

The counting of votes is in itself a confession of partial failure. If the peace aims of the twenty-one Powers (and of the Great Powers especially) had been as simple and as easily reconcilable as their war aims, and if the negotiators at Paris had been under instructions to sacrifice as much for the maintenance of peace as their compatriots had for its achievement, there would have been no need to count votes. In fact, their peace aims, as indicated by their uncompromising claims at the Conference, were not reconcilable.

This being so, it was made clear that, whatever might be the voting practice in national Parliaments or in some international bodies, Great Powers will not allow themselves to be outvoted by simple or even two-thirds majorities at Conferences which, by redrawing boundaries and redistributing zones of influence, set the framework within which international relations will be conducted for the next generation. None of the Great Powers would accept even a two-thirds or any other majority vote in favour of any solution which it believed to be opposed to its vital interest<sup>(1)</sup>. It had taken the Great Powers ten months to reach the mutual accommodation represented by the draft treaties. For the Conference to make an alteration of the bargain (an alteration which would necessarily favour one of the Powers) would be to throw the whole settlement into the melting-pot. For instance, the Council of Foreign Ministers had settled the following vital issues as one interlocking bargain: Trieste, Italian colonies, Italian reparations. When this settlement was reached, and when the rules of procedure had been settled, but not until then, would the Council of Foreign Ministers permit the issue of invitations to the Peace Conference.

This situation underlay the rejection by Russia of the "democratic procedure" advocated by New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, and the Netherlands, as it did her insistence first on two-thirds majorities (*i.e.*, the right of obstruction by 8 out of 21) and later, when the simple and two-thirds majorities had been established by two-thirds vote, her insistence on "unanimity" (*i.e.*, the right of obstruction by 1 out of 21). Just what "unanimity" means in practice when the Big Powers have conflicting interests, and just how it was used to shape the peace treaties which the smaller Powers had little choice but to accept, was revealed when Mr Byrnes declared to the Plenary Conference on 9 August, during a stage of the Conference when tempers were running high:—

"I would be less than frank if I did not say that those who have insisted most loudly on unanimity here have not shown quite the same desire to achieve unanimity.

---

(1) Mr Molotov made it clear to the Plenary Conference on 14 October that the Soviet Union would use its veto in the Council of Foreign Ministers to prevent the adoption of recommendations (such as that concerning International Control of the Danube, or that concerning the Greco-Bulgarian frontier) on which the "Slav" States had been outvoted by the "Western" powers.