

# THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

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*The Great War Comes to an End, 1918*

Germany surrendered at 11 am on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918. The country had run out of food, ammunition and public support for the war. The Kaiser, faced with revolution, abdicated and fled to Holland, which had been neutral during the Great War. With his departure, Germany became a republic.

Once the war was over, Britain, France, Italy, and the United States met at Versailles in Paris to determine what the terms of peace would be. Canada was not initially allowed to participate in the discussions, despite the great contributions that had been made to the war effort.

- Britain did not want Canada there because they feared other dominions within the empire would want the same rights.
- The U.S. didn't want Canada there because they thought it would give Britain a stronger voice in the negotiations, and thus, an unfair advantage.

Through perseverance, Canada was finally allowed to send 2 delegates to the talks.

Germany was not allowed to attend the Peace Conference.

## There were 2 different approaches to the treaty negotiations:

1. MODERATELY, so as to NOT provoke the German people into wanting revenge.

- This approach was introduced in U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points", which favoured:
  - Self-determination, or the right of people to choose what nations they wished to belong to;
  - Disarmament, to remove the international arms race, and
  - The establishment of an international organization called the "League of Nations" to prevent international conflict.

2. HARSHLY, to make Germany pay for the war

- Economically;
- Territorially, and;
- Militarily.
- This was the approach the British and French preferred.

## The Peace Conference was dominated by "The Big Three"

### ("The Big Four" if you include Italy):

1. Lloyd-George (Great Britain)

- Wanted Germany to pay for the war;
- Wanted Germany's navy;
- Wanted German colonies in Africa.

2. Clemenceau (France)

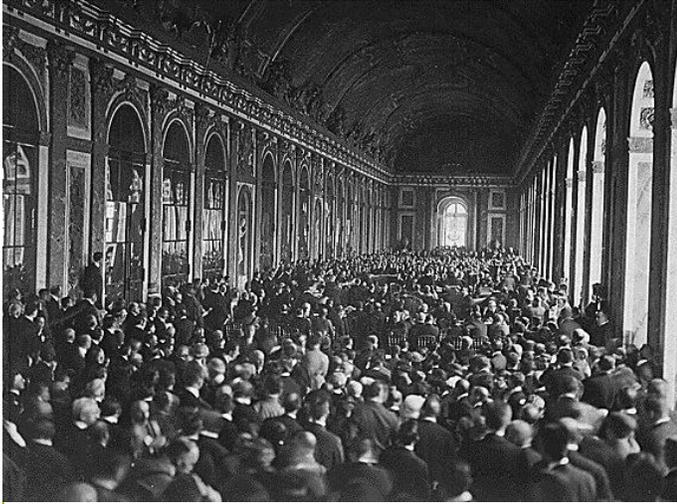
- Wanted Germany to pay for the devastation done to Northern France;
- Wanted the Rhineland (border between France and Germany) to be demilitarized;
- Wanted the territory of Alsace-Lorraine, lost to the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, back.

### 3. Wilson (United States)

Wilson had devised a 14 point plan that he believed would bring stability to Europe, based on the following points:

1. There were to be no secret treaties between powers like the treaties that had helped to cause the First World War. (Open Diplomacy)
2. Seas should be free in peace and in war to ships of all nations (Freedom of Navigation)
3. The barriers to trade between countries such as custom duties should be removed (free trade)
4. All countries should reduce their armed forces to the lowest possible levels (Multilateral disarmament.)
5. The national groups in Europe should, wherever possible, be given their independence. Wilson supported the idea of National Self-Determination, whereby a nation had the right to self-government.
6. Russia should be allowed to operate whatever government it wanted.
7. Territorial changes:
  1. Germany should give up Alsace-Lorraine and any lands taken away during the war.
  2. The Italian frontier should be readjusted.
  3. Belgium should be evacuated.
  4. Poland should be given an outlet to the sea.
  5. The defeated nations should not be made to pay for the war as a whole.
  6. A 'League of Nations' should be formed to protect world peace in the future.

When the Germans surrendered, they believed that the treaty was going to be based on Wilson's more moderate 14 Points, however none of the powers would come to complete agreement on its terms. Finally, after 6 months of negotiations, everyone involved was able to compromise. The proposals put forward by Britain and France formed the basis of the treaty, which incorporated some, but not all, of Wilson's 14 Points. The Germans were extremely upset with the final result, especially since they had not been allowed to take part in any of the negotiations. The seeds for future world conflict had been sewn.



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## How Did the German People React to Versailles?

When the terms of the treaty were made public in Germany on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1919, the German people were horrified. There were immediate protest rallies in Germany to try and persuade the new republican government not to sign. If Germany agreed to these terms, she was to lose:

- 10% of her land.
- All of her colonies.
- 12.5% of her population.
- 16% of her coal fields.
- 50% of her iron and steel industry.

With a small army and navy, no air force and a war debt of \$33 billion (approximately \$145 billion today) to be paid off, it was no wonder that the Germans were so upset. German resistance to signing the treaty was growing.

The head of the new German republic, Friedrich Ebert, had not even been invited to the Paris peace conference. But Germany was in no position to fight the terms of the treaty. The new republican government had been compelled to flee Berlin as a result of riots and an attempted communist revolution. Despite the overwhelming level of protest by the population, the German government was compelled to sign the Treaty of Versailles on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1919. Ebert had been told if he did not sign, then the Entente powers would invade and occupy Germany.

## What About the Other Triple Alliance Countries?

- Treaty of Saint Germain 1919: with Austria. Austria lost all of her former empire and had to restrict her military capacity.
- Treaty of Neuilly 1919: with Bulgaria. Bulgaria lost land to Greece, and had to restrict her military capacity.
- Treaty of Trianon 1920: with Hungary. Hungary lost all of her former empire and had to restrict her military capacity.
- Treaty of Sèvres 1920: with Turkey. Turkey lost all of her former empire and had to restrict her military capacity.

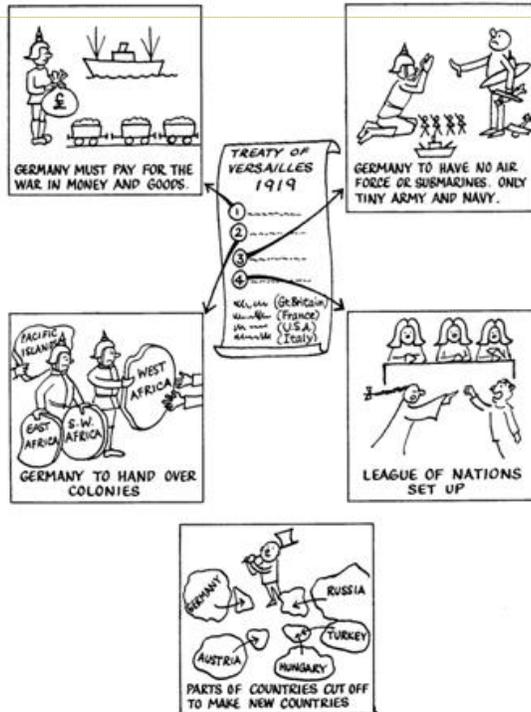
### The Treaty of Versailles, May 1919

None of the “Big Three” got everything that they wanted from the negotiations. Some compromises were required. It was the French who had most of their demands met when the Treaty of Versailles (a palace on the outskirts of Paris) was agreed by the Entente powers in May 1919:

- The Germans were also to take full blame for the war: the “war guilt” clause.

## These are the main terms of the Treaty of Versailles:

1. A “League of Nations” was to be created. This would be a security organization dedicated to the preservation of global peace. It would be comprised of many countries who would united and send their militaries to fight future aggression together if discussion and peaceful resolutions didn’t work. Germany was NOT allowed to join the League of Nations.
2. Article 231: The “War Guilt Clause”. This stated that Germany, and Germany alone, was responsible for causing the First World War and all its loss and damage.

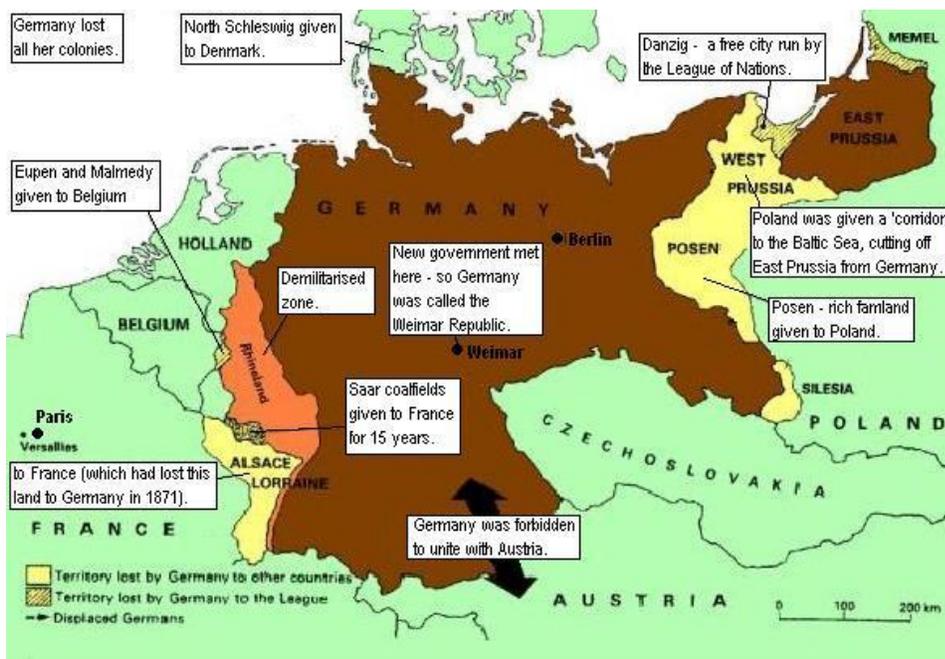


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## Other stipulations included:

1. Germany's army would be reduced to 100000 men (Germany would no longer be a world power).
2. All of Germany's U-boats (submarines) would be destroyed.
3. All of Germany's heavy artillery would be destroyed.
4. All of Germany's military aircraft would be destroyed.
5. Germany's navy would be reduced in size – they were only allowed to retain 6 battleships.
6. Conscription was banned – soldiers had to be volunteers.
7. The German Rhineland (the land between France and Germany) would be demilitarized, and occupied by French troops for 15 years.
8. Alsace-Lorraine, the territory lost by the French in the Franco-Prussian War, was returned to France.
9. The Saar, a rich coal mining territory in Germany, was to be occupied and exploited by the French.

10. 14% of German territory would be turned over to the new Polish State. This would include a Corridor, which would separate the German province of Prussia (a rich farming region for Germany) from the rest of Germany and allow Poland access to the sea. The Polish capital, Danzig, was to be a free city run by the League of Nations.
11. Germany would give up all its colonies in Africa. These colonies were made 'mandates' of the League of Nations, to be looked after by France (Camerouns), Britain (Tanganyika), Japan (islands in the Pacific), Australia (New Guinea) and New Zealand (Samoa)
12. Germany would pay **WAR REPARATIONS** to the Allies, in installments, until 1984. The amount would be 144 Billion Gold Marks, or \$33 Billion (\$145 Billion today).
13. Anschluss (union) between Germany and Austria-Hungary was forbidden.
14. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became independent states.



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