

Treaty of Versailles¹

The First World War had left Europe devastated. Those countries that had fought in it, had suffered casualties never experienced before:

Britain : 750,000 soldiers killed; 1,500,000 wounded
France : 1,400,000 soldiers killed; 2,500,000 wounded
Belgium : 50,000 soldiers killed
Italy : 600,000 soldiers killed
Russia : 1,700,000 soldiers killed
America : 116,000 soldiers killed

Those who had fought against the Allies suffered heavy casualties as well:

Germany : 2,000,000 soldiers killed
Austria-Hungary : 1,200,000 soldiers killed
Turkey : 325,000 soldiers killed
Bulgaria : 100,000 soldiers killed

The total deaths of all nations who fought in the war is thought to have been 8.5 million, with 21 million being wounded.

Alongside these statistics, was the fact that vast areas of north-eastern Europe had been reduced to rubble. Flanders in Belgium had been all but destroyed with the ancient city of Ypres being devastated. The homes of 750,000 French people were destroyed and the infrastructure of this region had also been severely damaged. Roads, coal mines, telegraph poles had all been destroyed and such a loss greatly hindered the area's ability to function normally.

¹ "The Treaty Of Versailles - History Learning Site". History Learning Site. N.p., 2016. Web. 29 Sept. 2016.

During mid-1918, Europe was hit by **Spanish flu** and an estimated 25 million people died. This added to the feeling of bitterness that ran through Europe and this anger was primarily directed at Germany.

The victors from World War One were in no mood to be charitable to the defeated nations and Germany in particular was held responsible for the war and its consequences.

The following was what Germany was forced to agree to, or risk invasion:

Territorial

The following land was taken away from Germany :

- Alsace-Lorraine (given to France)
- Eupen and Malmedy (given to Belgium)
- Northern Schleswig (given to Denmark)
- Hultschin (given to Czechoslovakia)
- West Prussia, Posen and Upper Silesia (given to Poland)
- Germany lost all of its overseas colonies.

Military

- Germany's army was reduced to 100,000 men; the army was not allowed tanks
 - She was not allowed an airforce She was allowed only 6 capital naval ships and no submarines
- The west of the Rhineland and 50 kms east of the River Rhine was made into a demilitarised zone (DMZ). No German soldier or weapon was allowed into this zone. The Allies were to keep an army of occupation on the west bank of the Rhine for 15 years.



DAVID THE SPOKESMAN: "Off with the spiked hat! What d'you think we fought for if not to abolish militarism?"

Financial

The loss of vital industrial territory would be a severe blow to any attempts by Germany to rebuild her economy. Coal from the Saar and Upper Silesia in particular was a vital economic loss. Combined with the financial penalties linked to reparations, it seemed clear to Germany that the Allies wanted nothing else but to bankrupt her.

Germany was also forbidden to unite with Austria to form one superstate, in an attempt to keep her economic potential to a minimum.

General

There are three vital clauses here:

1. Germany had to admit full responsibility for starting the war. This was Clause 231 – the infamous “War Guilt Clause”.
2. Germany, as she was responsible for starting the war as stated in clause 231, was, therefore responsible for all the war damage caused by the First World War. Therefore, she had to pay reparations, the bulk of which would go to France and Belgium to pay for the damage done to the infrastructure of both countries by the war. Quite literally, reparations would be used to pay for the damage to be repaired. Payment could be in kind or cash. The figure was not set at Versailles – it was to be determined later. The Germans were told to write a blank cheque which the Allies would cash when it suited them. The figure was eventually put at £6,600 million – a huge sum of money well beyond Germany’s ability to pay.³ A League of Nations was set up to keep world peace.



