Outline: France, Britain, and Eastern Europe (1920s)

I. France and Britain (“The Joyless Victors”)

*Both France and Britain struggled after the war…
--their economies were weak
--their power (both on the continent and internationally) was much diminished

A. France
   1. became conservative after the war
      a. the French voters were worried about Germany and Communism
      b. “Blue Horizon Chamber”
         1) name given to the Chamber of Deputies elected in 1920
         2) many members of the new Chamber were from the military (wore blue uniforms)
   2. new alliances: in an attempt to enforce the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and keep Germany weak, France made several alliances with the countries of eastern Europe
      a. Little Entente: France + Czechoslovakia + Romania + Yugoslavia
      b. made another military alliance with Poland

*The formation of these alliances heightened the sense of danger and isolation felt by Germany and the Soviet Union…
--established diplomatic and economic relations at Rapallo
--further worried France

3. Invasion of the Ruhr
   a. on January 11, 1923, France invaded the Ruhr, Germany’s borderland mining and manufacturing district
   b. wanted to ensure receipt of war reparations from Germany
   c. caused many problems:
      1) hurt Germany’s economy by causing mass unemployment and high inflation
      2) alienated England who became more sympathetic towards Germany and more suspicious of France

B. Great Britain
   1. economy was depressed throughout the 1920’s
      a. there was no post-war recovery
      b. unemployment never dipped below 10%
   2. in December of 1923, Ramsay MacDonald became the first Prime Minister from the Labour Party in British history
      a. sought social reform, not nationalization or public seizure of industry
      b. Ramsay’s term showed that the Labour Party was both respectable and responsible (not radical or revolutionary)
   3. fear of Communism caused British voters to once again vote conservative in 1924: Stanley Baldwin became Prime Minister and remained in office until 1929
   4. General Strike of 1926:
      a. in an attempt to make British goods more competitive on the foreign market, British management attempted to lower prices by cutting wages
      b. coal miners responded by going on strike
c. in May of 1926, sympathetic workers in other industries engaged in a general strike lasting nine days
d. there was tension, but eventually the workers gave in

5. Ireland
   a. during the war, the extremist Sinn Fein ("Ourselves Alone") became the dominant political party in Ireland
   b. in the election of 1918, Sinn Fein won all but four of the Irish parliamentary seats outside of Ulster (Northern Ireland), but refused to go to Parliament at Westminster
   c. on January 21, 1919, Sinn Fein declared Irish independence
   d. the military wing of Sinn Fein became the Irish Republican Army (IRA)
      1) guerilla war broke out between the IRA and the British army
      2) such conflict continues to this day
   e. in a treaty concluded in December of 1921, Ireland (except for the six counties of Ulster) received its independence

II. Eastern Europe

*The “new” countries of Eastern Europe were carved out of what was once territories of the overturned German, Austrian-Hungarian, and Russian empires. Given the political, social, and economic problems of the 1920’s, it was difficult, if not impossible, for these brand new democracies to survive. Only Czechoslovakia succeeded.

A. Problems faced by the “Successor States” in Eastern Europe
   1. little democratic experience
   2. ethnic tensions
      a. many of the ethnic groups were unhappy with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles
      b. there was no great power (e.g., Austria-Hungary) to suppress these nationalistic uprisings
   3. most of the economies were agrarian and ill equipped for the new industrial world economy

B. Why did Czechoslovakia succeed? (that is, why did its democratic government remain in power until taken over by Germany in 1939)
   1. Czechs and Slovaks trusted each other
   2. country had a comparatively strong industrial base
   3. there was a substantial middle class
   4. there was a tradition of liberal values
   5. good leadership (Thomas Masaryk)

*In the end, except for Czechoslovakia, all of these states succumbed to some form of domestic authoritarian government.