

Reading response

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Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points Woodrow Wilson, in his speech of 8th. January 1918, outlined the fourteen points that would end the war and lead to world peace. Wilson entered the war with high ideals to create a new world order where there would be international cooperation and war would never occur again. He outlined his vision for a peaceful and democratic world that would "be made fit and safe to live in" and where "all the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest." (Wilson, speech to Congress) He sincerely believed that if these points were incorporated into the treaty of Versailles, it would establish principles of peace and justice in the world. Germany hoped these points would be the basis for the treaty. However this hope was belied and the terms of the treaty were so harsh on Germany that it finally resulted in a more destructive and horrific war.

America had come out of the war virtually unscathed. However the people of Britain and France were devastated by the destruction caused by the war and in no mood to forgive Germany for it. So it came about that Germany was held solely responsible for the misery and death caused to millions, and the terms of the treaty were particularly humiliating to Germans. Besides, Britain and France had rich colonies that added to their coffers, and therefore clauses that held that determination of their status must have "the interests of the populations"; were contrary to their interests. Every nation naturally looked at the treaty with its own interests foremost. France wanted the territories of Alsace and Lorraine with a view to safeguarding its borders from future German attacks. In this way Germany lost land to France, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The victors of the war were the ones who drafted the treaty of Versailles and the defeated nations were not asked to contribute to the drafting of the

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treaty. The treaty therefore looked after the interests of the victors and since Germany was blamed for the havoc caused by the war and held solely responsible for it; she had to bear the burden of war reparation and cutting down of her armed forces as well as losing territories to other nations. The most important of the fourteen points was the last - that of setting up an international body to maintain peace among the nations of the world. This was set up in the form of the League of Nations. However, Wilson was unable to convince the Americans to join the league and it proved to be an ineffective and toothless body. It led to more friction among nations and was helpless in preventing the next war that was even more horrific than its predecessor causing untold misery to the peoples of the world.

Works Cited

Wilson, Woodrow.

President Wilson's Fourteen Points From World War I Document Archive

Delivered in Joint Session, January 8, 1918

1918 Documents > President Wilson's Fourteen Points

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