

In what ways were  
the aims of  
clemenceau, wilson  
and lloyd george  
different at th...



World War One lasted from 1914-1918, ending with an armistice on November 11th 1918. The allies (Britain, France and the USA) won. The war had reaped havoc across all those countries who participated in it. It left millions people dead or injured (8 million troops killed, 21 million injured) and destroyed huge areas of land and thousands of buildings. The Allies then had to agree a peace treaty with the losers. Everyone wanted to make sure a war like this wouldn't happen again, but all of the Big Three disagreed on how to do this.

Clemenceau (the President of France) wanted Germany to be punished. He had seen his country invaded, large parts of its industry destroyed and millions of its people killed. Clemenceau was determined to make Germany pay compensation for France. He also wanted to weaken Germany so that she could never threaten France again. He wanted Germany to pay huge reparations; he wanted no German armed troops on his border, have their armed forces reduced to a minimum and wanted Germany to split up into smaller states.

He felt they should be harsh on Germany as it was on Russia when they pulled out of the war the previous year – taking 40% of Russia's best land and forced to pay 300 million gold roubles in reparations (the treaty of Brest-Litovsk). Clemenceau knew he had the French people behind him as they wanted to feel safe again; they were hugely angered and wanted to see Germany crippled. Lloyd George and Wilson thought that Clemenceau was just taking advantage of the situation to further France and thought that if they were too harsh, Germany would only want revenge one day.

Lloyd George had been re-elected as Prime Minister (Britain) in 1918 but to win votes he had gone along with the popular mood that Germany's fault. However, he wanted to increase trade and prosperity (and Germany was Britain's number two trading power before the war and rebuilding Germany meant jobs for British workers) and so he wanted a moderate peace and he tried to prevent Germany from being punished too harshly.

Whenever he did this he clashed with Clemenceau and was criticised back in Britain. However he felt it right that Germany should pay some reparations for the damage it had done. Lloyd George ended up in a mid-way position between the aims of Clemenceau and Wilson. Wilson (the President of USA) did not share the anti-German passions of the Europeans. He thought there must be a peace without winners and losers otherwise one day the losers would want revenge which could lead to another war.

He thought that everyone should reduce their armies and navies. He just wanted a peace that would last and, in his opinion, this could be achieved through self-determination (each different nation of people having their own country and governing it themselves instead of being ruled by another nationality) and countries working together in a League of Nations to prevent future war. Wilson's ideas are to be found in his fourteen points.

The general basis of these points were disarming all countries and defining clear borders for each country and the most important point of creating a League of Nations to settle disputes between countries. However, public opinion back in the USA had been affected by the loss of 115, 000 US troops who had been killed in the war, and many Americans wanted less

involvement in European affairs, not more. It was all very well for Wilson to agree with his points as he had not been where the fighting was and was far away in America.

World War One was coined 'The War to End All Wars'. Having revenge and making Germany pay for what it caused may be popular and seemingly fair in the short term, but it only leads to further conflict later on. Despite it seeming that Germany would get off lightly, the only productive way to ensure peace was Wilson's ideas in his fourteen points. As the Treaty was, it dealt a dangerous and disastrous half-measure as it damaged Germany enough to cause resentment but not enough so that she wasn't strong enough to seek revenge.