

3 Peace making 1919–1920

1919 was the year after the Armistice. The First World War had ended. People were thankful that the fighting had stopped, but many people in Britain and France now wanted to punish Germany for the War.

B

In November [1918] came the Armistice. The news sent me out walking alone...cursing and sobbing and thinking of the dead. Siegfried Sassoon's famous poem celebrating the Armistice began:

Everybody suddenly burst out singing,
And I was filled with such delight...
But 'everybody' did not include me.

From the autobiography of Robert Graves, who was an officer in the British army during the War.

C

Last night, for the first time since August in the first year of the war, there was no light of gunfire in the sky, no sudden stabs of flame through darkness, no spreading glow above black trees where for four years of nights human beings were smashed to death. The Fires of Hell had been put out.

From Philip Gibbs, an American newspaper reporter writing from France in November 1918.

- 1 Look at Source A. How would you describe the mood of the crowd? How might this mood have influenced the politicians who went to Paris to decide the settlement?
- 2 Do Sources B and C support or contradict the evidence of Source A? Explain your answer.
- 3 How might you explain the different attitudes shown in these sources?
- 4 How reliable are sources A, B, and C for deciding how people felt at the end of the War in 1919?

The aims of the peace makers



Lloyd George



Clemenceau



Wilson



The leaders of all the countries that had been fighting met in Paris to decide on a peace settlement to end the War. Britain was represented by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George. He had just won a General Election in Britain. The people had voted for Lloyd George believing that he would 'make Germany pay' for the War. But it was France who really wanted to punish and weaken Germany. They were represented by their Prime Minister, Clemenceau. Most of the fighting had been in France. Many French towns and villages had been destroyed and hundreds of thousands of French people were homeless. France's northern coal mines and farm land had been badly damaged. Clemenceau went to Paris for revenge. He also wanted to protect France in the future by ensuring that Germany was kept weak. Woodrow Wilson was in Paris representing the USA. He was the US President, although his party had lost the majority in the US Senate. He went to Versailles with a Fourteen Point Plan, which was to form the basis of the peace settlement and the prevention of further wars. Wilson's position was not strong because he knew the American people did not want to become involved in Europe again. Lloyd George and Clemenceau had accepted the Fourteen Points, but they also aimed for a harsh peace settlement in order to satisfy the people at home. These three had by far

the biggest say as they were the victorious powers.

Russia was not at the meetings because of the Revolution of 1917 and the change of government there (see Chapter 1). Italy and Japan were there as part of the victorious Allied delegation, but did not have such a big say. The defeated powers were all there but they were given very little say in the debates. They were there simply to sign the treaties. Germany hoped for a reasonable settlement. The Kaiser had abdicated and there was now a more liberal government in Germany. But the Paris treaties were not negotiated. The treaties were forced upon the Germans and also on the Austrians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, and the Turks.

From: President Wilson, US
To: President Clemenceau, France
Prime Minister Lloyd George, United Kingdom
Date: January 1918

The Fourteen Point Plan

- 1 Open agreements and alliances, no secret agreements in future.
- 2 Freedom of navigation of the seas.
- 3 Removal of economic barriers to free trade.
- 4 Reduction of armaments to the lowest possible level.
- 5 Colonial claims to be dealt with in the interests of the populations concerned.
- 6 All Russian territory to be evacuated.
- 7 Belgium to be restored in full and free sovereignty.
- 8 All French territory to be freed. Alsace-Lorraine should be returned to France, righting the wrong done by Germany to France in 1871.
- 9 Italy's frontiers should be adjusted according to nationality.
- 10 The people of Austria-Hungary should be given the opportunity of self-government.
- 11 Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia to be given independence. Serbia to be given a coastline.
- 12 Turkey to be a separate state. Other parts of the Ottoman Empire to be given independence. The Dardanelles to be permanently free to all shipping.
- 13 An independent Polish state to be set up and given access to the sea.
- 14 An Association of Nations to be set up to preserve future peace.

From President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, 1918.



A The front cover of the British magazine *The Sphere*, November 1918. It shows the crowds in London celebrating the Armistice.

5 Look at Source D. Make a table with four columns. Write out the Fourteen Points under the following headings. (Some points may go into more than one column, one or two may not fit.)

Keeping peace or avoiding war.	Solving issues of independence or nationality.	Punishing or weakening the defeated or rewarding the victors.	Encouraging freedom of trade in the World.

6 Does your table help you to understand what Wilson was aiming for with his Fourteen Points? Do you think that any of Wilson's aims were likely to work against the others? Explain your answers.

The terms of the treaties

Separate treaties were made with each of the defeated countries:

- At Versailles the Allies made a treaty with Germany
- At St. Germain the Allies made a treaty with Austria.
- At Trianon the Allies made a treaty with Hungary.
- At Neuilly the Allies made a treaty with Bulgaria.
- And at Sevres the Allies made a treaty with Turkey.

These treaties altered borders, reduced the size of their armed forces and agreed reparations. These were payments from one country to another for the damage done in the War. Many new countries were created as a result of these treaties. For example, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia. In the case of Turkey, most of her Empire was lost. In each case the defeated country had little alternative but to accept the Treaty.

Treaty of St Germain September 1919

Austria paid reparations. Austrian army limited to 30,000 soldiers. Bohemia and Moravia given to the new state of Czechoslovakia. Bosnia and Herzegovina went to Yugoslavia. Galicia was given to Poland. South Tyrol and Istria went to Italy.

Treaty of Neuilly November 1919

Bulgaria paid reparations. Bulgarian army limited to 20,000. Bulgaria lost land to Yugoslavia, and lost Western Thrace which went to Greece.



- Territory lost by Austria - Hungary
- Territory lost by Bulgaria
- Territory lost by Turkey

Treaty of Trianon June 1920

Hungary paid reparations. Army limited to 35,000. Handed over war criminals. Transylvania given to Romania, Rutherfordia and Slovakia to Czechoslovakia; Croatia and Slovenia to Yugoslavia

Treaty of Sevres August 1920

Turkey lost Eastern Thrace and Smyrna to Greece. This was disputed and led to a war. In 1922 the Treaty of Lausanne returned Smyrna to Turkey. Turkey gave up all claims to territory in the Middle East.



The break up of the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire under the Treaty of Sevres

- British mandates
 - French mandates
- These territories became League of Nations mandates, administered by Britain and France (see chapter 4 about the League of Nations)

Allied officers trying to see into the room where the Treaty of Versailles is being signed

The Treaty of Versailles, June 1919



Sir William Orpen's painting of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28th June 1919 in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles



At Versailles the Allies made a treaty with Germany. Germany had to accept the Treaty of Versailles because the Allies still blockaded German ports and thirty-nine divisions of Allied soldiers were on the Rhine ready to invade Germany if

necessary. The Treaty of Versailles gave Clemenceau the opportunity to seek revenge for the war. Wilson's aim of an international association was also met. The League of Nations was to be established (see Chapter 4).

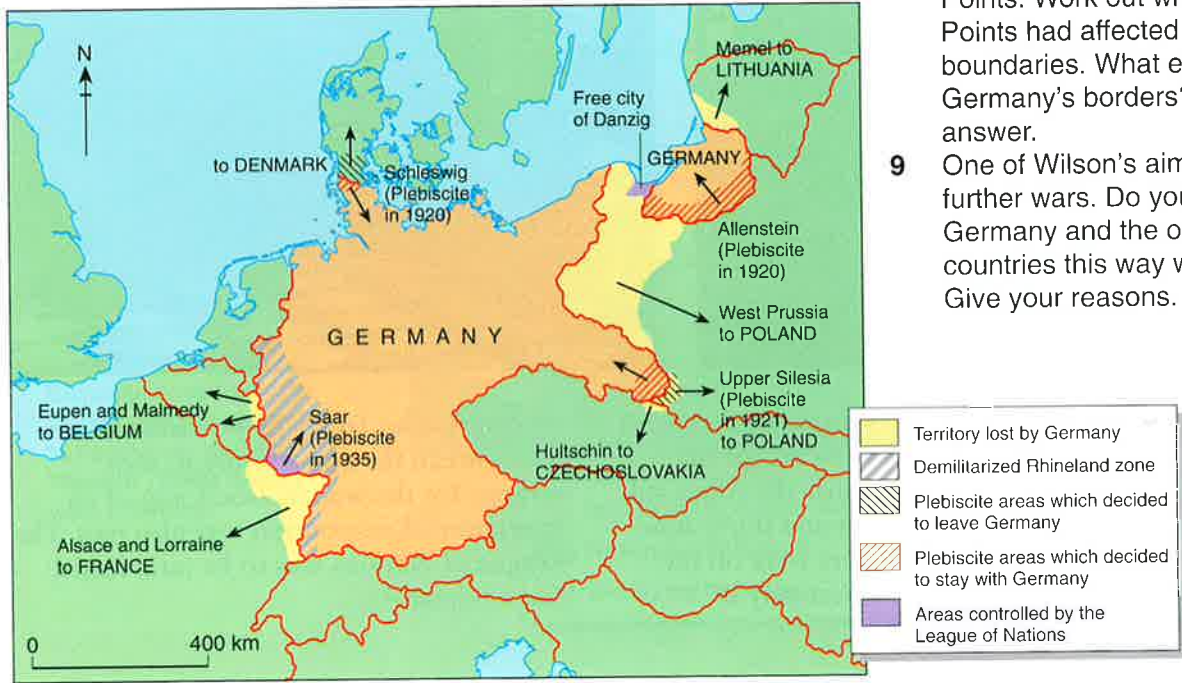
The German colonies which became League of Nations Mandates

This is what the Treaty of Versailles decided:
 • **COLONIES.** German colonies in South, East and West Africa, and in the Far East, were to become Mandates of the League of Nations.



This meant that Germany lost her colonies and the League of Nations would look after them until the people were ready to rule themselves. In practice other countries looked after them on behalf of the League (see map above).

• **GERMANY'S BORDERS.**



• **DISARMAMENT OF GERMANY.** The German navy had already been confiscated by the British but the sailors sank their own ships rather than hand them over. The Treaty said that the German navy was to be limited to six small battleships, six cruisers and 12 destroyers. No submarines were allowed. Germany was not allowed to have an airforce. The army could be no more than 100,000 men. Conscription was not allowed. Tanks and heavy guns were banned.

• **REPARATIONS.** Germany and her allies had to accept full responsibility for causing the war. This was called the War Guilt Clause. Germany then agreed to pay for damage done during the war. No figure for this could be fixed in 1919. Instead a Reparations Commission was set up to decide the amount. This figure was eventually fixed at £6,600 million plus interest. Much of this was to be paid in goods, such as coal, and the German merchant fleet was handed over to the Allies.

- 7 Look at Source E. Describe exactly what the men in the photograph are doing. What does this tell you about the importance of the Treaty of Versailles?
- 8 Look at the map of Germany (Source G) and at President Wilson's Fourteen Points. Work out which of the Fourteen Points had affected Germany's boundaries. What else had affected Germany's borders? Explain your answer.
- 9 One of Wilson's aims was to prevent further wars. Do you think that treating Germany and the other defeated countries this way would help to do this? Give your reasons.

How fairly was Germany treated at Versailles?

This really depends on whether or not you think Germany started the War. If you believe Germany started the War, as Clemenceau did, then it does not seem unreasonable to expect Germany to pay something towards the costs of the damage. Even so, the reparations payments were fixed at such a high level that it was unreasonable for Germany to pay, especially as her economy was ruined, her colonies lost, and much of her industrial capacity confiscated. Alsace and Lorraine had been French, so it could be argued that they were now being returned. But the loss of territory to Poland and Czechoslovakia, land containing many German speaking people, was resented by most Germans. German colonies were now administered by the victorious nations, which looks very much like an unfair gain from the War.

If you believe that Germany was not entirely to blame for the War and that it was more of a shared blame, then the Treaty begins to look very unfair indeed.

- 10 Make two lists. The first should contain all those parts of the Treaty of Versailles which a French person, in 1919, would think fair and reasonable. The second list should contain everything that a German would think unfair.
- 11 Is there anything on both lists? Why?

Today in the Hall of Mirrors of Versailles the disgraceful Treaty of Versailles is being signed. Do not forget it! The German people will press forward to reconquer the place among nations to which it is entitled. Then will come revenge for the shame of 1919.

From a German newspaper on the day of the signing of the Treaty.



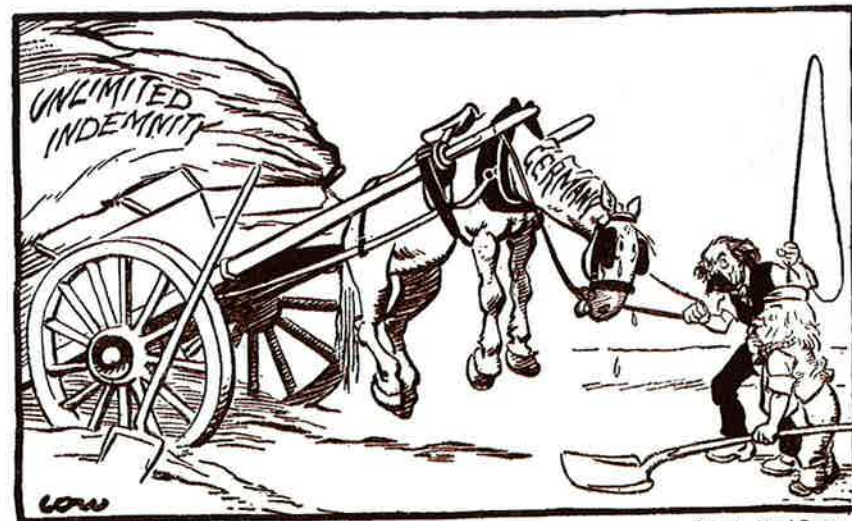
A German cartoon, 1919. The Allies are shown as devils preparing to make Germany sign the Treaty.

A cartoon from the British magazine Punch, 1919



THE RECKONING.

PAN-GERMAN, "MONSTROUS, I CALL IT. WHY, IT'S FULLY A QUARTER OF WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE MADE THEM PAY, IF WE'D WON."



"PERHAPS IT WOULD GEE-UP BETTER IF WE LET IT TOUCH EARTH"

L A cartoon by left wing artist David Low. This was published in January 1921 and is criticising the high level of reparations payments which Germany had to make.

- 12** Look at the Sources H,I,J,K, and L. How do these sources help you to understand how Versailles appeared to different people in different countries at the time?
- 13** Which of these sources are the most useful for telling you how people felt about the Treaty in 1919? Explain your answer.

The consequences of Versailles

The loss of her colonies might have helped Germany. These colonies had not been very important to her. She was now no longer distracted by having to look after an overseas empire. This may have helped her to concentrate on rebuilding her position in Europe.

The new countries around Germany were supposed to act as a safeguard against future German expansion. But these countries were not strong enough to resist Germany once she became strong again. Many Germans resented having land taken away. It became a matter of pride for Germany to get back the lands taken away at Versailles. In 1935 the people living in the Saar area voted to be returned to Germany.

German soldiers and sailors also deeply resented the treatment given out at Versailles. They did not believe that they had lost the War but anyway, ways were found to beat the restrictions. For example, Germany built up an army which, although small, was well trained and professional. Small, yet fast and powerful, ships were built. It was very difficult to check on the number and size of tanks and guns.

The German people bitterly resented the way they were forced to accept the blame for the War. The Treaty was called the Diktat, in other words it was dictated, they had no say.

M We are under no illusions as to the extent of our defeat and the degree of our powerlessness. We know that the strength of the German army is broken. We know the intensity of the hatred which meets us, and we have heard the victors' passionate demand that as the vanquished we shall be made to pay, and as the guilty we shall be punished.

The demand is made that we shall acknowledge that we alone are guilty of having caused the War. Such a confession would be a lie. We deny that the people of Germany, who were convinced that they were waging a war of defence, should be burdened with the sole guilt of that war.

From the speech made by Count Rantzau, the head of the German delegation at Versailles.

This resentment became focussed on the German politicians who had authorised the signing of the Armistice and the Treaty. They were called the 'November criminals' by Hitler who said they had 'stabbed Germany in the back'. The reparations payments were unrealistic. They were too high even for a strong economy. Germany found it impossible to pay. The USA had to lend massive amounts of money to Germany to help her pay off these reparations and eventually the payments had to be reduced. On the other hand, Germany was still a strong country even after Versailles, as British historian A.J.P. Taylor explained in 1969.

N Germany remained by far the greatest power on the continent of Europe. It was greatest in population – 65 million against 40 million in France, the only other major power. German superiority was greater still in the economic resources of coal and steel which [equal] power. Nothing could prevent the Germans from overshadowing Europe, even if they did not plan to do so.

From *The Origins of the Second World War* by A.J.P. Taylor, 1969.

Some people have argued that the Treaty of Versailles caused the Second World War, while others, such as Taylor, say that Germany was almost bound to present future problems because it was still such a strong country. Certainly, Hitler overturned many of the Versailles decisions (see Chapter 5), and when German soldiers invaded Poland in 1939 this led to war. Though this is not the same as saying Versailles caused the War.

Hitler could have chosen peaceful methods to get back German land. Hitler may have been set on war anyway. However, in two important ways the harshness of the Treaty did help to bring about the Second World War. The harshness of the War Guilt Clause and the reparations demands made it easier for Hitler to gain power in Germany. And the severe military restrictions and territorial adjustments meant that some politicians in Britain were sympathetic to Hitler's foreign policy between 1933 and 1938.

- 14** Read Source M. What was Rantzau's attitude to the War Guilt Clause of the Treaty of Versailles?
- 15** Why did the German delegation sign the Treaty if they believed it was unfair? Use Source M and the knowledge you have gained from this chapter to explain your answer.
- 16** You are a German politician in 1923. You know that many Germans resent the Treaty of Versailles and those politicians who signed it. Write a short speech saying what was wrong with Versailles and what you will do about it if the people vote for you.

Essays:

- i** What were the peace makers trying to achieve at Versailles? Were they successful?
- ii** Was the Treaty of Versailles a fair settlement?