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The Centennial of the Treaty of Lausanne:

Turkey, Switzerland, the Great Powers and a Soviet Diplomat's Assassination

by Thomas Quinn Marabello

The year 2023 marks the centennial of the Treaty of Lausanne. This treaty that many readers may not have heard of created the Republic of Turkey. More than that, it was a conference held in Switzerland where the Great Powers created new borders and made decisions about refugees, access to what are known as the “Turkish Straits” and led to British and French control of Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. The new mandate system showed that colonialism was still the mindset of most Europeans, along with a fear of Russia, which had become the Soviet Union. The conference and treaty that are being reexamined 100 years later had a great impact on Turkey, the Middle East, and especially Armenians, Kurds, and Greeks. It led to the rise of Turkey as a major global power that would join NATO three years after it was formed in 1949, and continues to play a major role in international affairs. The Treaty of Lausanne marked the birth of a new nation and essentially European colonial rule in most of the Middle East for several decades. It was the last treaty where the major European powers dominated and made decisions on the future of a non-Western state. In addition, the assassination of a Soviet diplomat by a Swiss-Russian man during the conference led to decades of non-relations between the new country of the Soviet Union and the Swiss Confederation.

The roots of the Conference and Treaty of Lausanne date to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. “After the conclusion of the war, a new Near East arose from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, shaped and dominated by British and French power,



1923 post card of Lausanne.

Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.

but seething with underlying tensions of local origin.”¹ This new Near East would be dominated by a new independent nation of Turkey, along with Britain and France controlling other lands that had been part of the Ottoman Empire. The mandate system that was created as part of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles was a new form of colonialism that arose after World War I and would have a great impact on the Middle East. The League of Nations was supposed to supervise the mandates, and the mandatory powers were to administer the state they were given and prepare it for eventual independence. “At the San Remo Conference held a few months before Sèvres, Britain and France had shared out the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East between themselves, using the League of Nations’ mandate system as fig leaf. The Treaty of Sèvres partitioned the Empire’s Anatolian heartland. Only a small interior rump state was to remain after Greece, Italy, and France had occupied their assigned regions.”² In addition, the Aegean islands went

¹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 193.

² “The Treaty of Lausanne,” The Lausanne Project. <https://thelausanneproject.com/history-lausanne-treaty/>.



Treaty of Sèvres. Credit: MediaWiki Commons.

to Greece, the Dodecanese islands to Italy, and Armenian independence was recognized.³ The Treaty of Sèvres signed in August 1920 in France allowed the Great Powers and Greece to gain lands in Anatolia but it would be short-lived, due to the Turkish Wars of Independence and victory by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁴ Turkish nationalists viewed this treaty as harsh and refused to accept its terms, which included the new nations of Armenia and Kurdistan.⁵ “In Anatolia, the Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha [Atatürk] ferociously resisted partition of the Anatolian core of the empire. Their success in overturning the peace settlement breezily imposed by the Allies at the end of the Great War is an astonishing episode in world history, and one which has received far less attention than it deserves.”⁶ With military victory by Turkish nationalists, including expelling Greek and French forces from Anatolia, the Western powers that had taken

³ Erik Goldstein, “The British Official Mind and the Lausanne Conference, 1922–23,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 14, no. 2 (2003), 189.

⁴ Ilia Xypolia, “Imperial Bending of Rules: The British Empire, the Treaty of Lausanne, and Cypriot Immigration to Turkey,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 32:4 (2021), 674.

⁵ Hanioglu, 196.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

lands in the Treaty of Sèvres were now cornered. Anatolia would not be partitioned as Britain, France and Italy had planned. The Eastern Question would be concluded with a new treaty to revise what had been decided at Sèvres two years earlier.

The Conference of Lausanne opened in November 1922 in the Swiss city on Lake Geneva. “Lausanne was chosen primarily due to Swiss neutrality, but also because it was easily accessible by the Orient Express train which linked Paris with Istanbul.”⁷ The Great Powers and other nations convened there to deal with Turkey and put an end to the “Eastern Question.”⁸ The Eastern Question had been a focus of European powers due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, and a desire to control trade routes or territories in that area. Turkey’s geographic location was vital for international trade and the countries with interests there wanted to make sure that they would have access and good relations with the new dominant country in the region. The British Cabinet agreed a conference should be held to discuss a Near East peace settlement to involve all interested parties.⁹ Opinions varied about who should be allowed at the conference.¹⁰ Britain, France, Italy, and Greece all had interests in the former Ottoman Empire and had been involved with the Treaty of Sèvres, so they would certainly be involved in the negotiations. American participation was considered desirable.¹¹ “Although the United States had never declared war against Turkey, the Department of State decided to send observers to Lausanne to present the American position on subjects of common concern and to protect American interests in the Near East.”¹² Since the end of World War I, the U.S. had become a global power and had played a major role in negotiating the Treaty of Versailles. Lord Curzon of Britain who would chair the conference did not want the Soviet

⁷ Julie Ezvan, “Kurds Demonstrate On Lausanne Treaty Centenary,” *Barron’s*, July 22, 2023. <https://www.barrons.com/news/kurds-rally-to-mark-lausanne-treaty-centenary-5f452aac>.

⁸ Xypolia, 674.

⁹ Goldstein, 193.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹² Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945*, ed. Walter Johnson, Vol. 1. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 481.



Benito Mussolini, the new prime minister of Italy, photographed at the conference's opening. Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.

Union or Bulgaria to participate.¹³ Representatives from the Soviet Union were allowed to be involved with negotiating the issue of the Turkish Straits, but did not negotiate in other areas and did not sign the treaty. “Normally a conference is presided over by a representative of the host country. The president of the Swiss Federal Council did indeed open the conference on November 20, 1922, but Switzerland had always made it clear that it would not preside, though it was happy to facilitate matters by providing an acceptable venue. Britain, France, and Italy had agreed prior to the opening of the conference that the chair would rotate between themselves, as the organizing powers.”¹⁴ The rotation never occurred, as Lord Curzon seized the chair after Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini and French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré left the ceremonial conference opening.¹⁵

¹³ Goldstein, 194.

¹⁴ Ibid., 200.

¹⁵ Ibid., 201.

The main negotiators at Lausanne included Lord George Curzon, the British foreign secretary; İsmet İnönü Pasha* of Turkey, a military leader with no diplomatic experience; Eugenio Camillo Garroni, an Italian diplomat; Camille Barrère, a French diplomat and ambassador to Italy; and Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos of Greece. Other key figures who would be involved in parts of the conference were U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland Joseph Grew; Richard Washburn Child, U.S. Ambassador to Italy and head of the American conference delegation; Rıza Nur of Turkey; British Ambassador Horace Rumbold; Maurice Bompard of France who replaced Barrère; and Georgy Chicherin, Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs and Vatslav Vorovsky, a Soviet diplomat. “When Swiss Federal President Rudolf Haab inaugurated the Conference in the late afternoon of Monday, November 20, 1922, in Lausanne’s Montbenon Casino, he stressed the importance of a peace that would also satisfy the needs of the losers.”¹⁶ Haab’s words fell on deaf ears as non-Turks such as Armenians and Kurds forced into the new republic would face persecution that continues to this day, while countries that lost battles to Turkey, such as Greece and France, did well when the final treaty was signed. Also, Ambassador Grew wrote in his diary on November 21, 1922, “I sympathized with İsmet’s position: he represented a victorious nation but was being given no consideration whatever in the organization of the Conference. But he made a mistake in objecting to every trifle; he would have done better to pick out important points and stand pat on them.”¹⁷ Early on, Turkey was treated like a colony that was not equal to the Great Powers. Turkey was not allowed to chair the conference or be involved with its organization. İsmet did not make any friends by repeatedly opposing ideas and proposals. Since Lord Curzon chaired the conference and asserted himself early on, he would dominate the negotiations on behalf of the Western powers and worked to protect British imperial interests in the Middle East.

*Pasha was a title and rank often given to Turkish military commanders. Atatürk and İnönü both received it and it often appears after their last name.

¹⁶ Hans-Lukas Kieser, *When Democracy Died: The Middle East’s Enduring Peace of Lausanne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 137.

¹⁷ Grew, 492.

The Leading Diplomats at the Lausanne Conference



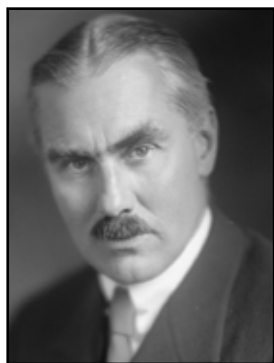
*İsmet İnönü Pasha
of Turkey*



*Lord George Curzon
President of the Lausanne
Conference & British
Foreign Secretary*



*Eleftherios Venizelos
of Greece*



*Joseph Grew
U.S. Ambassador
to Switzerland*



*Eugenio Camillo Garroni
of Italy*



*Camille Barrère
of France*

All images credit: MediaWiki Commons.



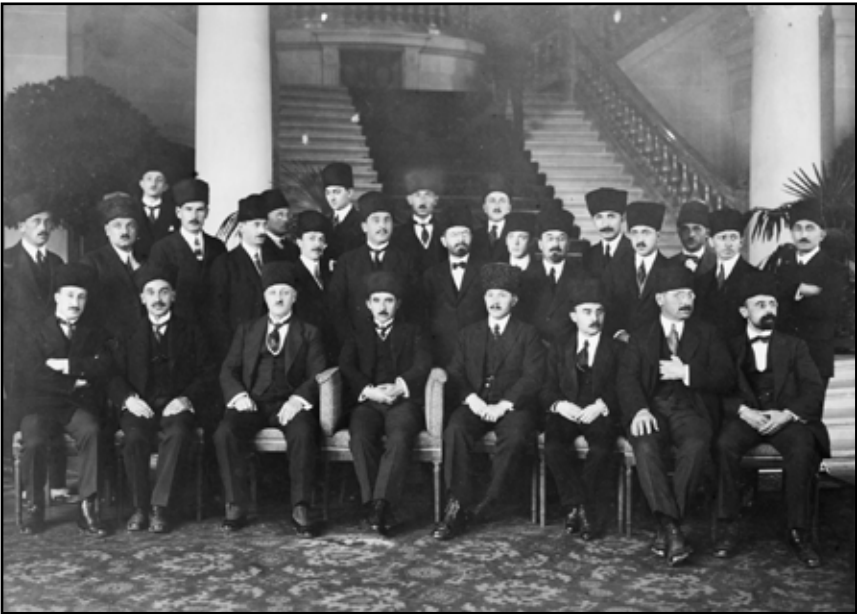
The Beau-Rivage Palace opened in 1861. This grand luxury hotel was constructed in the Art Déco and neo-Baroque styles. The Treaty of Lausanne was negotiated there. Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.



Château d' Ouchy on Lake Geneva where many people involved with the treaty stayed and where some conference sessions were held. Built on the site of an old medieval castle, it was rebuilt from 1889-1893 and turned into a hotel. Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.



The Palais de Rumine is where the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on July 24, 1923. A Florentine Renaissance style palace, it was completed in 1904 as a public building gifted by Gabriel de Rumine, son of Russian nobles, who left funds to the city of Lausanne. Today it houses museums and a library of the University of Lausanne. Credit: MediaWiki Commons.



Delegation of Turks sent to Lausanne.

Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.

As diplomats and observers gathered in Lausanne, many were thinking of the Treaty of Versailles that had ended World War I three years earlier. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination and the creation of the League of Nations were on the minds of many and would come up during the conference. İsmet İnönü mentioned Wilson's principles and said Turkey wanted independence and freedom like all nations.¹⁸ However, Turkey was not willing to give Kurds or Armenians self-determination and the Great Powers would back down over this issue. Fascism was also beginning and the new prime minister of Italy, Benito Mussolini, was welcomed in Lausanne as a prodigal son.¹⁹ He had emigrated to Switzerland in 1902 and briefly studied at the University of Lausanne in 1904, before returning to Italy. Mussolini only stayed for the conference opening and nine months later, sent troops to occupy the Greek island of Corfu.²⁰ The conference coincided with the rise of dictators and spread of Fascism, eventually destroying the peace that had been achieved with the Treaty of Versailles. Lausanne failed to meet the utopian challenge of "world peace."²¹

The Lausanne Conference had many issues to discuss and deal with. Formal diplomatic negotiations divided between three commissions: Territorial and Military Questions; Regime of Foreigners; and Economic and Financial Questions.²² The commissions considered where Turkey's borders with Greece and the British mandate of Iraq should lie; convention governing the transit of warships through the Turkish Straits; reparations, refugees, and Ottoman Empire debt.²³ "The Conference's first weeks led to heated exchanges when fundamental questions like population transfer, minority rights, and the establishment of an Armenian home were addressed."²⁴ One of the biggest decisions that involved many nations was access to the Turkish Straits (which includes the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles). "Then as now, the Straits are the maritime entrance

¹⁸ Kieser, 143.

¹⁹ Ibid., 132.

²⁰ Ibid., 135.

²¹ Ibid., 272.

²² "The Treaty of Lausanne," The Lausanne Project.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kieser, 143.

to Istanbul from the Mediterranean as well as the Black Sea. Being in possession of both shores of the Straits, Ankara can today easily control and close the narrow corridor between both Seas.”²⁵ This issue was the one area in which the Soviet Union was allowed to have a say. “The Constantinople agreements of 1915 between Great Britain, France, and Russia, which awarded the Ottoman Straits to Russia (on the condition that Istanbul remain a free port), became a dead letter following the Bolshevik Revolution.”²⁶ Russia had lost its control of the Straits due to its communist revolution and withdrawal from World War I in March 1918. Now as the Soviet Union, they hoped to regain access to this important maritime waterway close to their border. They demanded that the Straits be permanently open to vessels of commerce but closed to war vessels.²⁷ According to the December 6, 1922, diary entry by U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew:

“Lord Curzon immediately exposed the Allied plan which, with certain qualifications, comprised demilitarization of the Straits under an international commission of control with one member each of the following powers: England, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United States, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Turkey, the Turkish member to be permanent President of the Commission; the Straits to be open to merchant and warships both in time of peace and in time of war.”²⁸

Ambassador Richard Washburn Child, who headed the U.S. delegation at Lausanne, responded with the following statement:

“We cannot accept the position that the future of commerce in the Black Sea is the exclusive affair of the States bordering upon it. We assert that it is the concern of all the nations of the earth. It is untenable that any one nation by the virtue of geographical position should hold the power of depriving every other nation of these rights. The unlimited control of the Straits and the Black Sea by any one nation is against the policy of the world.”²⁹

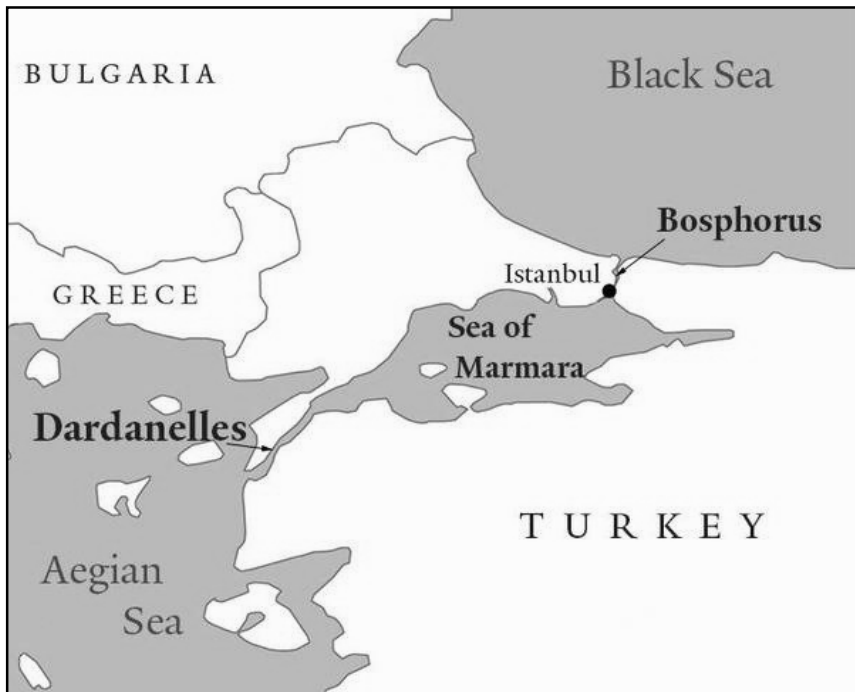
²⁵ Kieser, 145.

²⁶ Hanioglu, 192.

²⁷ Kieser, 146.

²⁸ Grew, 506.

²⁹ Ibid., 507.



The Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara, and Dardanelles are known collectively as the Turkish Straits. Credit: <http://iilss.net/navigational-regimes-of-particular-straits-bosporus-and-dardanelles-case-study/>

The Americans' position would be the one adopted by the conference. Article 23 of the Treaty of Lausanne states: "The High Contracting Parties are agreed to recognise and declare the principle of freedom of transit and of navigation, by sea and by air, in time of peace as in time of war, in the strait of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, and the Bosphorus, as prescribed in the separate Convention signed this day, regarding the regime of the Straits."³⁰ This was a win for some nations, except the major powers and the Soviet Union, that wanted to control and limit who could go through the Straits. Turkey regained military control of the Straits in 1936 with the Montreux Convention, which still stands today. Fears of Fascist Italy expanding in the region led to this change and it proved to be a smart one as the Soviet Union later challenged the

³⁰ "Treaty of Lausanne," July 24, 1923. https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne.



İsmet İnönü (signing, left), Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1921 and Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos (signing, right), sign the clause of the Treaty of Lausanne on the population transfers on January 31, 1923. Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.

Montreux agreement, leading Turkey to ally with the United States and join NATO during the early years of the Cold War.

The next major issue that the conference had to deal with were minorities and population transfers. Before 1914, there was no ethnic majority in the Ottoman Empire (Muslims included Turks, Kurds, Arabs, and others).³¹ The Turkish government wanted Christians to leave Anatolia for Greece and then have Muslims from Greece resettle in Turkey.³² The majority in Turkey's National Assembly believed non-Muslims did not have a place in their country anymore and that an exchange of populations with Christians in Greece was the solution.³³ But this was not something that got support from the Great Powers at Lausanne. The Turkish delegation understood that removing Christians including Armenians from their new country was a no-go.³⁴ British, French, and Italian delegates argued in the

³¹ Kieser, 151.

³² Ibid., 148.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 150.

Sub-Commission on Minorities for a modest home for Armenians that would be an autonomous province under Turkish sovereignty.³⁵ Riza Nur of Turkey believed Jews and Armenians were and had to be “eternal nomads” without any rightful claim to a homeland.³⁶ The Treaty of Sèvres had projected independence for Armenia.³⁷ No one at Lausanne could agree on a practical solution for Armenia and so the Great Powers decided to allow the League of Nations to deal with it.³⁸ The League never would and the effects of this failure to help Armenia still resonates today. Over a million Armenians had been killed in the genocide that coincided with World War I and like Jews who experienced their own genocide during World War II, they wanted a homeland as partial compensation for all they had lost. The powers at Lausanne were not willing to take a hard line with Turkey on this issue and instead made their lives easier by sending it to the League of Nations. “The Lausanne Conference made the small Armenian people the twentieth century’s victim par excellence. Armenians were not only robbed of their homeland, their home, their possessions—and, for a million—their very lives.”³⁹

The other minority group that would be greatly impacted by the Treaty of Lausanne were the Kurds. An issue that had to be decided was whether the city of Mosul would go to Turkey or British-controlled Iraq. Mosul had been part of the Ottoman Empire and the Turks wanted it since the majority of its inhabitants were Muslims.⁴⁰ Curzon argued that the Kurds who lived there were of an Iranian, not Turkish race.⁴¹ Britain opposed the creation of a Kurdish state.⁴² Nur believed Mosul was necessary for Turkey, since it had oil and also because he feared Kurdistan could potentially unite with the Armenians.⁴³ However, according to Ambassador Grew, Ismet seemed open to allowing the

³⁵ Kieser, 158.

³⁶ Ibid., 168.

³⁷ Ibid., 158.

³⁸ Ibid., 160.

³⁹ Ibid., 169.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁴¹ Ibid., 183.

⁴² Ali Othman, “The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923”. *Middle East Studies*. Vol. 33, (1997): 521.

⁴³ Kieser, 184.

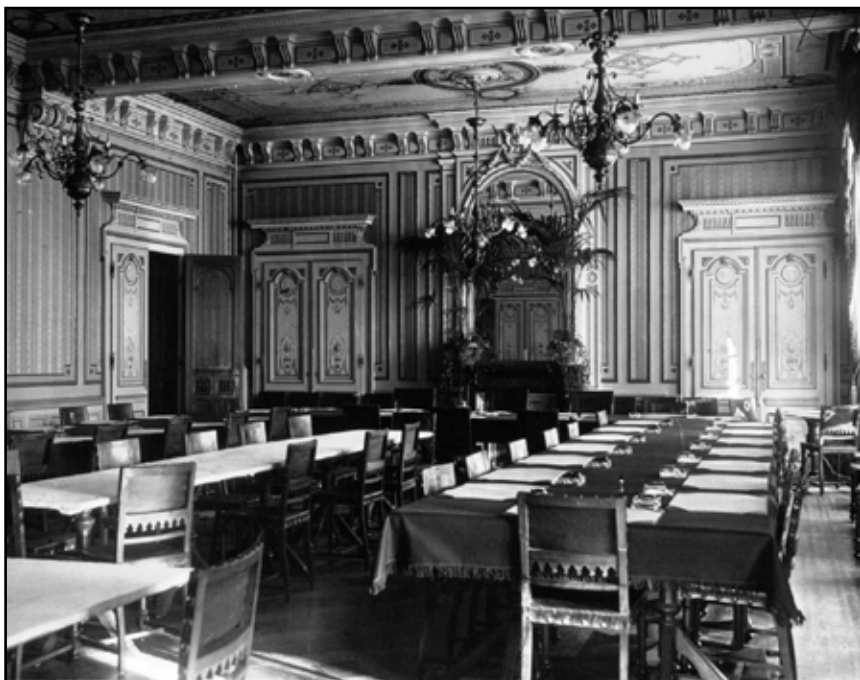
British to have Mosul. “. . . I do not attach too much importance to what the Turks say after a good dinner. I am told that Ismet, under the warming effects of good champagne, has three times told Lord Curzon that the British could keep Mosul. It is also proverbial at the Conference that on the days following such dinners the Turks are more obstinate than ever and simply say no to everything.”⁴⁴ Were Nur and Ismet playing off each other, did the Turkish government want Mosul, or did Ismet not care that much about the province and who controlled it? “Britain’s new official stand on Kurdish independence was dictated primarily by her desire to appease Turkey, whose co-operation was needed in Britain’s grand strategy to isolate Bolshevik Russia.”⁴⁵ The British government had gone from supporting an independent Kurdistan in the Treaty of Sèvres to changing course because their interests had changed. This made sense, considering the perceived threat of the Soviet Union and desire to not engage with them or see communism spread into Turkey or elsewhere in the region. In the end, a compromise was agreed to that after one year of signing the Treaty of Lausanne, if the matter of Mosul could not be resolved, then it would be decided by the League of Nations.⁴⁶ In 1926, the League of Nations confirmed Mosul belonged to Iraq, which was a win for Britain, since it was a territorial part of their mandate and they could control the province’s oil fields.

Negotiations at Lausanne were disrupted by the January 1923 French invasion of the Ruhr Valley, because Germany had defaulted on their World War I reparation payments. There was pressure to reach a final agreement so the Great Powers could go home and deal with the situation between France and Germany. Ismet would not agree to economic and judicial clauses in the draft treaty that Britain, France, and Italy had decided upon. According to Grew, the French defected which led to the failure and end of the conference. There was evidence they would try to deal separately with the Turks, holding out negotiations for loans as a bait. He also accused them of breaking the

⁴⁴ Grew, 522.

⁴⁵ Othman, 531.

⁴⁶ Kieser, 184.



Conference Room, Hôtel Beau-Rivage.

Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.

solid front between the Great Powers, giving the Turks new strength”⁴⁷ Nur wrote in Lausanne “The idea of Turkey having the capacity to live has not yet entered the minds of Europeans.”⁴⁸ The Great Powers wanted to decide what type of government and institutions Turkey would have, and that meant a Western-style constitutional system. They did not care about Turkey’s culture or what their people might want for their nation. However, Turkey had an upper hand with its successful military victories after the Treaty of Sèvres, along with being in a prime geographic location. The conference adjourned on February 4, 1923.

Two months later, everyone returned to Lausanne to try and achieve a final settlement and acceptable treaty. Horace Rumbold replaced Curzon as head of the British delegation. Ambassador Grew wrote upon his return on April 21, “Montagna* feels that Curzon and

⁴⁷ Grew, 540, 554.

⁴⁸ Kieser, 196.

Rumbold ruined the chances of peace at the last meeting as they did not understand how to deal with the Turks; they had no knowledge of bargaining or pliability and gave away financial concessions without getting anything in return.”⁴⁹ Ambassador Rumbold believed the Turks should be seen and not heard.⁵⁰ That would no longer be possible since the Turks had refused to sign the treaty they were offered in February. “Six main questions were to be addressed in Lausanne’s sequel: reparations; the Capitulations; the Ottoman public debt; concessions to Western companies; amnesty and return; and the Allies’ evacuation of Istanbul.”⁵¹ The biggest issue was over reparations which Turkey sought from Greece. A compromise proposal that Turkey accept Karagatch** from the Greeks in lieu of reparations was accepted by Ismet and Venizelos.⁵²

On May 10, 1923, a murder sent shockwaves through Lausanne. Vatslav Vorovsky, a delegate from the Soviet Union, was assassinated in his hotel restaurant by Maurice Conradi, a young Swiss man born in St. Petersburg, Russia, who fought for the Russian Imperial Army in World War I. Conradi’s family originated from the canton of Graubünden in southeastern Switzerland where they had owned a confectionary factory. His father and uncle were murdered by the Bolsheviks.⁵³ Maurice was a White Army officer who fled to Switzerland and met up with Russian expatriates there.⁵⁴ He was determined to kill a Bolshevik and the right target came along with the Lausanne Conference. Ambassador Vatslav Vorovsky of Italy was designated by Georgy Chicherin, the people’s commissar of foreign affairs of the Soviet Union, to be the Soviet representative when the conference

*Giulio Montagna was the Italian minister plenipotentiary in Athens and chair of the Lausanne conference subcommittee on minority rights.

⁴⁹ Grew, 558.

⁵⁰ Goldstein, 199-200.

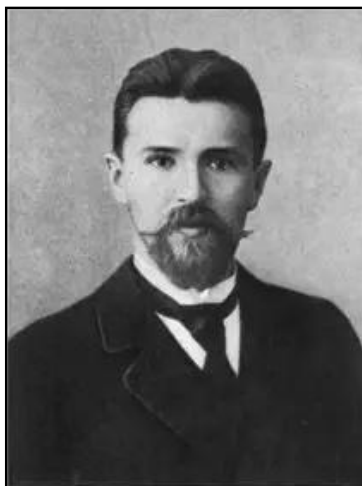
⁵¹ Kieser, 202.

⁵² Grew, 575.

⁵³ The Conradi Affair, Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland. <https://www.dodis.ch/en/conradi-affair>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

**Karagatch (Karaağaç in Turkish) was a neighborhood of the city of Edirne (or Adrianople) on the border with Greece. Edirne was the capital of the Ottoman Empire from 1369-1453. It was part of Greece from 1920-23.



Ambassador Vatslav Vorovsky



Maurice Conradi

resumed in April. Chicherin, like the rest of the diplomats, had left Lausanne when the first conference adjourned in February. “The Turkish representative, again Ismet Pasha, demanded that the Russians be admitted to the deliberations. The British and the French refused, and when they learned that the Swiss had granted Vorovsky a visa, they were infuriated.”⁵⁵ Vorovsky declared that Switzerland was violating its principles of neutrality and that the Swiss government was not being very hospitable.⁵⁶ Protests and demonstrations against Vorovsky began in Lausanne soon after his arrival on April 27. On May 10, Conradi arrived in Lausanne by train, having secured financial support for his mission to kill Vorovsky from Arcadius Polunin, a former White Army officer who lived in Geneva.⁵⁷

Conradi entered the Hôtel Cécil dining room on the evening of May 10, 1923. “Vorovsky was sitting just a few meters away. After two years of civil war in Russia, living with death almost daily, Conradi had no trouble accepting the thought of committing a murder.”⁵⁸ After Vorovsky, his press chief, and secretary, were finishing their meal,

⁵⁵ Alfred Erich Senn, *Assassination in Switzerland: The Murder of Vatslav Vorovsky*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.



The Hôtel Cécil in Lausanne where Vorovsky was assassinated on May 10, 1923. It became a Swiss hospital in 1931. Credit: MediaWiki Commons.

Conradi walked over to their table, pulled out a gun and said, “That’s for the Communists,” and fired a bullet into Vorovsky’s head, killing him instantly.⁵⁹ Conradi told his waiter to call the police and declared “I am Swiss; I have done a good thing because the Russians have ruined Europe. I have killed three Russians.”⁶⁰ Vorovsky’s assassination caused an uproar and was denounced by the Soviet Union’s government as a conspiracy by the West against them. “The Swiss, anxious to play down the assassination, insisted on regarding it as an act of personal vengeance.”⁶¹ Some Russians believed that Curzon and the British were behind the murder, and approximately 500,000 people marched on Red Square in Moscow, demanding death for Conradi.⁶² Vorovsky was buried in the Kremlin Wall Necropolis in Moscow’s Red Square. An economic boycott was issued by the Soviet government and three months later, Conradi was charged with premeditated murder.

⁵⁹ Senn, 4-5.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁶¹ Ibid., 53.

⁶² Ibid., 81.

A trial was held in November 1923, and journalists came from all over to report on it. Conradi had a lot of sympathy from the Swiss who admired what he had done, according to Ambassador Grew.⁶³ A jury found Conradi responsible for Vorovsky's murder, but split on whether he was responsible for the attacks on the Soviet press chief and secretary who survived the shooting.⁶⁴ The judge, who had discretionary power, acquitted both Conradi and Polunin.⁶⁵ Conradi went on to serve in the French Foreign Legion, then retired to his ancestral home town of Andeer where he died in 1947. Chicherin said Swiss bourgeoisie were a "league of murderers" and henceforth so far as Russia was concerned, "Switzerland does not exist."⁶⁶ Conradi's acquittal infuriated the Soviet Union, impacting their relations with the Swiss government for decades. Relations between the two nations were not normalized until 1946 and the Soviets successfully opposed having the United Nations headquartered in Switzerland, in part due to Vorovsky's assassination some twenty three years earlier.

"The assassination of Vatslav Vorovsky in 1923 holds an important place in the martyrology of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Because it took place in Switzerland, a bastion of Western capitalism, Soviet commentators have repeatedly pointed to it as a craven effort at revenge by a defeated Old Regime, allegedly supported by Western imperialists who themselves feared the socialist future."⁶⁷

Turning back to the Lausanne Conference, negotiations continued and were successful as Turkey and the Great Powers sought to secure a final peace agreement. Greece and Turkey agreed to relocate most Muslims and Greeks who had remained in each other's country since the Turkish Wars of Independence. In his diary, Grew wrote on July 17:

"The successful conclusion of the Lausanne Conference has now been achieved. It is too early, doubtless, and we are too close to the stress and turmoil of negotiation to value

⁶³ Senn, 179.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 186.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 187.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 192.

⁶⁷ Ibid., vii.

the result secured at its true worth, in all its many beneficial aspects. But we need feel no hesitation in describing this result as momentous. A long period of warfare and disturbance affecting the whole of the Near East has been brought to a close..."⁶⁸

The final treaty was signed on July 24, 1923, by the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, and Turkey. Turkey recognized the British annexation of Cyprus and all islands less than three miles from the Asiatic coast would remain under Turkish sovereignty.

Article 26 - "Turkey hereby recognises and accepts the frontiers of Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Roumania, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State and the Czechoslovak State..."

Article 38 - "Non-Moslem minorities will enjoy full freedom of movement and of emigration, subject to the measures applied, on the whole or on part of the territory, to all Turkish nationals, and which may be taken by the Turkish Government for national defence, or for the maintenance of public order."

Article 39 - "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Moslems."

Article 39 . . . - "All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law."

Article 44 - "Turkey agrees that, in so far as the preceding Articles of this Section affect non-Moslem nationals of Turkey, these provisions constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. They shall not be modified without the assent of the majority of the Council of the League of Nations."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Grew, 584-85.

⁶⁹ All Articles in the Treaty of Lausanne come from "Treaty of Lausanne," July 24, 1923. https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne.



Borders of Turkey set by the Treaty of Lausanne. Credit: MediaWiki Commons.

In addition, İnönü accepted British and French colonial rule for Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. That would of course have lasting consequences on the Middle East, as would the Treaty of Lausanne. The treaty created the new nation of Turkey, allowed unrestricted passage through the Turkish Straits, restricted the boundaries of Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey, and negatively impacted the Armenians, Kurds, and Arabs. Those three “minority groups” had followed President Woodrow Wilson’s idea of self-determination from the Treaty of Versailles, hoping to get their own nation-state. Instead, they would end up in Turkey and other new countries within the British and French mandates. “In Lausanne, Armenians, Assyrians, and Syrians had to give up their last hope of any form of League-supported democratic self-determination in their native land.”⁷⁰ The “unmixing” of Turkish and Greek populations forcibly displaced 1.5 million people.⁷¹

The Treaty of Lausanne was the most consequential treaty for the Eastern Mediterranean in the past century.⁷² It allowed nations to access the Turkish Straits, a big boon for commerce and led to a population increase. About 800,000 people moved to Turkey from 1923 to 1938.⁷³ Turkey would become a new country and major

⁷⁰ Kieser, 37.

⁷¹ “The Treaty of Lausanne,” The Lausanne Project.

⁷² Xypolia, 674.

⁷³ Ibid., 677.



power in the Middle East. While many view Turkey as a good ally that is pro-West, it has essentially been an autocracy since Atatürk's administration. "Above all, thanks to Lausanne and, twenty-nine years later, NATO, Ankara appeared to be a Western Power, even if it was not democratic."⁷⁴ Some have blamed this on the Great Powers who backed down over Armenia and allowed Turkey to do as it pleased. Appeasing Turkey was essential to preserving British imperial interests in the Middle East.⁷⁵ The Great Powers, especially Great Britain, were more interested in accessing oil and continuing to build up their empire with territory, than seeing Turkey become a Western democratic and capitalist nation-state. According to Grew, "Turkey agreed to assure full and complete protections of life and liberty to all inhabitants without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race, or religion."⁷⁶ It is also interesting to note that Atatürk's program of Westernization for Turkey included instituting a law code based on Switzerland's. In 1927, Joseph Grew became the first U.S. ambassador to Turkey, and Ismet İnönü succeeded Atatürk as president of Turkey in 1938.

The Conference and Treaty of Lausanne continues to impact people and nations one hundred years later. The centennial has brought about new books by historians, the Lausanne Project website,* an exhibit at the Musée Historique Lausanne (Lausanne Historical Museum), and demonstrations by Kurds against the treaty that has negatively impacted them since it was signed. On July 22, 2023, 6,000 Kurds from across Europe gathered in Lausanne to demonstrate against the treaty that is still in place.⁷⁷ The Kurdistan Cultural Centre in Lausanne said the treaty "enacted the separation of the Kurdish people between four states—Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria—whose democratic record over the past century is largely negative."⁷⁸ For Armenians, they still deal with a Turkey that refuses

*The Lausanne Project Website includes articles, photographs and podcasts – <https://thelausanneproject.com/>.

⁷⁴ Kieser, 244.

⁷⁵ Othman, 523.

⁷⁶ Grew, 587.

⁷⁷ Ezvan.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

to acknowledge the genocide they imposed from 1915-1917 and survivors who left as refugees for Russia and other parts of the Middle East. After the treaty, Armenians still living in Turkey were mostly expelled to the French mandate of Syria. “The Lausanne Conference made the small Armenian people the twentieth century’s victim par excellence. Armenians were not only robbed of their homeland, their home, their possessions—and, for a million—their very lives.”⁷⁹

The Treaty of Lausanne represented the colonial interests of the Great Powers and coincided with the rise of Fascism and weakening of the League of Nations. Turkey stayed neutral during World War II, only declaring war on Germany three months before the war ended. The mandate system would come to an end after the war with decolonization. Britain, France, and Italy, are no longer empires. Turkey joined NATO in 1951 and continues to have a major impact on that organization, most recently by opposing and then after some diplomacy with the U.S., agreeing to admit Sweden as a new member state. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is an autocrat with lots of power and influence, who will oversee the upcoming centennial celebrations for the Republic of Turkey. He praised the treaty on its 100th anniversary on July 24, saying Turkey had followed its implementation.⁸⁰ Switzerland was also impacted by the treaty, despite not being involved with conference negotiations due to their policy of neutrality. The assassination of a Soviet diplomat on Swiss soil and acquittal of his killer led to boycotts and the suspension of relations between the Swiss Confederation and the Soviet Union for two decades. How different things might have been if the United Nations had been headquartered in Geneva and not New York.

In conclusion, the Conference and Treaty of Lausanne had a major impact on many nations and millions of people. It didn’t just lead to the birth of Turkey, which many see as a model secular Muslim nation today. Through revisionist history on the centennial of this

⁷⁹ Kieser, 169.

⁸⁰ Emma Frage and Brenna Hughes Neghaiwi, “Treaty that created modern Turkey still evokes pain for some, 100 years after signing,” *Reuters* (July 24, 2023): <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/treaty-that-created-modern-turkey-still-evokes-pain-some-100-years-after-signing-2023-07-23/>.



The men who signed the Treaty of Lausanne posing at the Hôtel Beau-Rivage on July 24, 1923. Left to Right: Constantin Contzesco, Ernest Chuard, Miloutine Yovanovitch, Maurice Pellé, Ismet Pasha, Karl Scheurer, Horace Rumbold, Constantin Diamandy, Camillo Garroni Carbonara, Kentaro Otchiai, and Edmund Schulthess. Credit: <https://thelausanneproject.com/project-type/the-agence-rol-collection/>.

important agreement, we see that many benefited from it, but non-Muslims and minority groups especially were hurt by the treaty and Turkey's broken promises and guarantees to protect non-Turks living in their newly created country. "Western diplomacy and the League ignored desperate letters from Kurds, Armenians, and Assyrians with cries for help."⁸¹ Appeasement had begun well before the Munich Conference in 1938. Today, Europe is Turkey's largest export market. Unless the government collapses or President Erdoğan invades another country, this is unlikely to change. Commerce dominates over politics and Turkey's location matters greatly. "At the negotiating table in Lausanne, they gave Ankara what it wanted in return for getting what they wanted: reasserted national-imperial power, an

⁸¹ Kieser, 244.



Credit: MediaWiki Commons.

Plaque Translation:

The Lausanne Conference for Peace in the Middle East

Held at Chateau D'Ouchy

From November 21, 1922 - July 24, 1923

*The United States of America, The United Kingdom, France, Greece,
Italy, Japan, Romania, Turkey, The Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia,
Slovenia, Bulgaria and Russia*

*Participated in the workings of the conference
which culminated in the signing of the
Treaty of Lausanne*

exploitable Arab Middle East, working relations with potentates, and a politically sidelined Russia.”⁸² Turkey and the Great Powers came out of Lausanne as major winners. But they also created problems and failed to uphold and enforce self-determination and democratic principles. The conference and treaty has a mixed legacy, that we should continue to explore and discuss one hundred years later.

⁸² Kieser, 272.



Treaty of Lausanne Monument in Karaağaç, Edirne, Turkey.

Credit: MediaWiki Commons.



Kurds marched in Lausanne on July 22, 2023, for the centennial of the Treaty of Lausanne. This banner translates to: The Treaty of Lausanne is a decision to genocide the People of Kurdistan. The People of Kurdistan do not accept the Treaty of Lausanne! Credit: euro.dayfr.com/local/557095.html

Ernest Hemingway & The Lausanne Conference

Famed American poet and writer Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) was just a 23-year-old foreign correspondent for *The Toronto Star* newspaper when he was sent to Lausanne in November 1922. Hemingway had previously spent time in Turkey covering the war with Greece. He interviewed the Soviet delegation and Mussolini. Hemingway wrote the following poem, which was published in 1923.



*Hemingway's passport
photo, 1923*

THEY ALL MADE PEACE—WHAT IS PEACE?

All of the turks are gentlemen and Ismet Pasha is a little deaf. But the Armenians. How about the Armenians? Well the Armenians.

Lord Curzon likes young boys. So does Chicherin. So does Mustapha Kemal.* He is good looking too. His eyes are too close together but he makes war. That is the way he is.

Lord Curzon does not love Chicherin. Not at all. His beard trickles and his hands are cold. He thinks all the time.

Lord Curzon thinks too. But he is much taller and goes to St. Moritz.

*Hemingway did not care for Curzon, İsmet İnönü, or Kemal Atatürk. He saw them as promoting war. The reference to liking young boys could be a biting reference to a penchant for war. Hemingway was not necessarily accusing them of being pedophiles or homosexuals. I had a hard time finding analysis of this sentence and got some insights by email from Dr. Alex Vernon and Dr. Carl Eby, English literature professors and Hemingway scholars.

Mr. Child does not wear a hat. Baron Hayashi gets in and out of the automobile. Monsieur Barrère gets telegrams. So does Marquis Garroni. His telegrams come on motorcycles from MUSSOLINI. MUSSOLINI has nigger eyes and a bodyguard and has his picture taken reading a book upside down. MUSSOLINI is wonderful. Read the Daily Mail.

I used to know Mussolini. Nobody liked him then. Even I didn't like him. He was a bad character. Ask Monsieur Barrère.

We all drink cocktails. Is it too early to have a cocktail? How about a drink George? Come on and we'll have a cocktail Admiral. Just time before lunch. Well what if we do? Not too dry.

Well what do you boys know this morning?

Oh they're shrewd. They're shrewd.

M. Stambuliski walks up the hill and down the hill. Don't talk about M. Venizelos. He is wicked. You can see it. His beard shows it.

Mr. Child is not wicked.

Mrs. Child has flat breasts and Mr. Child is an idealist and wrote Harding's campaign speeches and calls Senator Beveridge. You know me Al.

Lincoln Steffens is with Child. The big C. makes the joke easy.

Then there is Mosul
And the Greek Patriarch
What about the Greek Patriarch?*

*After the creation of the Republic of Turkey, the Greek Patriarch was (and today still is) recognized as spiritual leader of the Greek minority in Turkey. Turkish law requires that candidates for patriarch be a Turkish citizen. Since the establishment of Turkey, only Turkish-born citizens of Greek ethnicity have served as patriarch.

Who's Who in "They All Made Peace—What is Peace?"

- Ismet Pasha – Turkish general who led the delegation at Lausanne and later was the second President of Turkey; he would often turn off his hearing aids to ignore Curzon
- Lord Curzon – British foreign secretary who chaired the first Lausanne Conference
- Georgy Chicherin – Commissar for Foreign Affairs for the Soviet Union
- Mustapha Kemal (*aka* Atatürk) – first President of the Republic of Turkey
- Richard Washburn Child – American observer at the conference and Ambassador to Italy; friend and admirer of Mussolini
- Mrs. Child (Maude Parker Child) – an author who divorced her husband the ambassador
- Baron Hayashi – Japanese Ambassador to the United Kingdom
- Camille Barrère – participated in the conference on behalf of France and was Ambassador to Rome
- Marquis Eugenio Camillo Garroni – participated in the conference on behalf of Italy and was Ambassador to Turkey
- Aleksandar Stamboliyski – Prime Minister of Bulgaria
- Eleftherios Venizelos – Prime Minister of Greece
- Warren G. Harding – President of the United States at the time

- Albert J. Beveridge – U.S. Senator from Indiana who had rejected expansionist imperialism
- Lincoln Steffens – American reporter who supported communism and the Soviet Union

Ernest Hemingway, *"In Our Time" & "They All Made Peace—What is Peace?": The 1923 Text*. Ed. James Gifford. Victoria: University of Victoria, 2015. <http://web.uvic.ca/~mvp1922/library/hemingway/time/Hemingway-In-Our-Time-1923.pdf>.