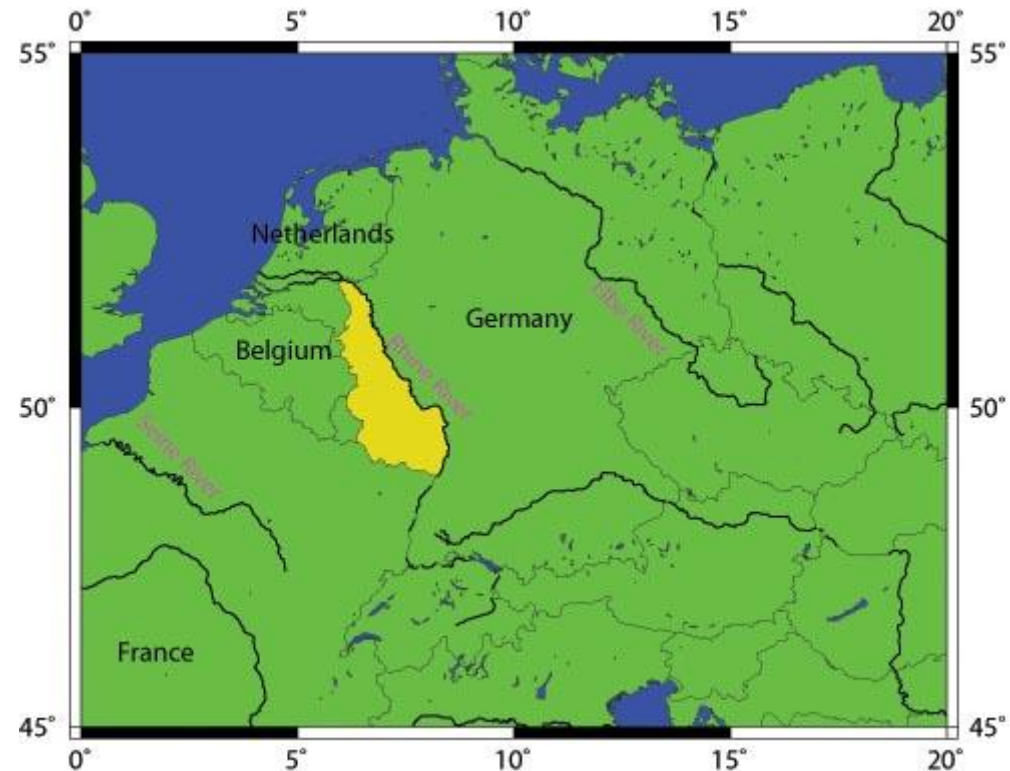


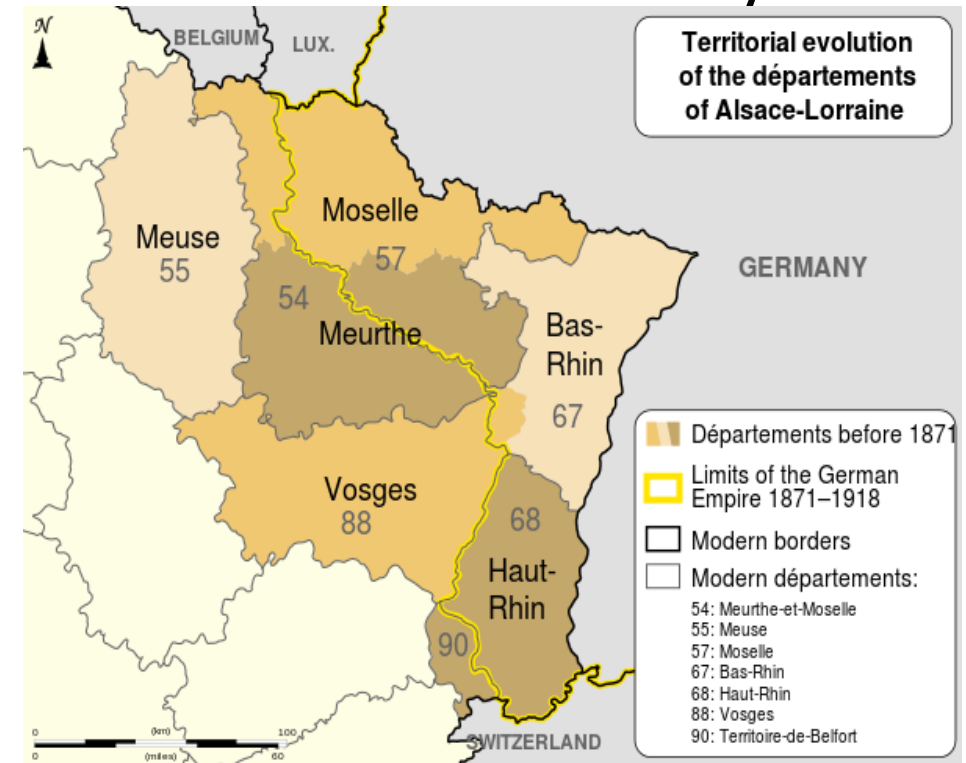
# Occupation of the Rhineland under the auspices of the League of Nations.

- Following World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to make numerous concessions - most notably, the loss of Alsace-Lorraine(left) and the demilitarization of Rhineland(right).



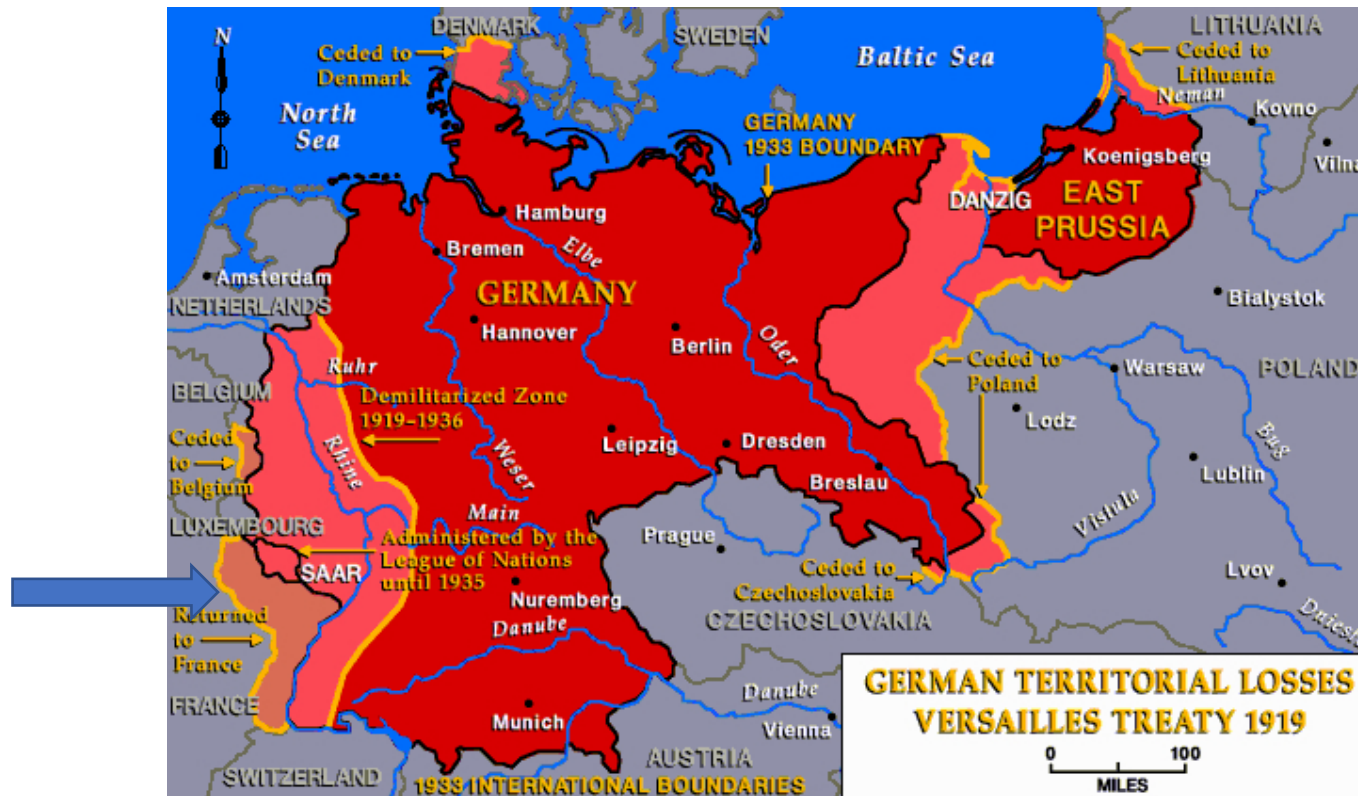
# Alsace Lorraine.

- The regions of Alsace and Lorraine, straddling the French- German border, have been a source of political, cultural, and nationalistic dispute between the French and Germans in various forms for nearly 1,000 years.
- The Imperial Territory of Alsace-Lorraine was created by the German Empire in 1871 following its victory in the Franco-Prussian War.



# After World War I.

- Alsace-Lorraine returned to France by the Treaty of Versailles.



# We stay until you pay!

- Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles Germany admitted responsibility for starting the war and was obliged to pay war reparations to the various Allies, principally France.
- The total sum of reparations demanded from Germany was 226 billion gold marks (\$846 billion in 2015).
- Partly as a guarantee of this payment the Rhineland was occupied by the allies.

# De-militarized Rhineland.

- According to the treaty, the Rhineland (situated between France and Germany) was to be placed under the authority of the League of Nations; it was to serve as a "buffer" in case of a future German invasion of France. (Note: Ruhr outside the occupied zone)



# Rhineland occupied by the Allies.(The Ruhr was not occupied at first-see later).

- The 1919- 1923 occupation of the Rhineland and Saar regions:
- blue: France,
- yellow: Belgium,
- brown: United Kingdom,
- **stripes (Ruhr): France & Belgium,**
- green (Saar): occupied by France under the auspices of the League of Nations





# Some concession.

In 1921, the amount was reduced to 132 billion.

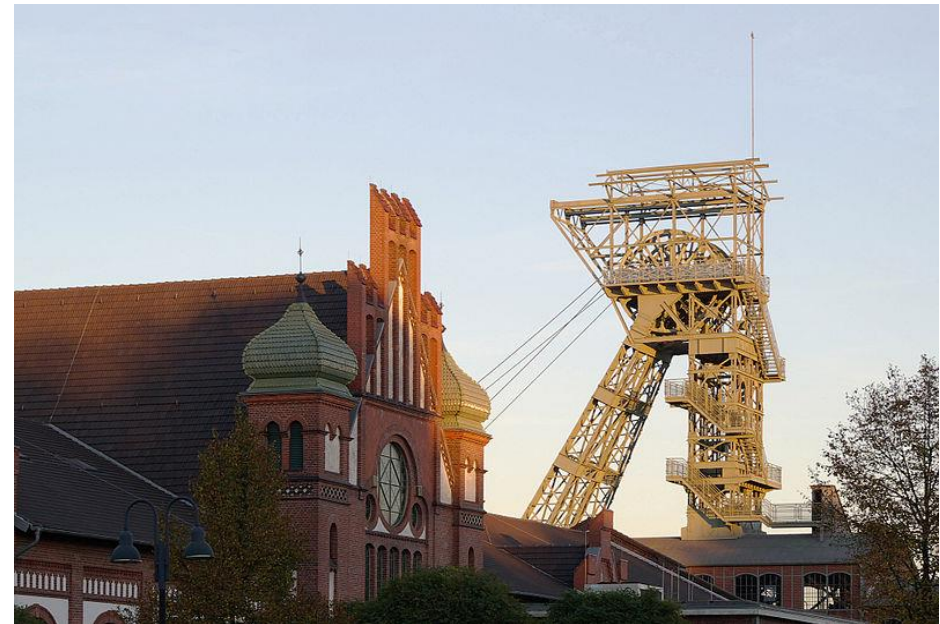
As some of the payments were in industrial raw materials, such as timber and coal, German factories were unable to function, and the German economy suffered, further damaging the country's ability to pay.



# Differing points of view.

- By late 1922, the German defaults on payments had grown so regular that a crisis engulfed the Reparations Commission; the French and Belgian delegates urged occupying the Ruhr as a way of forcing Germany to pay more, while the British delegate urged a lowering of the payments.

Dortmund.





# Invasion of the Ruhr.

- As a consequence of a German default on timber deliveries in December 1922, the Reparations Commission declared Germany in default,
- Initiated by the French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr took place in January 1923.
- French Chasseurs Alpins in Buer (Now Gelsenkirchen).



# German economy destroyed.

Some theories state that the French aimed to occupy the centre of German coal, iron, and steel production in the Ruhr area valley simply to get the money.

Some others state that France did it to ensure that the reparations were paid in goods, because the Mark was practically worthless because of hyperinflation that already existed at the end of 1922.

A 5 billion mark postage stamp issued during the hyperinflation.



# Raw materials coveted.

- France had the iron ore and Germany had the coal.
- Each state wanted free access to the resource it was short of, as together these resources had far more value than separately. (Eventually this problem was resolved in the European Coal and Steel community.)
- French soldiers in the Ruhr in 1923.



# An effective response.

- The German government responded with "*passive resistance*", letting workers and civil servants refuse orders and instructions by the occupation forces.
- Production and transport came to a standstill and the financial consequences contributed to German hyperinflation and ruined public finances in Germany and France, as well as several other countries.
- French troops observing the Rhine at Deutsches Eck, Coblenz, (German Corner).





# Athletes express their feelings.

- Protests by gymnasts from the Ruhr at the 1923 Munich Gymnastics Festival (The sign on the left reads "The Ruhr remains German"; the sign on the right reads "We never want to be vassals".)



Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-00121  
Foto: o. Ang. | 15. Juli 1923

# Dawes Plan conference held in London.

- Passive resistance was called off in late 1923, allowing Germany to implement a currency reform and to negotiate the Dawes Plan, which led to the withdrawal of the French and Belgian troops from the Ruhr in 1925.
- French troops leaving Dortmund.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-00769  
Foto: o. Ang. | Oktober 1924

# French tenacity.

- While others had withdrawn, French forces continued to occupy German territory in the Rhineland till the end of 1930, while France continued to control the smaller Saarland region till 1935.

- Bend in the Saar near Mettlach



# Calling the Allies bluff.

On 7 March 1936, Adolf Hitler took a massive gamble by sending 30,000 troops into the Rhineland.

As Hitler and other Nazis admitted, the French army alone could have destroyed the Wehrmacht.

Werner Goldberg, who was blond and blue-eyed, was used in Wehrmacht recruitment posters as the "ideal German soldier".

He was later dismissed after it became known that he was "half Jewish" (actually no such person as a half-Jew; a Jew if mother is a Jew; otherwise not a Jew).





# Missed opportunity: World War II?

- The French passed the problem to the British, who found that the Germans had the right to "enter their own backyard", and no action was taken.
- In the League of Nations, the Soviet delegate Maxim Litvinov was the only one who proposed economic sanctions against Germany.
- According to historian Samuel Mitcham, the Rhineland crisis was the last chance for the Allies to defeat Hitler while the odds were overwhelmingly on their side.