

Treaty of Versailles Signed

The Great War ended in an armistice in November 1918. The Allied victors met in the Palace of Versailles Hall of Mirrors from January 18 to June 28, 1919. The German army and government saw a chance to end the war without major hardship to the nation after President Wilson issued his Fourteen Points for what he called “peace without victory.” The other Allied leaders held different points of view.

Vittorio Orlando of Italy wanted the secret negotiations made by the Allied powers to be kept. Italy had been promised territory and populations in Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Albania and Africa. The Allied powers cut back on those agreements in 1919. Orlando walked out of the conference once and later broke down and cried to President Wilson. Italy would agree to the Treaty but with resentment toward the Allied powers.

Georges Clemenceau and the French government had entered the war wanting revenge for the Franco-Prussian War of 1817 and the beating that France suffered during the four years of the Great War. The spoils of war belonged to France. Germany was to be punished to the point that the Germans could never become a threat to France. Clemenceau saw President Wilson as a self-righteous, narrow-minded hypocrite. He went on to say that Wilson has his Fourteen Points and God only has Ten Commandments. Wilson’s view of Clemenceau was just as negative. When Clemenceau was shot and wounded by an anarchist, President Wilson was credited with saying the anarchist should be sentenced to eight years of target practice.

David Lloyd George and the British wanted to weaken Germany’s industrial power but not to weaken Germany to the point that the country could not be a counterbalance of power in Europe to offset France. Britain saw Germany as the key to offset Soviet Bolshevisms. They also supported the freedom-of-the-seas point in the Fourteen Points.

Japan wanted to come out of the Treaty as an equal to the powers of Europe. Asian leaders and the Middle East were viewed as not ready to be independent powers—they would need to be guided into the democratic world by European leadership.

President Wilson’s Fourteen Points were slowly eroded by European leaders’ demands and Wilson’s desire to have a League of Nations to prevent future aggression and another World War. Colonel Edward House, Wilson’s point man, compromised on European demands to ensure the passing of a League. Yet Wilson’s idealism only extended to Europe as Clemenceau was referring to in his dislike of Wilson.

The Treaty was signed on June 28, 1919, with 440 Articles on 200 pages and 75,000 words. No nation was happy with the Treaty. Germany called the Treaty the “*Diktat*” and had not been allowed into the negotiations. The German Army

had told the government to sign the armistice based on the Fourteen Points and then accused the government of being traitors with a “stab in the back” myth that was born to fuel resentment of the Allied powers. Germany complained about the harshness of the Treaty.

Stats and Facts

Germany Lost in Treaty of Versailles Allied powers and Germany, 1919	Russia Lost in Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (Germany and Russia, 1918)
13.5 % of land	27% of farmland
12.5% of population	32% of population
16% of coal production	89% of coal production
48% of iron production	73% of iron production
15% of farmland	33% of rail road mileage
all merchant ships	5,000 factories and industrial plants

Military was reduced for defense only; reparations to be paid up to 1987.

Machiavelli had said, “Either crush a foe or make a friend. Do not insult him”

John Maynard Keynes voiced concerns over the economic conditions imposed by the Treaty’s reparations payments.

The United States refused to ratify the Treaty because of Article 10 and the question of territorial guarantee. The Treaty would allow other nations to become involved in the U.S. territory matters to settle disputes. The U.S would not join the League of Nations.

Collateral Casualties

	War Widows	War Orphans
Germany:	525,000	over 1,000,000
Italy	200,000	300,000
France	600,000	760,000
Great Britain	240,000	350,000
Romani	300,000	
Russia		
United States		

France and the United States were the only nations that made it legally mandatory to send home bodies of the fallen soldiers.

In France, a war widow lost her benefits when she remarried. A woman that married a disabled veteran was allowed to keep his benefits when he died.

Three royal houses fell, and 10 new nations came into being, one of them being the Soviet Union, and everyone went back to doing what they had done before. Progress?

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