insisted be the first subject of the negotiations: The League of Nations.

It is difficult to talk to a modern audience about the League of Nations. In our time, its very name is a byword for weakness, ineffectuality, disappointment, and failure. So much so that a future generation, rather than reform it, is going to construct an entirely new organization to replace it. Lord Robert Cecil, the 53-year old British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who began circulating Cabinet papers on a possible post-war league of nations in 1916 and who will play a role in developing the League at the Paris Peace Conference, will live long enough to speak the most famous words ever uttered at the League of Nations in 1946. Sadly, those words will be: "The League is dead; long live the United Nations!"

A common misconception about the League of Nations is that it was Woodrow Wilson's brainchild, his personal plan for ensuring a post-war peace. The idea of an international organization to arbitrate international disputes and band together to oppose war is nothing new. It originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the cause has been taken up by a number of organizations and discussed at the two Hague conferences in 1899 and 1907. The horror of the Great War only underscored the arguments of peace advocates that war had become too expensive and too dangerous and it was time the nations of the world came together to end it.

Woodrow Wilson included a call for arbitration of international disputes and for disarmament as two of his Fourteen Points, but again, these were not new ideas. He was distilling the best ideas that were already being raised in the Allied nations regarding the shape of the postwar world. If Wilson's name has become intertwined with the League of Nations concept, it is because of his passionate advocacy for it, and especially his insistence that the League be part of the peace treaty, and indeed that it be the first topic discussed at the peace conference.

There were many, in America and in Europe, who saw the League as a separate issue from the peace treaty, and believed that peace should be secured first, and then the League negotiated. But Wilson saw it exactly the other way around. For him, the League was the most important element of the peace talks. Get the League right, and none of the other questions were nearly as important. Because, let's face it, the 1919 peace conference is unlikely to come up with the best possible solution to every single problem before it. But if at some future date it became apparent that some of the peace terms had been badly decided, if an unworkable border had been drawn, if reparation payments had been set too high or too low, if the rights of some minority group had been neglected or overlooked, well, so long as there was a functioning League of Nations, any such error could be brought to the League's attention and corrected. But if there were no League, or if it were not functioning properly, then what hope would there be that the rest of the peace treaty would hold together? Thus, argued Wilson, the League is central to the peace agreement.

Lloyd George supported the League concept too, though not with Wilson's passion. The idea was popular with the publics in all the Allied nations. Clemenceau did not oppose the idea exactly, although he was skeptical of it, saying things like, "I like the League, but I do not believe in it."

Wilson's insistence on the League as the top priority made the other leaders at the conference a little nervous. What kind of league did Wilson have in mind, exactly? Was it to be an alliance? A club for nations? A conference that met as needed when a crisis arose? And how would it work its will? By moral authority only? Would it impose blockades or economic sanctions? Would it have the authority to take its members to war? Would it have its own standing military?

The good news for them is that Wilson came into the peace talks with no fixed plan as to how the League should be organized or how it should operate. Wilson seemed to believe the idea of the League was so sensible that it would be a simple matter for the delegations at the conference to work out the details of the organization together. When a committee was formed at the peace talks to put together a blueprint for the League, Wilson was naturally made its chair and he confidently predicted it would only take a few weeks.

To everyone's surprise, he was right. But in truth, this is more to the credit of Lord Cecil and especially of Jan Smuts, the South African general and foreign minister, who had taken the liberty of preparing a plan for the proposed league even before the conference began. Smuts, like Wilson, was a true believer. He agreed that the League should be the first business of the peace conference.

Wilson read the Smuts plan and he liked it. In essence, the League would consist of an assembly of all member nations, large and small alike getting one vote each. Then there would be a council, a sort of executive committee, of nine. Five of the nine seats would be held permanently by the five major Allied powers. The other four seats would rotate among the other members of

the League. There would be a permanent Secretariat of experts. There would also be a Permanent Court of International Justice and an International Labor Organization.

The League would not have its own standing military force, which is what the French wanted, but it did include a commitment from each member to respect the sovereignty of every other member. Its arbitration power would not be compulsory, and it could act only upon a unanimous vote. The draft terms were ready on February 13, another auspicious date, at least to Woodrow Wilson.

This was the most important of the Fourteen Points, as far as he was concerned. The peace talks would continue long after this day, but Woodrow Wilson would never again fight for anything as hard as he fought for the League.

You and I know that the League is doomed, but in that glorious moment in 1919, those present could be forgiven for believing that a new chapter in human history was beginning. The Concert of Europe, with its informal system of conferences had kept the peace in Europe, more or less, for a century, more or less. Now, with a new and more formalized system in place, there was reason to hope that the late war would be the last war, and a new dawn was breaking, of international cooperation and broad-based prosperity.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks for listening, and I'd especially like to thank James for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons, who are listeners just like you, help keep the podcast going, and if you'd like to help out, visit the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com) and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

Okay, about the next phase of the podcast. I might have just continued telling the story of the Paris Peace Conference chronologically from here, as the conferees dealt with each one of the plethora of international problems that came before them. But I decided against doing that for two reasons. First, as I said, my buddy Zack already covered the conference in great detail in just this way over as his podcast, *When Diplomacy Fails*, and if you want a detailed, blow-by-blow account of the conference, that's the place you should go. For me to do it all over again feels redundant.

But second, and more important, I feel that's not the right approach for this podcast, because I want to look at not only the discussions held in Paris, but how they affected things on the ground in various parts of the world. Even if I covered the conference first, I'd still want to examine the implementation of all those decisions afterward, and I'd be constantly referring back to the previous conference episodes. We'd be looking at Austria-Hungary, say, and I'd have to begin by reminding you what was discussed in Paris that I covered in episode such-and-such, and then proceed with a discussion of what happened in the implementation.

That strikes me as inefficient. Instead of doing the conference all at once and then moving on to its real-world impact, I'd like to borrow instead from a different history podcast, Robin Pearson's

*History of Byzantium*. After every century of Byzantine history, Robin pauses the narrative to do a survey of the world, inside and around the Empire at that moment of history, and how it's changed in the past hundred years.

The very first episode of this podcast was a quickie survey of the world of 1901, and so I've decided that now, 175 episodes in, it's time to take another survey of the world as it stands in 1919. We'll take a look at the world's nations and regions and examine how they were affected by the Great War and the peace agreements that followed. I intend to cover pretty much the whole planet, and this will also give me the opportunity to fill in the gaps in some places that have been overlooked or undercovered in the podcast so far. *Cough-India-cough*. I'm calling it The History of the Twentieth Century 1919 World Tour. (I wonder how that would look on a T-shirt.)

I don't know how long this is going to take exactly, but I can guarantee you a minimum of 25 episodes. After we finish, we'll move on into the 1920s and the Jazz Age. Next week is a bye week for the podcast, but I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we begin the 1919 World Tour in, yes, Austria-Hungary—seems as good a place to start as any—the multi-ethnic empire that is about to dissolve into a whole gaggle of new ethnic states. That's going to take us three episodes to consider, and it begins in two weeks' time, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Among the many national groups that petitioned the Council of Four for recognition of their rights to self-determination was a group of young, Bolshevik-leaning Vietnamese men living in Paris who were publishing articles calling for independence for Vietnam. They received no reply from the peace conference. Sadly, the Paris Peace Conference was notably cool to the idea of self-determination for any peoples in Asia or Africa, but among this Vietnamese group is a 29-year old pastry chef and merchant seaman who has been knocking around Britain, France, and the United States for the past ten years. His name is Ho Chi Minh, and I point him out to you now because you can expect to hear more about him later.

[music: Closing Theme]