

Source A: President Wilson's Address to Congress, January 8, 1918:

. . . . No statesman who has the least conception of his responsibility ought for a moment to permit himself to continue this tragical and appalling outpouring of blood and treasure unless he is sure . . . that the objects of the vital sacrifice are part and parcel of the very life of Society and that the people for whom he speaks think them right and imperative as he does. It will our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. . . . We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The program of the world's peace, therefore, is our program; and that program, the only possible program, as we see it, is this:

- I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.
- II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.
- III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.
- IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
- V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.
- VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their goodwill, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.
- VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.
- VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.
- IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality

- X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.
- XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.
- XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman [Turkish] Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule [i.e., Kurds, Arab peoples, Armenians and some Greeks] should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles [namely, the straits leading from the Black Sea approaches to international waters] should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.
- XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.
- XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

Source B: From the Versailles Peace Treaty

Article 231

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

Source C: From <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWversailles.htm>

The main terms of the Versailles Treaty were:

- (1) the surrender of all German colonies as League of Nations mandates;
- (2) the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France;
- (3) cession of Eupen-Malmedy to Belgium, Memel to Lithuania, the Hultschin district to Czechoslovakia,
- (4) Poznan, parts of East Prussia and Upper Silesia to Poland;
- (5) Danzig to become a free city;
- (6) plebiscites to be held in northern Schleswig to settle the Danish-German frontier;
- (7) occupation and special status for the Saar under French control; (8) demilitarization and a fifteen-year occupation of the Rhineland;
- (9) German reparations of £6,600 million;
- (10) a ban on the union of Germany and Austria;
- (11) an acceptance of Germany's guilt in causing the war;
- (11) provision for the trial of the former Kaiser and other war leaders;
- (12) limitation of Germany's army to 100,000 men with no conscription, no tanks, no heavy artillery, no poison-gas supplies, no aircraft and no airships;
- (13) the limitation of the German Navy to vessels under 100,000 tons, with no submarines.

Source D: Raymond Poincare diary entry (14th March, 1919)

Today Clemenceau is angry with the English, and especially with Lloyd George. - "I won't budge," he said, - "I will act like a hedgehog and wait until they come to talk to me. I will yield nothing. We will see if they can manage without me. Lloyd George is a trickster. He has managed to turn me into a "Syrian". I don't like being double-crossed. Lloyd George has deceived me. He made me the finest promises, and now he breaks them. Fortunately, I think that at the moment we can count on American support. What is the worst of all is that the day before yesterday, Lloyd George said to me, "Well, now that we are going to disarm Germany, you no longer need the Rhine". I said to Clemenceau: "Does disarmament then seem to him to give the same guarantees? Does he think that, in the future, we can be sure of preventing Germany from rebuilding her army?" "We are in complete agreement," said Clemenceau: "it is a point I will not yield."

Source E: David Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties (1938)

There never was a greater contrast, mental or spiritual, than that which existed between these two notable men. Wilson with his high but narrow brow, his fine head with its elevated crown and his dreamy but untrustful eye - the make-up of the idealist who is also something of an egoist; Clemenceau, with a powerful head and the square brow of the logician - the head conspicuously flat topped, with no upper storey in which to lodge the humanities, the ever vigilant and fierce eye of the animal who has hunted and been hunted all his life. The idealist amused him so long as he did not insist on incorporating his dreams in a Treaty which Clemenceau had to sign.

It was part of the real joy of these Conferences to observe Clemenceau's attitude towards Wilson during the first five weeks of the Conference. He listened with eyes and ears lest Wilson should by a phrase commit the Conference to some proposition which weakened the settlement from the French standpoint. If Wilson ended his allocution without doing any perceptible harm, Clemenceau's stern face temporarily relaxed, and he expressed his relief with a deep sigh. But if the President took a flight beyond the azure main, as he was occasionally inclined to do without regard to relevance, Clemenceau would open his great eyes in twinkling wonder, and turn them on me as much as to say: "Here he is off again!"

Source F: Georges Clemenceau, speech at the Paris Peace Conference (16th June 1919)

In the view of the Allied and Associated Powers the war which began on August 1st, 1914, was the greatest crime against humanity and the freedom of peoples that any nation, calling itself civilised, has ever consciously committed. For many years the rulers of Germany, true to the Prussian tradition, strove for a position of dominance in Europe. They were not satisfied with that growing prosperity and influence to which Germany was entitled, and which all other nations were willing to accord her, in the society of free and equal peoples. They required that they should be able to dictate and tyrannise to a subservient Europe, as they dictated and tyrannised over a subservient Germany. Germany's responsibility, however, is not confined to having planned and started the war. She is no less responsible for the savage and inhuman manner in which it was conducted.

Though Germany was herself a guarantor of Belgium, the rulers of Germany violated, after a solemn promise to respect it, the neutrality of this unoffending people. Not content with this, they deliberately carried out a series of promiscuous shootings and burnings with the sole object of terrifying the inhabitants into submission by the very frightfulness of their action. They were the first to use poisonous gas, notwithstanding the appalling suffering it entailed. They began the bombing and long distance shelling of towns for no military object, but solely for the purpose of reducing the morale of their opponents by striking at their women and children. They commenced the submarine campaign with its piratical challenge to international law, and its destruction of great numbers of innocent passengers and sailors, in mid ocean, far from succour, at the mercy of the winds and the waves, and the yet more ruthless submarine crews. They drove thousands of men and women and children with brutal savagery into slavery in foreign lands. They allowed barbarities to be practised against their prisoners of war from which the most uncivilised people would have recoiled.

The conduct of Germany is almost unexampled in human history. The terrible responsibility which lies at her doors can be seen in the fact that not less than seven million dead lie buried in Europe, while more than twenty million others carry upon them the evidence of wounds and sufferings, because Germany saw fit to gratify her lust for tyranny by resort to war.

The Allied and Associated Powers believe that they will be false to those who have given their all to save the freedom of the world if they consent to treat this war on any other basis than as a crime against humanity.

Justice, therefore, is the only possible basis for the settlement of the accounts of this terrible war. Justice is what the German Delegation asks for and says that Germany had been promised. Justice is what Germany shall have. But it must be justice for all. There must be justice for the dead and wounded and for those who have been orphaned and bereaved that Europe might be freed

from Prussian despotism. There must be justice for the peoples who now stagger under war debts which exceed £30,000,000,000 that liberty might be saved. There must be justice for those millions whose homes and land, ships and property German savagery has spoliated and destroyed.

That is why the Allied and Associated Powers have insisted as a cardinal feature of the Treaty that Germany must undertake to make reparation to the very uttermost of her power; for reparation for wrongs inflicted is of the essence of justice. That is why they insist that those individuals who are most clearly responsible for German aggression and for those acts of barbarism and inhumanity which have disgraced the German conduct of the war, must be handed over to a justice which has not been meted out to them at home. That, too, is why Germany must submit for a few years to certain special disabilities and arrangements. Germany has ruined the industries, the mines and the machinery of neighbouring countries, not during battle, but with the deliberate and calculated purpose of enabling her industries to seize their markets before their industries could recover from the devastation thus wantonly inflicted upon them. Germany has despoiled her neighbours of everything she could make use of or carry away. Germany has destroyed the shipping of all nations on the high sea, where there was no chance of rescue for their passengers and crews. It is only justice that restitution should be made and that these wronged peoples should be safeguarded for a time from the competition of a nation whose industries are intact and have even been fortified by machinery stolen from occupied territories.

Source G: Edward M. House, diary (29th June, 1919)

To those who are saying that the Treaty is bad and should never have been made and that it will involve Europe in infinite difficulties in its enforcement, I feel like admitting it. But I would also say in reply that empires cannot be shattered and new states raised upon their ruins without disturbance. To create new boundaries is always to create new troubles. The one follows the other. While I should have preferred a different peace, I doubt whether it could have been made, for the ingredients for such a peace as I would have had were lacking at Paris

Source H: German Response to the Treaty:

I have the honor to transmit herewith the observations of the German Delegation on the Draft of the Treaty of Peace. We had come to Versailles in the expectation of receiving a proposal of peace on the basis actually agreed upon. . . We hope to get the Peace of Right which has been promised us. We were aghast when, in reading (the treaty), we learned what demands Might Triumphant has raised against us. The deeper we penetrated into the spirit of this Treaty, the more we became convinced of its impracticability. The demands raised go beyond the power of the German Nation.

[Here follow a narrative of the territorial sacrifices to be made by Germany: most of West Prussia to Poland, the German city of Danzig, the German town of Memel, the heavily industrialized Upper Silesia, occupation of the Rhineland, and so on.]

In spite of such monstrous demands the rebuilding of our economic system is at the same time made impossible. We are to surrender our merchant fleet. We are to give up all foreign interests. We are to transfer to our opponents the property of all German undertakings abroad, even of those situated in countries allied to us. Even after the conclusion of peace the enemy states are to be empowered to confiscate all German property. No German merchant will then, in their countries, be safe from such war measures. We are to completely renounce our colonies, not even in these are German missionaries to have the right of exercising their profession. We are, in other words, to renounce every kind of political, economic and moral activity.

But more than this, we are also to resign the right of self-determination in domestic affairs. Dictatorial powers are conferred on the International Reparation Commission over our whole national life in economic and cultural matters, its power by far exceeding those ever enjoyed within the German Empire by the Emperor, the German Federal Council and the Reichstag put together. This Commission has the unrestrained power of disposal over the economic system of the state, of the municipalities and of private individuals. All matters of education and public health likewise depend on it. . . . The Commission . . . can, in order to augment the payments of Serfdom, inhibit the whole system of social care for the working classes in Germany.

Also in other respects Germany's right of sovereignty is abrogated. Her principal rivers are placed under international administration, she is obliged to build on her own territory the canals and railways desired by the enemy, she must, without knowing the contents, assent to agreements which her adversaries intend concluding with the new states in the East [i.e., Poland and the Baltic states] and which affect Germany's own boundaries. The German people is excluded from the League of Nations to which all common work of the world is confided.

Thus a whole nation is called upon to sign its own proscription, yea, even its own death warrant.

Germany knows that she must make sacrifices in order to come to Peace. Germany knows that she has promised such sacrifices by agreement and wishes to carry them through to the utmost limit she can possibly go to.

1. Germany offers to take the lead before all other nations in disarming herself, in order to show that she is willing to help them in bringing forth the new era of the Peace of Right. She will give up compulsory service and will . . . diminish her army to 100,000 men. She is even prepared to surrender the battleships which her opponents intend leaving her. But she hereby acts on the assumption that she will be immediately admitted, as a state with equal rights, into the League of Nations. . . .

2. In territorial questions Germany unreservedly endorses the Wilson program. She renounces her sovereignty in Alsace-Lorraine, desiring, however, a free plebiscite to be carried through there. . . . [here follow a description of the further concession Germany is willing to make: cession of territory indisputably inhabited by Poles and Danes; a free port in Danzig and Polish access to the sea; submitting her former colonies to the administration of the League of Nations, with mandatory rights for Germany. All this is coupled with a 'demand' that the right of self-determination be respected also in favor of the Germans in Austria and Bohemia.]

3. Germany is prepared to make the payments incumbent on her . . . up to the maximum amount of 100 billion marks gold, namely, 20 billion marks gold until May 1, 1926, and the remaining 80 billion marks gold afterwards, by annual installments bearing no interest . . . In conceding this, Germany acts on the assumption that she will have to make no further sacrifices of territory beyond the above mentioned ones, and that she will again be granted freedom of action at home and abroad.

4. Germany is ready to devote her entire economic power to the work of reparation. She is desirous of actively cooperating in the restoration of the devastated territories in Belgium and Northern France. . . .

9. The German Delegation again raise their demand for a neutral inquiry into the question of responsibility for the war and of guilt during the war. An impartial commission should have the right of inspecting the archives of all belligerent countries and examining, as in a court of law, all chief actors of the war. The high aims which our adversaries were the first to establish for their warfare, the new era of a just and durable Peace, demand a Treaty of a different mind. Only a cooperation of all nations, a cooperation of hands and intellects, can bring about a permanent peace. We are not under a misapprehension as to the intensity of hatred and bitterness that is caused by this war; and yet the forces at work for the union of mankind are now stronger than

ever. It is the historical task of the Peace Conference of Versailles to bring about this union.

Accept, Sir, the assurance of my high esteem,

(signed) *Brockdorff-Rantzau* [German Foreign Minister]

Source I:



Central Ypres 1918



Central Ypres 2002.

Source J: John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of Peace* (1920)

The Treaty includes no provision for the economic rehabilitation of Europe - nothing to make the defeated Central Powers into good neighbours, nothing to stabilise the new States of Europe, nothing to reclaim Russia; nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity amongst the Allies themselves; no arrangement was reached at Paris for restoring the disordered finances of France and Italy, or to adjust the systems of the Old World and the New.

It is an extraordinary fact that the fundamental economic problem of a Europe starving and disintegrating before their eyes, was the one question in which it was impossible to arouse the interest of the Four. Reparation was their main excursion into the economic field, and they settled it from every point of view except that of the economic future of the States whose destiny they were handling.



Source K: Picture from Hall of Mirrors during the signing of Versailles Peace Treaty.

Questions.

Question 1.

Identify the following persons:

- a) Woodrow Wilson.
- b) Raymond Poincare.
- c) George Clemenceau.
- d) David Lloyd Gerorge.
- e) Brockdorff-Rantzau.
- f) Edward M House.
- g) John M Keynes.

Question 2.

What impressions about the Peace treaty do you get from the different sources?

Question 3.

Which sources are positive to the Treaty, which are negative?

Question 4.

Compare and contrast the sources F and H.

Question 5.

Why is source J critical to the Treaty?

Question 6.

Based on your own knowledge of the Treaty to what extent do you agree with the following statement taken from source G "While I should have preferred a different peace, I doubt whether it could have been made, for the ingredients for such a peace as I would have had were lacking at Paris ".