

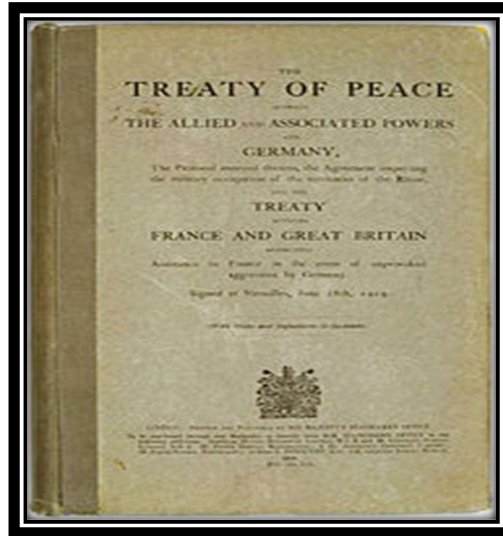
## **THE VERSAILLES TREATY**

**THE TREATY THAT ENDED WW1- BUT LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR WW2**

**THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON GERMANY THAT WERE NEVER ENFORCED**

**AMERICA'S JUSTIFICATION TO NOT JOIN "THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS"**

174



**OUTLINES THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON GERMANY AFTER WW1**

### **THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES OF 1918 AND IT'S WORLD CONSEQUENCES**

This video explains how Adolph Hitler was able to come to power while ignoring the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles as his actions **were ignored by the world**. It also explains some of the consequences of the US Senate's refusal to ratify the treaty, accepting the role of an isolationist. **Experts say that as a member of The League Of Nations America could have prevented Hitler's rise to power and the outbreak of WW2.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfnEy8FuElc>

### **INTRODUCTION**

World War I officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. Negotiated among the Allied powers with little participation by Germany, its 15 parts and 440 articles reassigned German boundaries and assigned liability for reparations.

After strict enforcement for five years, the French assented to the modification of important provisions. Germany agreed to pay reparations under the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan, but those plans were canceled in 1932, **and Hitler's rise to power and subsequent actions rendered moot the remaining terms of the treaty.**



The treaty, negotiated between January and June 1919 in Paris, was written by the Allies with almost no participation by the Germans. The negotiations revealed a split between the French, who wanted to dismember Germany to make it impossible for it to renew war with France, and the British and Americans, who did not want to create pretexts for a new war. The eventual treaty included fifteen parts and 440 articles. Some of the noteworthy parts of the Treaty were:

**PART 1**

Created the Covenant of the New League of Nations, which Germany was not allowed to join until 1926.

**PART 2**

Specified Germany's new boundaries, giving Eupen-Malm[acute]dy to Belgium, Alsace-Lorraine back to France, substantial eastern districts to Poland, Memel to Lithuania, and large portions of Schleswig to Denmark.

**PART 3**

Stipulated a demilitarized zone and separated the Saar from Germany for fifteen years.

**PART 4**

Stripped Germany of all its colonies.

**PART 5**

Reduced Germany's armed forces to very low levels and prohibited Germany from possessing certain classes of weapons, while committing the Allies to eventual disarmament as well.

**PART 8**

Established Germany's liability for reparations without stating a specific figure and began with Article 231, in which Germany accepted the responsibility of itself and its allies for the losses and damages of the Allies "as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

**PART 9**

Imposed numerous other financial obligations upon Germany.



*The Hall Of Mirrors – Negotiations were held here*

**REACTION**

The German government signed the treaty under protest. Right-wing German parties attacked it as a betrayal, and terrorists assassinated several politicians whom they considered responsible. The U.S. Senate refused to ratify the treaty, and the U.S. government took no responsibility for most of its provisions.

For five years the French and the Belgians tried to enforce the treaty quite rigorously, leading in 1922 to their occupation of the Ruhr. In 1924, however, Anglo-American financial pressure compelled France to scale down its goals and end the occupation, and the French, assented to modifying important provisions of the treaty in a series of new agreements.

Germany in 1924 and 1929 agreed to pay reparations under the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan, but the depression led to the cancellation of reparations in 1932. The Allies evacuated the Rhineland in 1930. Germany violated many disarmament provisions of Part V during the 1920s, and Hitler denounced the treaty altogether in 1935.

From March 1937 through March 1939, Hitler overturned the territorial provisions of the treaty concerning Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Memel, with at least the tacit consent of the Western powers. On September 1, 1939, he attacked Poland to alter that frontier, as well.



*The Palace and Grounds at Versailles*

One can never know whether either rigorous Franco-British enforcement of the original treaty or a more generous treaty would have avoided a new war. Certainly, the British and American governments after 1945 sought to avoid many of the problems that had been raised by the Treaty of Versailles, especially regarding reparations, and the division of Germany and the Cold War enabled them generously to rebuild the western zones and to integrate them into a western alliance without renewing fears of German aggression. Meanwhile, they deferred certain fundamental issues for so long that no formal peace treaty was ever written to end World War II.

#### **SUMMARY AND ADDITIONAL DETAILED INFORMATION**

The Treaty itself can be divided into several sections....**Territorial, Military, Financial, and General**

##### **TERRITORIAL**

The following land was taken away from Germany: Alsace-Lorraine (given to France), Eupen and Malmedy (given to Belgium), Northern Schleswig (given to Denmark), Hultschin (given to Czechoslovakia) & West Prussia, Posen and Upper Silesia (given to Poland). The Saar, Danzig, and Memel were put under the control of the League of Nations, and the people of these regions were allowed to vote to stay in Germany or not in the future.

The League of Nations also took control of Germany's overseas colonies. Germany had to return to Russia land taken in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Some of this land was made into new states: Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. An enlarged Poland also received some of this land.

##### **MILITARY**

Germany's army was reduced to 100,000 men; the army was not allowed tanks. She was not allowed an air force. She was allowed only 6 capital naval ships and no submarines. The west of the Rhineland and 50 km east of the River Rhine was made into a demilitarized zone (DMZ). No German soldier or weapon was allowed into this zone. The Allies were to keep an army of occupation on the west bank of the Rhine for 15 years.

##### **FINANCIAL**

The loss of vital industrial territory would be a severe blow to any attempts by Germany to rebuild her economy. Coal from the Saar and Upper Silesia in particular was a vital economic loss. Combined with the financial penalties linked to reparations, it seemed clear to Germany that the Allies wanted nothing else but to bankrupt her. Germany was also forbidden to unite with Austria to form one superstate, in an attempt to keep her economic potential to a minimum.

##### **GENERAL**

**There are three vital clauses here:**

1. Germany had to admit full responsibility for starting the war. This was Clause 231 - the infamous "War Guilt Clause".
2. Germany, as she was responsible for starting the war as stated in clause 231, was, therefore responsible for all the war damage caused by the First World War. Therefore, she had to pay reparations, the bulk of which would go to France and Belgium to pay for the damage done to the infrastructure of both countries by the war. Quite literally, reparations would be used to pay for the damage to be repaired.

Payment could be in kind or cash. The figure was not set at Versailles - it was to be determined later. The Germans were told to write a blank cheque which the Allies would cash when it suited them. The figure was eventually put at £6,600 million - a huge sum of money well beyond Germany's ability to pay.

3. A League of Nations was set up to keep world peace. The first 26 clauses of the treaty dealt with the League's organization.



*Negotiating in the "Hall Of Mirrors"*

### **THE GERMAN REACTION TO THE TREATY**

After agreeing to the Armistice in November 1918, the Germans had been convinced that they would be consulted by the Allies on the contents of the Treaty. This did not happen and the Germans were in no position to continue the war as their army had all but disintegrated. Though this lack of consultation angered them, there was nothing they could do about it. Therefore, the first time that the German representatives saw the terms of the Treaty was just weeks before they were due to sign it in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles on June 28th, 1919.

There was anger throughout Germany when the terms were made public. The Treaty became known as a Diktat - as it was being forced on them and the Germans had no choice but to sign it. Many in Germany did not want the Treaty signed, but the representatives there knew that they had no choice as Germany was incapable of restarting the war again.

In one last gesture of defiance, the captured German naval force held at Scapa Flow (north of Scotland) scuttled itself i.e. deliberately sank itself.

Germany was given two choices: 1) sign the Treaty or 2) be invaded by the Allies.

### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE VERSAILLES TREATY**

The Treaty seemed to satisfy the "Big Three" as in their eyes it was a just peace as it kept Germany weak yet strong enough to stop the spread of communism; kept the French border with Germany safe from another German attack and created the organization, the League of Nations that would end warfare throughout the world.

However, it left a mood of anger throughout Germany as it was felt that as a nation Germany had been unfairly treated. Above all else, Germany hated the clause blaming her for the cause of the war and the resultant financial penalties the treaty was bound to impose on Germany. Those who signed it (though effectively they had no choice) became known as the "November Criminals".

Many German citizens felt that they were being punished for the mistakes of the German Government in August 1914 as it was the government that had declared war, not the people.

### **WERE THE TERMS OF THE TREATY CARRIED OUT?**

1. The League of Nations was created. This did happen even if Germany was initially excluded from it.
2. Land had to be handed over to Poland, France, Belgium, and Denmark. This did happen - all the land Germany was required to hand over, was handed over. Territory put under League of Nations control was handed over to the League.
3. All overseas colonies were to be handed over to the League. This did happen.
4. All land taken from Russia had to be handed back to Russia. This did happen though the land in the western area became Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in keeping with the belief in national self-determination.

5. Germany's army had to be reduced to 100,000 men. On paper, this happened. The fact that Germany side-stepped the rule did not mean that she broke it - though what she did was a deliberate attempt to break this term. German soldiers in the 1920s were signed on for a short contract of service and then put in the reserves once their time had finished. Therefore, Germany never had more than 100,000 soldiers serving at any one time though she certainly had substantial reserve soldiers which boosted Hitler when he renounced the clauses of Versailles.

6. Germany's navy was reduced to 6 battleships with no submarines. This happened. Germany could not afford battleships in the aftermath of the war and most navies were now moving to smaller (by degrees), faster ships that could also carry weapons that carried a punch - such as cruisers. Aircraft carriers were also being developed with greater commitment. Submariners were trained abroad - Versailles did not cover this, so it did not break the terms of Versailles - only the spirit.

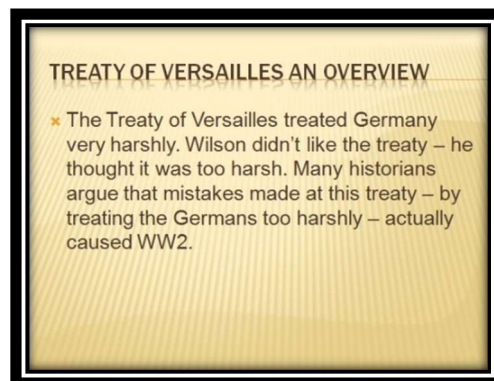
7. No air force was allowed. This happened but as with submariners, potential pilots were trained abroad or using gliders in Germany to educate them in the theory of flying. This did not break Versailles

8. Western Germany was to be demilitarized. This happened.

9. Germany was forbidden to unite with Austria. This happened.

10. Germany had to accept the "War Guilt Clause" and pay reparations. The former happened in the sense that Germany signed the Treaty which meant that she accepted this term on paper. if not in fact. Germany did try and pay reparations when she could do so. She did not refuse to pay in 1922. She simply could not produce what was needed that year and this led to the French invasion of the Ruhr. In the 1920's it was the Allies who took the decision to reduce reparations and eased Germany's plight in so doing. The first instance of refusal to pay reparations came in 1933 when Hitler announced that Germany would not pay - and the Allies did nothing.

**Therefore, throughout the 1920's, in nearly all parts of the Treaty, the terms were carried out. It was after 1933 that there was a systematic breaking of the terms when the Nazis came to power.**



## **BACKGROUND**

World War I had left Europe devastated. Those countries that had fought in it, had suffered casualties never experienced before:

**Britain:** 750,000 soldiers killed; 1,500,000 wounded

**France :** 1,400,000 soldiers killed; 2,500,000 wounded

**Belgium:** 50,000 soldiers killed

**Italy:** 600,000 soldiers killed

**Russia :** 1,700,000 soldiers killed

**America:** 116,000 soldiers killed

Those who had fought against the Allies suffered heavy casualties as well:

**Germany :** 2,000,000 soldiers killed

**Austria-Hungary :** 1,200,000 soldiers killed

**Turkey:** 325,000 soldiers killed

**Bulgaria:** 100,000 soldiers killed

The total number of deaths of all nations who fought in the war **is thought to have been 8.5 million with 21 million being wounded.**



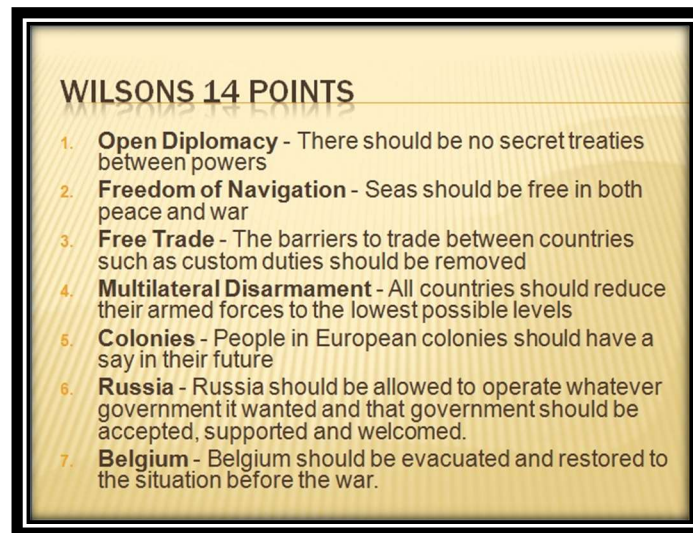
Alongside these statistics, was the fact that vast areas of north-eastern Europe had been reduced to rubble. Flanders in Belgium had been all but destroyed with the ancient city of Ypres being devastated. The homes of 750,000 French people were destroyed and the infrastructure of this region had also been severely damaged. Roads, coal mines, and telegraph poles had all been destroyed and such a loss greatly hindered the area's ability to function normally.

The victors from World War One were in no mood to be charitable to the defeated nations and Germany in particular was held responsible for the war and its consequences.

During mid-1918, Europe was hit by Spanish flu and an estimated 25 million people died. This added to the feeling of bitterness that ran through Europe and this anger was primarily directed at Germany.

### **SUMMARY OF AMERICAN ACTIONS**

President Woodrow Wilson's original 14 points he originally submitted to the negotiators.



[The Covenant of the League of Nations was included as part of the treaty.](#)

Wilson's victories included the creation of a modern Poland, the pledge of support for disarmament, the establishment of colonial trusts, and, of course, the creation of the League of Nations. However, to obtain these provisions, he acquiesced to the demands of the Allies on reparations, stripping Germany of its colonies, and the near-total destruction of the German military — all of which contributed to an undercurrent of anger in the defeated nation.

Opposition to the treaty came from many different sources. Besides the isolationists who felt the treaty forced to United States to do too much, another view was that it did little to prevent future global conflicts. This point, made in an editorial that appeared in the New Republic on May 24, 1919, expressed this view.

Wilson was well aware of the objectionable features of the treaty but believed that they could be overcome in the future by actions of the League of Nations.

### **SOME WEAKNESS OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS**

The country, whose president, Woodrow Wilson, had dreamt up the idea of the League - America - refused to join it. As America was the world's most powerful nation, this was a serious blow to the prestige of the League. However, America's refusal to join the League, fitted in with her desire to have an isolationist policy throughout the world.

Germany was not allowed to join the League in 1919. As Germany had started the war, according to the Treaty of Versailles, one of her punishments was that she was not considered to be a member of the international community and, therefore, she was not invited to join. This was a great blow to Germany but it also meant that the League could not use whatever strength Germany had to support its campaign against aggressor nations.

Therefore, the League had a fine idea - to end the war for good. However, if an aggressor nation was determined enough to ignore the League's verbal warnings, all the League could do was enforce economic sanctions and hope that these worked as it had no chance of enforcing its decisions using military might.



*Japan Delegates walk out on League of Nations*

#### **REASONS WHY US CONGRESS DID NOT RATIFY THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES**

1. President Wilson didn't bring any Republicans with him to the meeting at Versailles and therefore lost Republican support (the Senate was dominantly Republican)
2. US citizens felt sympathy towards Germany and the harsh terms pushed on the nation in the Treaty.
3. The Senate was dominantly Isolationist and didn't agree with Wilson's 14th point: the League of Nations, because it would pull the US into foreign affairs.
4. President Wilson would not compromise on the Treaty, especially the 14th point, which is what the Senate wanted in return for them to ratify the Treaty.
5. Many say Wilson's stubbornness was the main cause of the failure of the Treaty.

Most decisions made in life always prompt the questions, of what could have been, what might have been, what should have been, and what ought to have been.

Many historians feel that the Versailles Treaty turned out in years to come to be one of the most important treaties ever negotiated and signed and that it was a "missed opportunity".

#### **CONSIDER THIS**

1. The 14 points presented to the parties by President Woodrow Wilson were acceptable to the Germans...but were rejected by the parties to the treaty.
2. Only three countries (America, Great Britain, and France) made the final decisions of the treaty. Germany was not included and Japan walked out...
3. France was not open to any concessions to Germany and wanted to destroy them....
4. The League of Nations was formed by the parties to the treaty, but, the United States did not ratify the results of the treaty and did not become a member of the League of Nations, choosing isolation instead of involvement. Times were tough at that time in the United States and the US nor any other country offered any kind of support to help rebuild Germany as we did after WW2.
5. President Wilson declined to take any politicians from the opposition party (Republicans) with him to Versailles and pissed off the Republican Controlled Senate making them unreceptive to the terms of the treaty.
6. The American people did not agree with the treatment of the Germans and decided they wanted nothing to do with it and did not want to "get involved"
7. When Hitler assumed control of Germany all monitoring of Germany's compliance with the restrictions of the treaty had stopped.

#### **A SIMPLE 'WHAT IF'**

If President Wilson had been more "diplomatic" in his efforts to bring the United States into the "League Of Nations" thus bringing them into the "monitoring" of German compliance, would this have stopped the rise of Hitler and "Nazi Germany". History will never know.....

## **PERSONAL POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND IT'S INFLUENCE IN THE NON-RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY REPUBLICAN OPPOSITION IN THE U.S.**

Although Wilson had secured his proposal for a League of Nations in the final draft of the Treaty of Versailles, the U.S. Senate refused to consent to the ratification of the Treaty. For many Republicans in the Senate, Article X was the most objectionable provision.

Their objections were based on the fact that, by ratifying such a document, the United States would be bound by an international contract to defend a League of Nations member if it was attacked. Henry Cabot Lodge from Massachusetts and Frank B. Brandegee from Connecticut led the fight in the U.S. Senate against ratification, believing that it was best not to become involved in international conflicts. Under the United States Constitution, the President of the United States may not ratify a treaty unless the Senate, by a two-thirds vote, gives its advice and consent.

Because the Senate would not support ratification, the U.S. never joined the League of Nations, hampering the League's credibility as a mediator of world conflict.

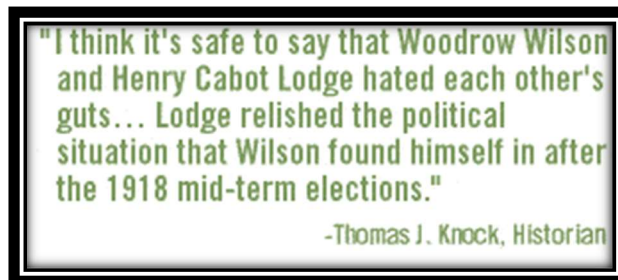
Senator Henry Cabot Lodge led the opposition. Lodge and Wilson were bitter political foes, but they also had legitimate differences of views on the League and the covenant's Tenth Article.

Wilson and Lodge surely could have found a middle ground. Some sort of compromise language could have been drafted. There were pro-treaty Republicans who could have formed a coalition with the Democrats to win the necessary two-thirds majority.

But Wilson blocked compromise after he suffered a massive stroke in October 1919. No accommodation with the opposition was found on either side. The treaty was voted down.

The United States remained officially at war until June of 1921 when President Warren Harding approved a joint congressional resolution proclaiming the war with the Central Powers ended and later signed a separate peace treaty. The resolution and the treaty specified that although the United States was not a party to the Versailles Treaty, it retained all rights and advantages accorded to it under the pact's terms, excluding the League Covenant.

The United States never joined the League of Nations.



While stationed in Europe during my military service I was fortunate enough to tour the Palace at Versailles and its grounds on two occasions including the famous "Hall Of Mirrors." My only wish is that I had been more aware of its significance at the time of my visit. (JEC)

### **DISCLAIMER**

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