

Treaty of versailles: unfair, yet often misjudged

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



TREATY OF VERSAILLES: unfair, yet often misjudged -Katrina Besler, bl. B On November 11th, 1918 at 11 o'clock in the morning, World War One, arguably the greatest war of all time up until that point, came to an end. They called it 'the war to end all wars', denoting that it would result in peace; unfortunately for the world, quite the opposite occurred. The 'winners' of the war, known as the Allies, assembled in Paris soon after the guns ceased their blazing and the triumphant, though terribly exhausted and both physically and emotionally scarred, troops returned home. Some, like the French and Belgians, came home to an agitated, war-ravaged land, while the Germans were saluted by their president with the words, "we greet you undefeated". (MacMillan, Interview, p. 11) The irony is that Germany actually lost. This disillusion that the German people were guided into was part of the reason why they were so shocked and outraged when they received the product of the Allied powers' conference: the infamous Treaty of Versailles. Another reason for their reaction was that the treaty was "signed under duress" (IA, p. 43) and the Allies were "rejecting all arguments" (G view TOV, p. 1) in Germany's counter-proposal; it was also because they were expecting a peace based on Wilson's fourteen points, and were astonished at the harshness of the resultant treaty. (V: WGC, p. 1) Finally, a significant part of the anger of the German people toward the Treaty of Versailles was because, collectively, it just wasn't fair. Granted, as David Thomson says in Europe since Napoleon, the negotiators were "constricted not only by their wartime agreements with one another and by pledges at home but also by the accumulated debris of war itself, they could do no more..." (Lewis, WWI aftermath, p. 11), or at least it would be tremendously difficult to attain a

better peace than what they had generated; but, some of the Treaty's terms were intolerable. The restriction of Germany from the League of Nations, the failure to include Germany in discussion about reparations and the subsequent signage of a figurative blank check, the failure of other nations to demilitarize with Germany (and thus the military restrictions, to some extent), some of Germany's territorial losses, the payment of interest on reparations, and the handover of part of Germany's merchant marine to Britain, the laying of blame for the entire war on Germany, her colonial losses, and the manner in which the treaty was made and presented were unjust and " could have been handled more prudently" (Sandy, How...peace, p. 5). The terms that were reasonable- including the military restrictions, reparations paid to France and Belgium for physical damage caused, the presence of the War Guilt Clause (some blame on Germany and the inclusion of the clause in the treaty were sensible), the prohibition of Anschluss, the relinquishing of the Saar coalfields to France for 15 years, and some of the actions and attitudes of the Allies with respect to their demands for the treaty and how those were carried out- did not outweigh those that were not, however, the blame laid on the treaty and its authors is excessive. In the words of Paul Birdsall, " the prosaic truth is that elements of good and bad were combined in the treaties" (TCV, p. 63) and " it satisfied nobody" (how b3 felt, p. 1) The creators of the Treaty of Versailles each had different objectives upon commencement of the Paris Peace Conference, including worldwide peace, revenge, compensation, economic resurgence, and more; some of these aims were addressed more thoroughly than others, and these proportions contributed to the unfairness of the treaty. The first meeting

scheduled to fulfill these goals took place on January 18th, 1919, the date that the German Empire was established forty-eight years earlier. This was a "deliberate humiliation of Germany" (D: TWR, p. 2), and the beginning of a series of similar dealings against her. While some of these were prompted by justified motives, others, such as compelling Germany to sign the treaty and thus- as said by Count von Brockdorff- Rantzau- "sign its own proscription, yea, even its own death warrant" in the very place that the German Empire was proclaimed in 1871, the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles (Lewis, WWI aftermath, p. 10), were not. Unfortunately for Germany, the treaty was a package deal. Three main powers were involved in the tug-of-war for gaining their desired outcomes: the vengeful, French Georges Clemenceau (also known as "The Tiger" (IA p. 43)), the idealistic American Woodrow Wilson, and the mediator from Britain, David Lloyd George, who collaborated to amalgamate a treaty that was "hastily put together", "vague", and "exposed the Allies' inability to cooperate towards an agreement" (Atkinson, TOV cons., p. 1). Eventually they were able to produce a document that laid out the terms of the peace with Germany, which should have been venerable, considering the fact that "the peacemakers were not trying just to draw up terms for the defeated; they were trying to run and remake much of the world" (MacMillan, AIT, p. 2). "Something created so quickly and in an environment as hostile as the immediate aftermath of the bloodiest war of all time was bound to be filled with clauses created more through fear and anger than forgiveness, compassion and a desire for rebuilding relationships and really ensuring long lasting peace." (Moorhouse, how... peace?, p. 2-3), so we really can't blame them, especially with the image of oneself

attempting to draft such a peace in mind. However, too many of the elements of the Treaty of Versailles were completely unreasonable, even whilst taking the circumstances into consideration, as they were clearly not based on "magnanimity and wisdom more than revenge or hatred" (Keynes, TCV, p. 62). One such instance is the splitting of Germany's colonies among the Allied powers. The decision to confiscate Germany's colonies was made with one motive: the personal gain of the Allied powers. "In the age where colonial possessions were part of a nation's self-image" (Curtis, Was...fair?, p. 1), the only purpose this term served was to debase Germany. To her people, it "was seen as just so much British empire building" (why opp...G? p. 2), and that opinion is quite accurate. Germany was already paying reparations and giving away other territory, so the colonies were a cherry to top the massive pile of gains the Allies were already making. In fact, divesting Germany of the resources that may have been extracted from her colonies was debilitating Germany from paying her reparations. The one million square miles (IA, p. 45) that Germany surrendered to the Allies were unjustly requisitioned, especially when added to her other territorial losses. The peacemakers in Paris were responsible for redrawing the map of Europe in concurrence with the principle of self-determination, as well as the ultimate goals of peace and justice; the terms of the Treaty of Versailles included losses of territory for Germany, some of which were achieving the said aims, although some were not. According to many observers of these new borders, "the principle of national self-determination... was always applied if it weakened Germany and its former allies but never where it would have benefitted them". (D: TWR p. 1) This was evidently true in the

cases of Alsace- Lorraine, the territories transferred to Belgium, and the city of Danzig, all of whose populations were composed of over 75% German-speaking people (IA p. 46- Alsace- Lorraine percentage calculated together). Danzig was a German port city, important for economic activity (Lepore), the loss of which was a barrier to Germany's economic recovery and ensuing payment of reparations. It was placed under the administration of the League of Nations, " but with Poland enjoying considerable rights there" (IA, p. 45). This was clearly a violation of self- determination, as 328 000 of the 336 000 people living there were German- speaking (IA p. 46) and yet it essentially became a Polish city. The transfer of Moresnet, Eupen, and Malmedy to Belgium, as well, was unwarranted, as the majority of their residents spoke German (IA p. 46) and Belgium would already be receiving compensation for war damage through the reparations terms. However, in the case of Alsace- Lorraine, the conflict between France and Germany over them " had unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years" (Wilson, WWI aftermath, p. 3), and the return of those states to France was vital in the prevention of further conflict. Moreover, Germany had taken Alsace- Lorraine from France in 1871 (GCSE- podcast), therefore the logical course of bringing about justice would be to restore it. Inferentially, " the territorial settlement in Europe was" not always " the ' unfair' and cynical perversion of Wilson's principles of self- determination which has been pictured". (Birdsall, TCV p. 63) In fact, self- determination was unreservedly applied in the case of Slesvig: a plebiscite was carried out in order to constitute the border between Demark and Germany, resulting in a Danish northern half and a German southern half. Self- determination also governed the transference of

the Polish corridor, Posen, and Upper Silesia to Poland. 79% of the collective populations of those areas did not speak German (IA p. 46) and, similarly to the situation of Alsace- Lorraine, much of that territory had once belonged to Poland and was predominantly inhabited by Poles (IA p. 53-54, MacMillan Interview p. 6). Conversely, " West Prussia and Upper Silesia were rich farming areas", so their loss was detrimental to Germany's economy and inhibited the payment of reparations, as it further lessened the resources utilizable for her recompense (why opp...G, p. 2). In addition, the eventual consequence of the displacement of this territory to Poland was the Nazi-Soviet Pact and subsequent destruction of the state twenty years later (IA, p. 55). The peacemakers were not clairvoyant and able to foresee the outcome of their decision, nor were they unjustified in separating East Prussia , which had historically been the source of much aggressive military behavior (Lepore), from the rest of Germany in hopes of preventing war, but they weren't completely ignorant either. The severing of a country into two pieces without so much as a centimeter of a common border when its merchant marine and naval force are greatly reduced has unmistakable potential for disaster, namely the crumbling of the territory wedged between them (even if the corridor between them provides the other nation with access to the sea (GF p. 22)). Another segment of the territorial losses of Germany that was unfair was the approved seizure of Memel by Lithuania. It was not an abomination of self- determination, as only just over half of the population of the port city spoke German (IA p. 46) and Lithuania didn't actually take Memel until after the treaty, but the League of Nations, in effect, blessed the random theft of another country's city when it allowed Lithuania to keep

Memel in 1920 after taking it from Germany (IA p. 45). Additionally, this deprived Germany of another harbor which was imperative in paying her reparations; Lithuania may have put a port to good use, but she didn't need to pay reparations. The final terms concerning Germany's territory in the Treaty of Versailles specified the renouncement of territory gained in the treaties of Brest- Litovsk and of Bucharest. Brest- Litovsk was an exceedingly harsh agreement, which Russia had no choice but to accept for her own salvation from the war that was ravaging her economy and her government (GF p. 19, 74/ TCH p. 54). Germany had to face up to the damage she caused to other nations in World War One, therefore she would justly return what she had stolen from Russia. Although Germany had no choice but to accept the Treaty of Versailles, and some of its terms were unnecessarily severe, this was not one of them. In fact, renouncing the gains of the treaty of Brest- Litovsk resulted in a number of eastern nations including Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and more receiving their independence. (GF p. 74) The Treaty of Bucharest is analogous to Brest- Litovsk in that Romania's desperation for peace led her to accept many harsh terms; the chief profit for Germany from the treaty was the receipt of Romania's oil wells, which were ceded to her for ninety years. This was a harsh consequence for Romania, and it was essential for the sustenance of Germany's war effort, so its resignation in the Treaty of Versailles was both just and preventative of further conflict. The only factor that may have supported Germany's custody of the oil fields was that she would already be losing 16% of her coalfields and 50% of her iron and steel industry as well as much farm land (why opp... G, p. 2) and paying the reparations that the Treaty of Versailles asked of her

would be very difficult, if not impossible without these fundamental resources. All things considered, the new map of Europe disunited some territory from Germany unfairly (Danzig, land that went to Belgium and Poland, Memel) and some fairly (Alsace- Lorraine, Danish territory, renouncing of treaties of Brest- Litovsk and Bucharest), according to self-determination, the " hopelessly mixed" populations in Germany (Birdsall, TCV, p. 63), justice and compensation, future peace, and Germany's ability to pay reparations. " Reparations were the most controversial aspect of the Versailles Treaty" (IA p. 47), as the approach taken by the Allied powers provoked resentment and because of the perdition of Germany. These losses were arguable " not beyond Germany's means" (Hopkins, was...fair? p. 1), and may not have been quite so aggravating if it weren't for the way the Allies carried out their terms. First of all, the exclusion of Germany from discussions concerning what would be required for compensation and what was reasonable for her to pay was not fair. " It would have been a wise and just act to have asked the German Government at the peace negotiations to agree to a settlement, without further examination of particulars"; instead, they chose " the method of arriving at the final result over a period of many months by an addition of hundreds of thousands of individual claims for damage to land, farm buildings, and chickens". This choice resulted in " a sum... entirely impossible for her to pay" (Keynes, TCV p. 63) and in forcing Germany to sign a blank check, then wait apprehensively for the verdict. The least the allies could have done would have been to keep Germany informed as to the progress of the Reparations Committee, but the chosen alternative left her aggrieved and irate. The method of payment that the Treaty of

Versailles arranged for Germany was also unreasonable. It required that reparations must be paid over a period of 42 years, with an interest rate of 6% per year. This was compounded by the resources detached from Germany by the treaty's territorial terms and the requirement of 26% of the revenue from exports and 40 million tons of coal every year for those forty-two years (Lewis, WWI aftermath, p. 9). If the \$33 billion fine didn't leave Germany "crippled and paying forever" (How did B3 feel, p. 1), that certainly would. The logical course of action would have been the creation of a payment plan similar to what Charles Dawes drafted in 1924, along with consideration of the resources removed from Germany and other ways it was compensating. Even if the peacemakers and the people they were representing did believe that the blame for the entire fiasco that led to war lay on Germany's shoulders (MacMillan, AIT, p. 2), the reparations arrangements were unacceptable. Despite the apparent incapability of the allies to draft fair reparations terms, some were valid in their administration of justice by compensation. The payments made for physical damage done to France and Belgium, for instance, were fair. "Belgium... was invaded at the start of the war by Germany and...almost the whole of Belgium was occupied" (MacMillan, interview p. 7), and France was subjected to the destruction of thousands of factories and bridges, hundreds of thousands of houses, and thousands of miles of railway lines, and previously fertile land was left filled with pollutants and trenches and covered in barbed wire (Lewis, WWI aftermath, p. 7-8), because of German troops. Furthermore, even before the Treaty of Versailles, Germany agreed to "pay for damage done to Allied civilian property" (IA p. 46) under the terms of the November

11th Armistice that formally ended the war. " Subsequently the principle of reparations was extended to cover the full cost of the war, so that pensions and war debts were included" (IA p. 46); this added up to a collective sum of \$33 billion that Germany would be obligated to pay. When this sum is stripped of the general feeling of the German people that the war wasn't completely their fault and the attitudes of revenge by the allies and the anger provoked by the signing of a blank check without Germany's input as to the final amount, it is evident that \$33 billion wasn't totally ridiculous. " This amount was tiny compared to the total cost of the war" (Hopkins, Was... fair? p. 1) and with the majority of the world convinced that the war was Germany's fault, it's no wonder they were assessed that amount (Ibid). Germany was one of the best off of the European countries after the war, with its infrastructure intact and no physical damage (MacMillan, AIT, p. 3), so the allies figured, quite justifiably, that they could take her down a little, to restore the balance of power. Unfortunately for Germany, their feelings that " the huge sum was just designed to destroy their economy and starve their children" (why opp... G, p. 2) were partially correct (how did B3 feel p. 1-2, IA p. 43). According to a report to the German parliament by the president of their Department of Health, " on the average no less than fifty percent of the children [at schools] were undernourished... during an unannounced visit to a school class of twenty- seven girls, only three had proper shirts, only two had stockings without holes in them and only four were nourished in a moderately satisfactory way" (TCH p. 48)- the children were, in fact, starving. Germany had no way to pay her dues without " degrading the lives of millions of human beings" (Keynes, TCH p. 47). in

addition, weakening Germany to that extent and expecting such a payment from her would lower the quality of life in all of Europe; “ by aiming at the destruction of the economic life of Germany it threatens the health and prosperity of the Allies themselves” (Keynes, TCV p. 2) partly because “ If Germany paid in gold the cash could only be earned by massive exports of manufactures, which would cause unemployment in the receiving countries. Payment in goods was unacceptable for the same reason” (IA p. 47). But, on the contrary, Britain, France, and the other allied nations needed their funds from Germany so they could pay their war debts, chiefly to the US which “ demanded the repayment of wartime loans” (IA p. 47). Their economics depended on it, and no country was better than Germany to take the money from, as she started the war and didn’t suffer too much damage.

Furthermore, “ post-war Germany prospered under the leadership of Gustav Stresemann in the period 1924-1929” (Hopkins, Was...fair? p. 1), when he introduced a new currency and resumed the payment of reparations- unlike his predecessors who printed bills until the German mark became useless then refused to pay (TCH p. 49) - at which point the Allies saw Germany’s effort and negotiated an improved payment plan (TCH p. 50). This begs the questions of whether or not Germany would have been deprived of happiness (Keynes, WWI aftermath, p. 10) by the reparations if her leadership had been more capable; the extent to which the \$33 billion total was fair and reasonable cannot be determined without that answer. One component of the reparations terms whose fairness can be resolved is the ceding of the Saar coal mines to France. This was reasonable as it compensated for “ the ruin of France’s northern coalfields” and would follow

the principle of self-determination as "its future would be decided by a plebiscite" after fifteen years of administration by an International Commission (IA p. 44). Finally, the seizure of a segment of Germany's merchant marine by Britain was fair enough, as it paid the price for "losses caused to British shipping by U-boats and to families of men who had drowned" (Lewis, WWI aftermath, p. 8), and the role of that part of Germany's merchant marine was negligible as its colonies were taken and trade restrictions were in place against Germany (Brockdorff-Rantzau, G view TOV, p. 1). To conclude, it was unfair to keep Germany in the dark concerning reparations until the final sum was announced and to force her to sign a blank check, the method by which the reparations were calculated as well as the payment plan were unfair and "impracticable" (Keynes, TCV p. 63), compensating for damage to France and Belgium was fair, as was yielding the Saar coalfields to France for fifteen years and part of the merchant marine to Britain, but the fairness of the \$33 billion total for reparations cannot be decided without knowing what the result would be if Germany's government dealt with the payments as Stresseman did- according to Poincaré, "Germany... has only sought to avoid her obligations... because she has not yet been convinced of her defeat" (TCH p. 49) When analyzing the extent of the fairness and reasonableness of the Treaty of Versailles, one must take into account the other grounds for Germany's reaction to the treaty; one of these is the sentiment of the German people that they did not lose the war. The refusal to believe that the Fatherland had been defeated seems silly, childish, and stubborn, but "because the German army on the western front had held to the last hour an

unbroken defensive front outside the frontiers of the Reich, and had marched home in order, these people failed to understand that Germany had been defeated" (Fischer, WWI aftermath, p. 5). Furthermore, " they never really saw the devastation of war" (Wattenberg, Interview with MM, p. 11) and " they never really felt that they had been properly defeated" (MacMillan, *ibid*) because no German territory had even been touched by the war; they didn't understand how they could have lost without an enemy country conquering their territory or having been decisively defeated in a battle, as the mechanisms of modern war weren't familiar to them (D: TWR, p. 5). So, " they felt it was extremely unfair that they should sign a treaty which treated them as if they'd lost" (*ibid*, p. 12). Dismissed generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff took advantage of the confusion and disbelief, and propagated the 'stab in the back' legend: " Already before November 1918, they claimed, the democrats had undermined the war effort by diverting popular attention from ultimate support for the war to concerns about domestic gains" (D: TWR p. 5). Essentially, the press and the German Army Council deceived the people (Fischer, WWI... aftermath, p. 5) so " they never fully appreciated that the German High Command had told the government in 1918 that further resistance was useless, leaving the civilian authorities no choice but to agree to an armistice" (IA p. 43), and the government was too stubborn to admit that " Germany had surrendered and had lost the war... the Wehrmacht could not have continued past spring 1919" (Lewis, WWI aftermath, p. 4). Consequently, The Weimar Republic was resented for accepting the Treaty of Versailles (Fischer, *ibid* p. 5) and many people " felt its politicians had betrayed the German Empire" (TCH p. 47). These illusions

eventually allowed Hitler to manipulate the people's resentment, resulting in the crumbling of the Weimar Republic and his rise to power, then finally World War II (IA p. 47). The treaty itself did not hold as much responsibility for the aftermath of World War I as some attribute to it, and the antagonism the German people felt towards it was not solely fueled by the terms that were harsh or unfair; " it was the acknowledgement of defeat as much as the treaty terms themselves which they found so hard to accept. " (Dr. Henig, How...peace? P. 5) Article 231, nicknamed ' The War Guilt Clause', was a necessary element of the Treaty of Versailles, but the way it was constructed suggested that Germany would take all the blame for the war, and could have been ameliorated; the hatred felt toward it was partially due to the German people's refusal to accept their nation's part in starting the war (much less that they'd lost!) and the punishment it justified, but some of this was warranted because of the unfairness of holding Germany responsible for everything. " Firstly, the Germans did not think they had caused the war (for the Germans, the war was a war of self- defense against Russia, which had mobilized 31 July 1914)" (why opp...G, p. 1). The bulk of the world at the time the treaty was made, however, was confident that it was Germany's fault: this included the Allied powers, Woodrow Wilson (MacMillan, Interview p. 7), and the citizens of the Allied nations (MacMillan, AIT, p. 2). Once the passions stirred by the war had settled and evidence was more thoroughly examined, opinions changed (hist. p. 1-2) and now it has become almost universally accepted that each nation involved was somewhat at fault (Fay, Origins, p. 1), but it is unquestionable that Germany's part was significant: " Germany bears a special and peculiar responsibility for the war itself for its

universal and devastating character, and for its final development into a combat without quarter for mastery or defeat. " (Keynes, TCV p. 62). However, Germany did not leap into war impulsively; " Germany did not plot a European war, did not want one, and made genuine, though too belated efforts, to avert one" (Fay, Origins, p. 2). Fay goes on to say that " she was the victim of her alliance with Austria" and that her " geographical positions between France and Russia, and her inferiority in number of troops" made the Schlieffen Plan- and the invasion of Belgium which had transformed and continentalized Austria's war with Serbia- a necessity (Fay, Origins, p. 2). But, in the words of John Keynes, " A criminal may be the outcome of his environment, but he is nonetheless a criminal" (TCV p. 62). Therefore, Germany was deserving of many of the terms of the Versailles Treaty that the War Guilt Clause justified, particularly in view of the fact that her allies also paid reparations, lost territory, and that " almost identical language was incorporated in the treaties subsequently signed with Germany's allies" (IA p. 48-53)(Keylor, V: WGC, p. 1). The clause, however, lays the culpability of Germany's allies on her: " Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing (all the damage of the war)". The Treaty itself does not require her to pay for her allies' actions; " Germany was to be held morally responsible for the war and its consequences, but legally liable only for the narrowly defined damages specified in the treaty" (Keylor, V: WGC, p. 1). " This was a moral judgment which an entire nation felt entitled to resent" (Terrain, WWI aftermath, p. 11), and rightfully so, as the war cannot be blamed on one single country (Keynes, TCV p. 62)(Fay, Origins, p. 1), regardless of whether said country has to pay for everything or not. This

concept of moral responsibility should not have been reflected in the War Guilt Clause, as it did not promote future peace, rather, it invited German resentment. Article 231 should not have laid the moral responsibility for the war on Germany, but its presence in the treaty was necessary for legal liability, and the recognition of Germany's part in the war was reasonable. A major component of Germany's part in the war, Germany's alliance with Austria was prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles in order to prevent future war. Evaluating the benefits of Anschluss against the risks is a testing task; the factors of self-determination, Germany's geography, the previous war, and the interests of the allied powers all come into play. The prohibition of union between two Germanic countries contravened self-determination (why opp... G? p. 2), and it was ostensibly unfair to Germany to surround her with potentially hostile countries without an ally. However, this alliance had formerly given Austria the confidence to take the gamble of declaring war on Serbia, thus engaging the world in conflict (Fay, Origins, p. 2). Although this was certainly not the only cause of the war and may have been a logical decision at the time, the peacemakers weren't willing to take the risk of permitting Anschluss lest it contribute to further warfare. This decision may have been influenced by the movies of each individual nation, but it was determined that too many possible negative consequences were associated with Germany's alliance with Austria, and that those outweighed the benefits of it. The military restrictions imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles were precautionary measures with a purpose of avoiding war, as was the prohibition of Anschluss, but they were somewhat impractical. " It was entirely ' fair' that at the end of such a conflict the leaders of the

victorious powers should seek to prevent any prospect of a repetition by reducing Germany's potential as an aggressor" (Hopkins, Was...fair? p. 1), although "to a people with a strong military tradition, Germany could only view this as an attempt to make them a weak, second-rate power" (Curtis, Ibid); to some extent, it was. Taking revenge to far as to render Germany "virtually defenseless" (IA p. 46) would not have been justified. In that time period, 100 000 non-conscripted soldiers may not have been considered sufficient, but considering the 30 000 volunteers that Austria was limited to- 20 000 for Bulgaria and 35 000 for Hungary (IA p. 48-51)- as well as the implication that there would be peacetime after the treaties, this was "adequate to [Germany's] needs" (Hopkins, was...fair? p. 1). Limiting Germany's navy was also acceptable for peacetime, the prohibition of submarines was fair as it was directly consequential of the destruction U-boats caused in World War I, and was a step on the road to disarmament, as was continued in other countries- including the Big 3- at the Washington Conference in 1921 and the London Conference in 1930. What was inappropriate about some of the military restrictions was that there was no follow-up in other nations. "The preamble of the military section of the treaty with Germany suggests that Germany was to be disarmed 'in order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations'" (Atkinson, TOV cons., p. 2), but no action succeeded this save for the Geneva Conference in 1932, the progress of which was nullified when Hitler withdrew and began the arms race in 1933. The military terms themselves weren't so bad, and "were a realistic concession" to the needs of countries surrounding Germany whose security would be threatened in the

event of German aggression " without violating the Fourteen Points in any important particular" and without utterly immobilizing Germany (Birdsall, TCV p. 63); but, when combined with the lack of cooperation from other nations toward future peace, they appeared quite barbaric to Germany. Furthermore, prohibiting Germany from the League of Nations left Germany with " neither armies nor argument" (why opp...G? p. 2), so she had no way to defend herself or receive fair treatment from other countries, as well as being left in the dust of the ongoing arms race. Peace and disarmament were almost ideas ahead of their time, in this respect. The one instance where the military terms could realistically be regarded as irrational was the demilitarization of the Rhineland, in that Germany wasn't allowed to police the area in 1920 by sending troops to stop riots against the government (why opp.. G? p. 2); this was regarded as " a hostile act calculated to disturb the peace of the world" - as any other violation of the military terms would be (IA p. 46)- and hence the French invaded (why opp in G? p. 2). Overall, however, demilitarization of the Rhineland and its occupation by the allies was not infringing on self- determination, and the territory would be " successively evacuated at five- year intervals" (IA p. 46) and could have been an effective deterrent to war if the allies had actually occupied the land and enforced the terms for the full 15 year period. The sole revision that should have been made was to allow a specified police force in the Rhineland, as was clearly necessary in view of the social and political upheaval occurring in Germany post-war. In conclusion, the military restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles were justifiable in and of themselves, but the failure of other nations to maintain the initiated demilitarization and

the segregation of Germany from the League of Nations put Germany in a situation that rendered the outcomes of the terms unreasonable. The most inequitable term of the Treaty of Versailles was the exclusion of Germany from the League of Nations; it was in complete opposition of the supposed aim of future peace that she was prohibited from joining, and it worsened the other terms of the treaty. The purpose of the League of Nations was to establish a new world order in which war could be prevented by arbitration, collective security, and international cooperation, and to transform the world into a place " fit and safe to live in, particularly for every peace-loving nation which... wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, and be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world against force and selfish aggression" (Wilson, IA p. 42). " Instead of admitting the new democratic Germany into the community of democratic nations, the Allies ostracized the vanquished nation" (D: TWR p. 1), even though " Wilson made it clear that Germany would be allowed to gain a place in a new, liberal world order if it was willing to respect his principles and to forego its own expansionist or hegemonial aims" (D: TWR, p. 2). Germany demonstrated that she was willing, through her counter- proposal in which she agreed to many terms, requesting that " she will be immediately admitted, as a state with equal rights, into the League of nations" (A G view, p. 2). But, this was discriminatorily disregarded, and Germany was left with " neither armies nor argument" (why opp...G p. 2), nor alliances nor support for their new democratic system nor the ability to give input to the revision of the Treaty of Versailles: The League of Nations would not only be counted on for " all common work of the world" (Brockdorff- Rantzau, a G view, p. 2), but the

allies were looking forward to " the organization of the League of Nations to remedy, to repair, and to redress" (Lloyd George, WWI aftermath, p. 6). Therefore, Germany was not only excluded from the making of its peace treaty, but also from the revision. (MacMillan, Interview, p. 13)(Lewis, WWI aftermath p. 7) Military restrictions, Anschluss, and other terms of the treaty would have been lightened if Germany was in the League of Nations, as it would have been a place where she could have met some of her needs which would not be met without her former armed forces, alliances, etc. The barring of Germany from the international organization that was the war prevention and peace promotion committee of the world and that would be responsible for overseeing the peace treaty which governed her well-being left Germany without input into her future, without support from other nations, and without security or any way to ensure fair treatment; this was completely unwarranted, added to the unfairness of the rest of the treaty, and contradicted the purpose of the League of Nations itself. The Treaty of Versailles was, all things considered, not a fair or reasonable treaty. Although it was written " at a time of unprecedented political, social, economic and ideological upheaval" (Henig, TOV cons., p. 1) when some of the attitudes and revenge expressed through the treaty were justifiable, the Allies were liable for prioritizing their own gain rather than world peace. They failed to heed David Lloyd George's warning preceding the release of the treaty that they should not " soil this triumph of right by indulging in the angry passions of the moment, but...consecrate the sacrifice of millions to the permanent redemption of the human race from the scourge and agony of war" (Lloyd George, WWI aftermath, p. 8). Some of the treaty's terms were sensible-

including some territorial losses, reparation payments to France and Belgium for damage along with the surrender of the Saar coalfields to France for 15 years, some blame for the war on Germany and the presence of a war guilt clause, the prohibition of Anschluss, and the military restrictions- a disproportionate amount of the treaty and the dealings surrounding it were unwarranted. The " Diktat of Versailles" (IA p. 47) was dictated to Germany without accepting her input. She was deliberately humiliated, and prohibited from joining the League of Nations which would institute the peace that was claimed to be the intent of the treaty. The military restrictions weakened Germany to an unfair extent because other nations did not comply, and moral responsibility for the war was unjustly deposited on Germany. The allies excluded Germany from discussions on reparations and forced her to sign a blank check, possibly calculating an unrealistic sum, and she was unfairly stripped of part of her merchant marine and compelled to pay reparations with an unreasonable payment plan. Some of the territory taken from her was ceded unfairly, and the seizure of her colonies was irrational. Despite the unfairness of the treaty, however, the anger expressed toward it was not fully provoked because of its harshness or unjust terms; the failure of the German people to acknowledge their loss or part in the war (D: TWR, p. 5) contributed greatly to their reaction. The treaty was not completely at fault for the absence of peace in the years following it either; " there were other later actors- Hitler, Mussolini, or the Japanese militarists- who exercised their power to decide for war or for peace" (MacMillan, AIT, p. 3), Germany broke the peace (GCSE podcast), and other nations did not enforce the terms of the treaty (Henig, TOV cons., p. 4-5) or follow up with Wilson's

strategy for peace, the Fourteen Points; " Perhaps the biggest mistake they made was to mention at all the ideals of absolute justice or perpetual peace; for these, surely, were a most impossible outcome of the conditions in which Europe found itself when the guns no longer thundered and the men came marching home. " (David Thomson, WWI aftermath, p. 11). The Versailles Treaty of 1919 was not deserving of the totality of the censure it has received nor the resentment directed toward it, and the conditions in which it was created did not present the peacemakers with an easy task, but the terms it was comprised of and the proceedings surrounding it that were unwarranted could not be outweighed by those that were justifiable, and therefore the treaty was unfair and unreasonable. WORKS CONSULTED " A German View of the Treaty of Versailles." web. jjay. cuny. edu. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, n. d. Web. 9 Feb 2007. <http://web. jjay. cuny. edu/~jobrien/reference/ob94. html> " D: The Weimar Republic." www. colby. edu. N. p., n. d. Web. 12 Feb 2007. <http://www. colby. edu/personal/r/rmscheck/GermanyD1. htm> " Voices: The War Guilt Clause." Change and Conflict between the Wars: 1919-1939. 63. Print. Atkinson, James. " The Treaty of Versailles and its Consequences." . N. p., 16122002. Web. 9 Feb 2007. Bradshaw Fay, Sidney. " Origins of the World War." 32 Problems in World History. Ed. Edwin Fenton, Ed. Sherrill Aberg and Ed. Daniel Powell. Glenview: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1969. 178-184. Print. Clare, John D. (2002/2010), ' How did the ' Big Three' feel about the Treaty of Versailles?', at Greenfield History Site (<http://www. johndclare. net/EA4. htm>) Clare, John D. (2002/2010), ' How did the Treaty of Versailles establish peace?', at Greenfield History Site (<http://www. johndclare. net/EA4. htm>)

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