

# The treaty of versailles history essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

November 11th, 1918, an extremely important day in history; this was the day that the Germans signed a cease fire, ' the Armistice'. And that was the first step of a domino effect that led to the eventual end of World War I. On January 18th, 1919 the delegates from Thirty-two countries arrived in Paris for a meeting to discuss and agree on what they would demand from Germany, at that upcoming peace conference brought on by the signing of ' the Armistice'. Most notably what was later referred to as the " big three", President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of the United Kingdom, and Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France.

But, as more and more people assembled in Paris to have their say in the proceedings, this meeting turned into the actual Peace Conference, therefore the decisions made became binding. This was what made the Versailles Treaty different from most other treaties signed throughout history, since Germany wasn't permitted to send their delegates, only the Allies made the stipulations stated in the treaty.

Since the Germans had agreed to the Armistice, they were sure that the Allies would consult with them about the contents of the treaty before final agreements were made. Unfortunately this didn't happen, and even though they were angry the Germans weren't in any position to continue fighting in protest since, after signing the Armistice, their army had all but disintegrated. The choices were clear and few, but the decision, no matter which was chosen, would have massive consequences for Germany and its citizens; sign the treaty or be invaded by the Allies (The Treaty of Versailles, " 2011"). Because the Germans couldn't attend the Peace Conference, the

first time they saw the terms of the treaty was at the actual signing on June 28th.

The Treaty itself was an extremely long and extensive document, including 440 Articles (plus appendixes) divided into fifteen parts. The first section established the League of Nations. Actually the first twenty-six clauses of the treaty dealt with the organization of the League of Nations. Other sections included the terms of military limitations, land ownership, financial matters, and reparations.

The section regarding the military and its limitations were as follows:

The German army was reduced to 100, 000 men and the army was not allowed to own tanks

Germany was not allowed an air force

The German military was only allowed six capital naval ships and no submarines

The entire west side of the Rhineland and 50 kilometers east of the Rhine river was converted to a demilitarized zone; this meant absolutely no German soldiers or weapons were allowed in this zone

The Allies placed an army of occupation on the west bank of the Rhine for fifteen years

Germany was prohibited from building any type of major weapons of violence

Regarding land ownership, the following was seized from Germany:

Alsace-Lorraine, which was given to France

Eupen and Malmedy, which were both given to Belgium

Northern Schleswig was given to Denmark

Hultschin was given to Czechoslovakia

West Prussia, Posen and Upper Silesia were all given to Poland

The League of Nations took control of Saar, Danzig and Memel, but the citizens of the regions would be given the opportunity to vote to stay in Germany or not

And finally, Germany had to return land seized in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to Russia; the land was then turned into new states (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia)

The loss of vital pieces of industrial territories was a severe blow to Germany's financial well being, and combined with extreme financial penalties associated with reparations, it seemed clear to them that the Allies wanted nothing more than to hinder Germany from rebuilding its economy and financially bankrupt them. The final financial blow was the stipulation that Germany was forbidden from uniting with Austria to form one "super state", in an effort to keep the country's economic potential to a bare minimum.

And, what is considered the most controversial aspects of the Versailles Treaty, and was almost definitely the most personally offensive where Germany was concerned, was Article 231, known as the “ war guilt” clause. This clause stated that Germany was to take full responsibility for the destruction caused during World War I. And because Germany, as stated in article 231, was responsible for starting the war, it was responsible for paying reparations to repair the damage. The Germans were instructed to write a blank check, since no figure had been agreed on yet, which could be cashed by the Allies at their leisure. The final figure was eventually set at £6, 600 million (or \$1, 106, 825, 456. 72 by current exchange rates), an impossible amount for Germany to pay.

Needless to say, the citizens of German were extremely upset and angered, after the terms were made public. They felt that the treaty was forced on them and that there was no choice but to sign the treaty and agree to the terms, so in Germany the treaty became known as a Diktat. Although the majority of German citizens didn't want the treaty signed, the representatives knew that they had no other choice. The German Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann actually resigned so he wouldn't have to sign the treaty, and as passive aggressive and defiant final act was perpetrated, “ the captured German naval force held at Scapa Flow (north of Scotland) scuttled itself i. e. deliberately sank itself.” (The Treaty of Versailles, “ 2011”)