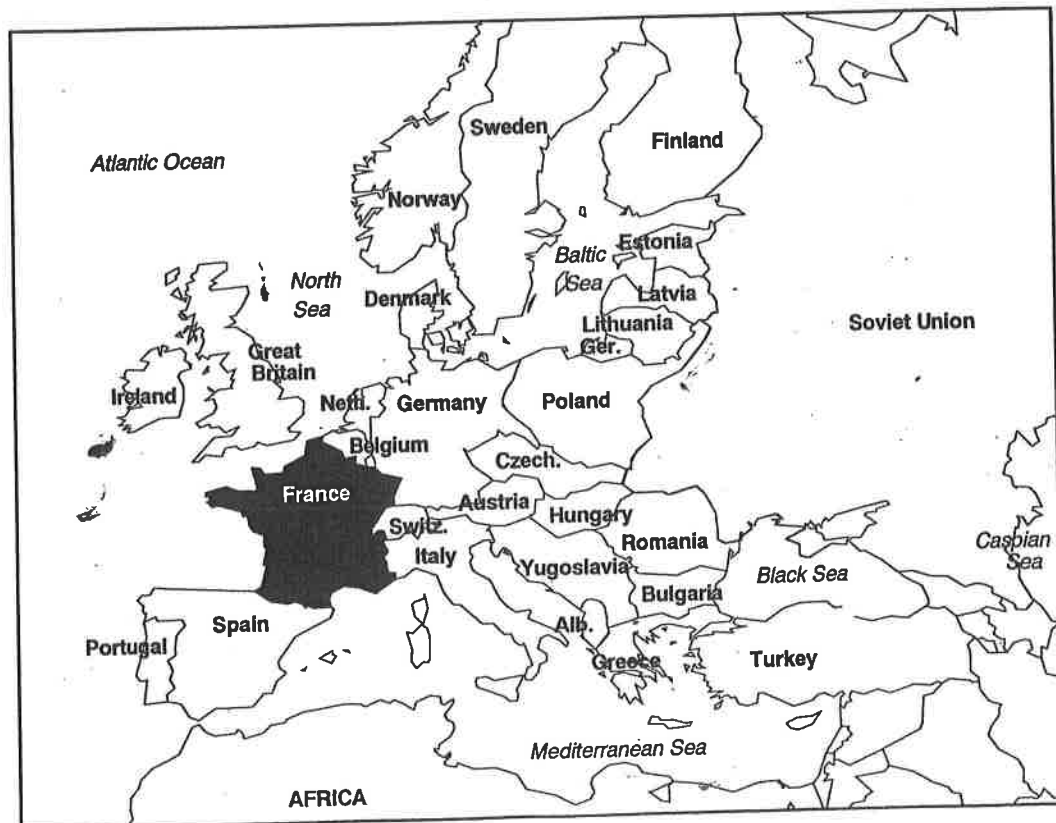


Background Information on France

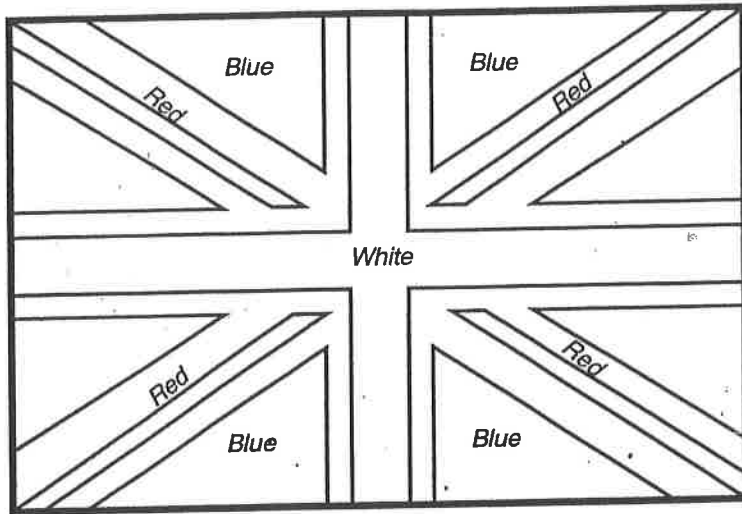
<i>Blue</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Red</i>
-------------	--------------	------------

France suffered greatly because of World War I, losing more than a million lives and 10 million acres of farmland, which was destroyed in the fighting. France also borrowed billions of dollars to help pay for the war. And four years of horrible warfare had an intense psychological effect on the French public. All these factors contributed to France's chief foreign policy goal after World War I, which was to avoid another war with Germany. To do this they

sought to limit the strength of Germany. France pushed to have the Versailles Treaty be as severe as possible against Germany, hoping to weaken its main enemy. In case Germany did become a threat, France constructed along the Franco-German border an elaborate system of defensive structures called the Maginot Line. France also signed defense treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Britain, to counter any rise in German power.

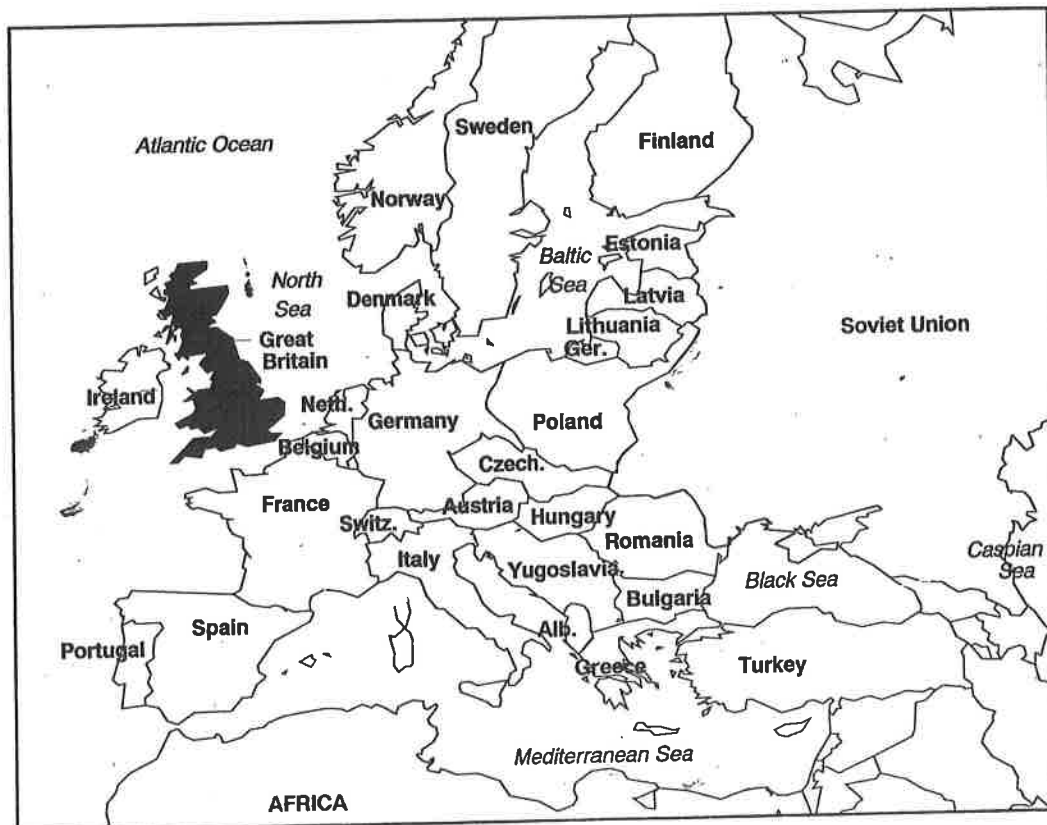


Background Information on Great Britain

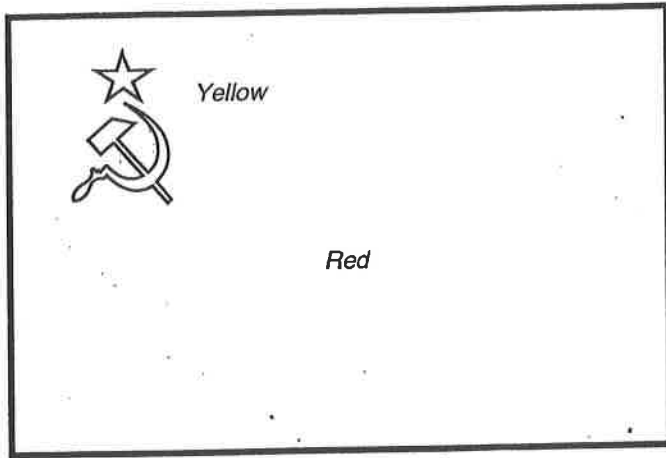


Great Britain suffered severe economic loss because of World War I. Britain's economy was based on overseas trade, but the British had lost nearly 40 percent of their merchant ships during the war. Other nations like the United States and Japan had begun to trade in Britain's place during the war, and after the war Britain faced new competition, which hurt British trading. Britain owed American businesses billions of dollars in war loans, and British unemployment rates

more than doubled in the early 1920s. To counter all of these harsh results of World War I, Britain felt it needed to protect its empire, the chief source of its economic riches. As a result, Britain's main foreign policy goal was to avoid another war like World War I. To do so, Britain maintained a strong navy, protected its colonies, and maintained strong ties with France, its last major European ally since Russia's government had fallen to the communists in 1917. Britain was happy to stay out of European problems if possible.

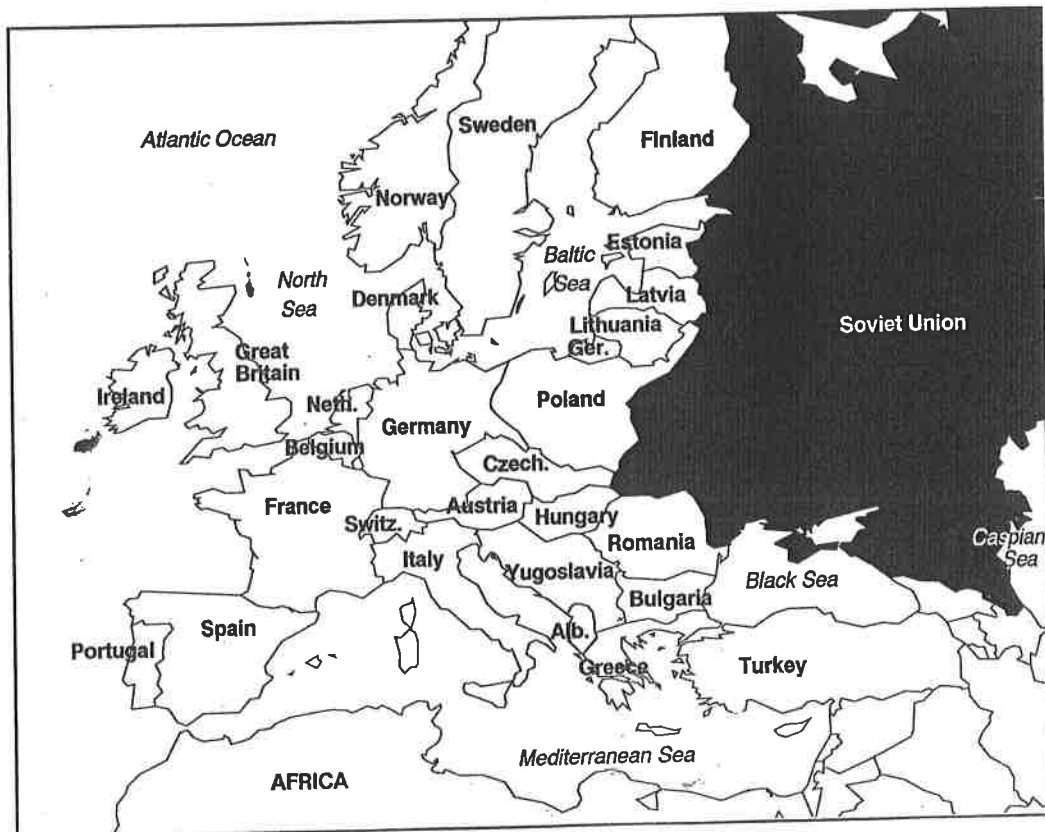


Background Information on the Soviet Union

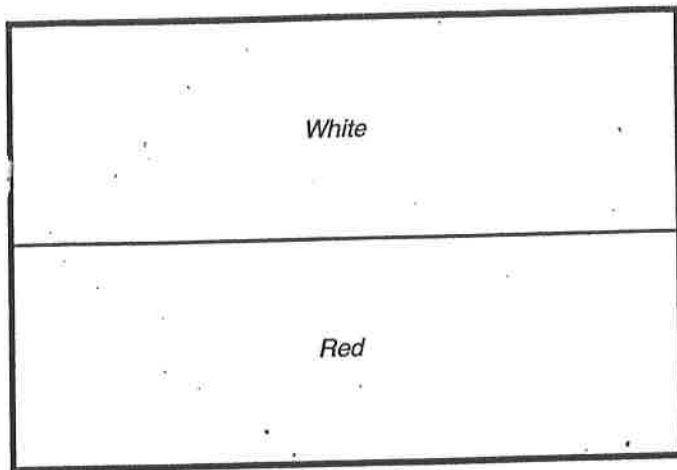


By 1917 Russia was losing World War I to the Germans, and Russians on the home front were suffering horrible economic hardships (problems). In the spring of 1917 life became so difficult that Russian society disintegrated into chaos. The result was a revolution by the Bolsheviks, a radical group of Russian communists, who overthrew the government. A civil war ensued (followed) between the Bolsheviks, known as Reds; and the supporters of traditional Russian society, known as the Whites. The Reds won, and

the Bolsheviks began the long process of making the Soviet Union, as Russia became known, an industrial power—a difficult task because Russia was the least developed major nation in Europe. The leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, worked hard to build Soviet industry and economy. He realized that the rise of Hitler in Germany signaled the coming of another war. Stalin's primary objective was to avoid involving the Soviet Union in a major war until the country's economy was stronger. To do so he attempted to help European countries that were against Germany in order to delay the war and allow Soviet society to modernize itself.

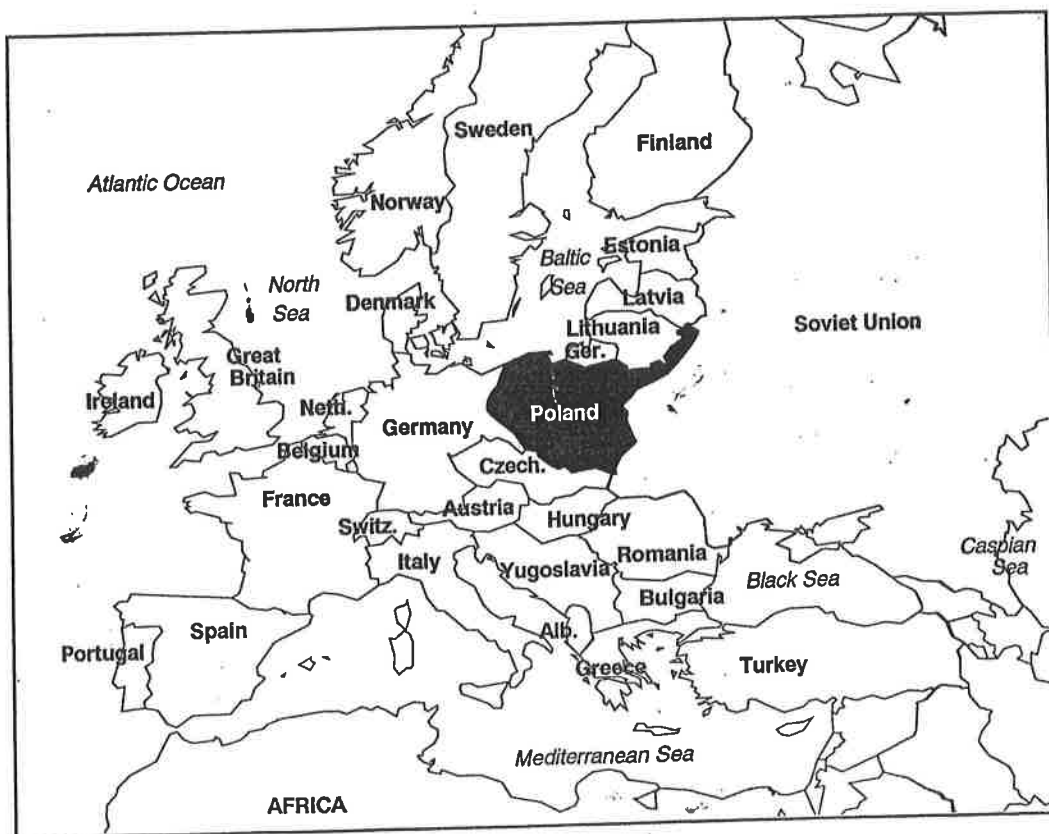


Background Information on Poland

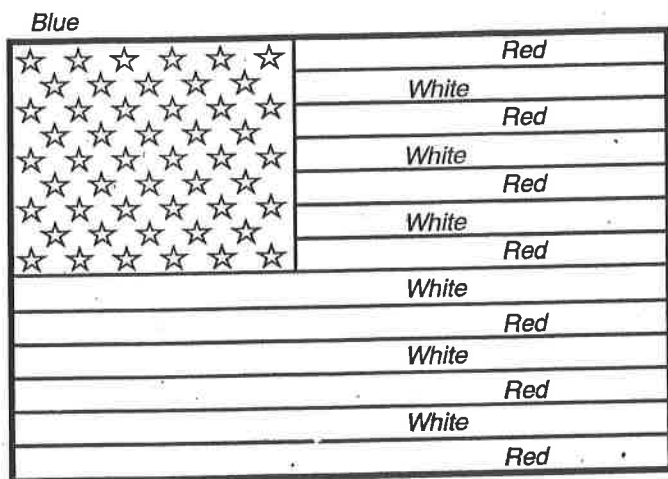


In 1919 the Versailles Treaty, which ended World War I between Germany and the Allies, created Poland as a landlocked country located between its traditional enemies, Germany and the Soviet Union. What little industry Poland had was destroyed in World War I, during which Poland lost over 800,000 soldiers and civilians. The Versailles Treaty gave Poland a strip of German land that gave it access to the Baltic Sea by way of the port city of Danzig. This strip also separated Eastern Germany from the main part of Germany, which caused

resentment among German nationalists. Poland was a largely agricultural, economically poor country that needed access to the sea for trade and defense against Germany and the Soviet Union. To counteract its difficult geographic position, Poland signed treaties with France and Great Britain. The rise of the Nazis made Germany a more dangerous enemy, so the Poles relaxed their position toward the Soviet Union and signed a defense agreement with the Soviets in 1934. Poland's main foreign policy goal became to defend itself against Germany.



Background Information on the United States

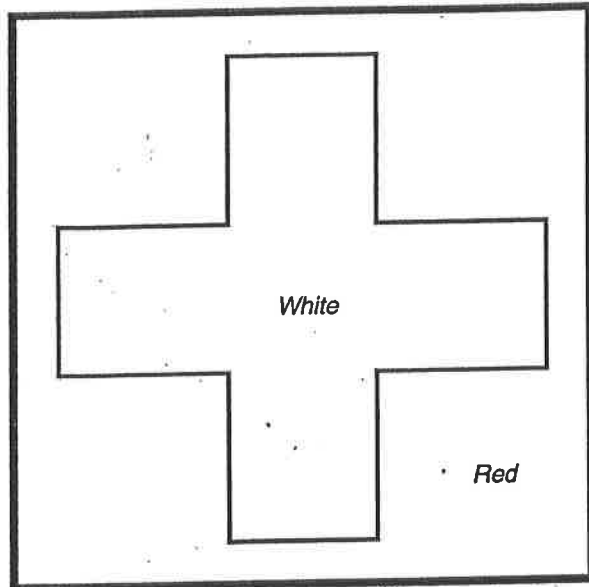


The United States had suffered the least of all the Allied countries in World War I. France and Great Britain lost more troops in a single battle than the United States lost in the whole war. And while European countries suffered economically from the war, the United States had benefited. During the first three years, while the United States was neutral, American businesses and banks loaned millions of dollars, and sold billions of dollars worth of war materials, to both the Allies and the

Central Powers. Unlike in Europe, the 1920s were a time of great economic success in the United States, and Americans wanted nothing to do with Europe and its troubles. This was reflected in the chief U.S. foreign policy goal of this era, called *isolationism*, which was to avoid involvement in another European war. Isolationist feelings increased in the early 1930s when the United States experienced a severe economic depression. The United States maintained relations with its ally Britain, but avoided any dealings with European problems.



Background Information on Switzerland



In 1815 Switzerland's traditional neutrality (policy of not supporting any side or fighting in a war) was guaranteed by the leading powers of Europe at the Congress of Vienna. Switzerland did not participate in World War I, and its boundaries were unchanged as a result of the war. Switzerland is a confederation of 22 *cantons*, or states, situated high in the Alps between France, Germany, and Italy. Despite the fact that most Swiss are ethnically French, German, or Italian, Switzerland was able to maintain peace, neutrality, and independence during the traumatic events in neighboring European countries in the 1930s and 1940s. During this time, Switzerland was a wealthy country, with a traditionally

democratic society and an economy based on banking, commerce, and international diplomacy. Switzerland's main foreign policy goal was to continue to maintain its neutrality.

