



Wilson Fights for Peace

MAIN IDEA

European leaders opposed most of Wilson's peace plan, and the U.S. Senate failed to ratify the peace treaty.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Many of the nationalist issues left unresolved after World War I continue to trouble the world today.

Terms & Names

- Fourteen Points
- League of Nations
- Georges Clemenceau
- David Lloyd George
- Treaty of Versailles
- reparations
- war-guilt clause
- Henry Cabot Lodge

In January 1918, at the magnificent Palace of Versailles outside Paris, President Wilson tried to persuade the Allies to construct a just and lasting peace and to establish a League of Nations. Colonel E. M. House, a native of Texas and a member of the American delegation to Versailles, later wrote about the conference.

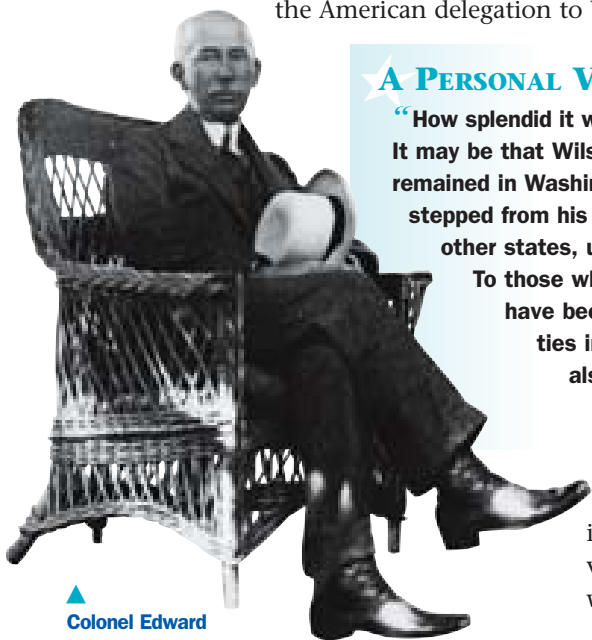
A PERSONAL VOICE COLONEL E. M. HOUSE

“How splendid it would have been had we blazed a new and better trail! . . . It may be that Wilson might have had the power and influence if he had remained in Washington and kept clear of the Conference. When he stepped from his lofty pedestal and wrangled with representatives of other states, upon equal terms, he became as common clay. . . .

To those who are saying that the Treaty is bad and should never have been made and that it will involve Europe in infinite difficulties in its enforcement, I feel like admitting it. But I would also say in reply that empires cannot be shattered and new states raised upon their ruins without disturbance.”

—quoted in *Hooray for Peace, Hurrah for War*

House saw what happened when Wilson's idealism ran up against practical politics. The Allied victors, vengeful toward Germany after four years of warfare, rejected most of Wilson's peace program.



▲ Colonel Edward M. House was a friend and advisor to President Woodrow Wilson.

Wilson Presents His Plan

Rejection was probably the last thing Wilson expected when he arrived in Europe. Everywhere he went, people gave him a hero's welcome. Italians displayed his picture in their windows; Parisians strewed the street with flowers. Representatives of one group after another, including Armenians, Jews, Ukrainians, and Poles, appealed to him for help in setting up independent nations for themselves.



FOURTEEN POINTS Even before the war was over, Wilson presented his plan for world peace. On January 18, 1918, he delivered his now famous **Fourteen Points** speech before Congress. The points were divided into three groups. The first five points were issues that Wilson believed had to be addressed to prevent another war:

1. There should be no secret treaties among nations.
2. Freedom of the seas should be maintained for all.
3. Tariffs and other economic barriers among nations should be lowered or abolished in order to foster free trade.
4. Arms should be reduced “to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety, thus lessening the possibility of military responses” during diplomatic crises.
5. Colonial policies should consider the interests of the colonial peoples as well as the interests of the imperialist powers.

The next eight points dealt with boundary changes. Wilson based these provisions on the principle of self-determination “along historically established lines of nationality.” In other words, groups that claimed distinct ethnic identities were to form their own nation-states or decide for themselves to what nations they would belong.

The fourteenth point called for the creation of an international organization to address diplomatic crises like those that had sparked the war. This **League of Nations** would provide a forum for nations to discuss and settle their grievances without having to resort to war.

THE ALLIES REJECT WILSON’S PLAN Wilson’s naiveté about the political aspects of securing a peace treaty showed itself in his failure to grasp the anger felt by the Allied leaders. The French premier, **Georges Clemenceau** (klēm’ən-sō’), had lived through two German invasions of France and was determined to prevent future invasions.

David Lloyd George, the British prime minister, had just won reelection on the slogan “Make Germany Pay.” The Italian prime minister, Vittorio Orlando, wanted control of Austrian-held territory. **A**

Contrary to custom, the peace conference did not include the defeated Central Powers. Nor did it include Russia, which was now under the control of a Communist government, or the smaller Allied nations. Instead, the “Big Four”—Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando—worked out the treaty’s details among themselves. Wilson conceded on most of his Fourteen Points in return for the establishment of the League of Nations.

(left to right) David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and Woodrow Wilson in Paris in 1919. ►


Vocabulary

free trade: the buying and selling of goods without tariffs, or fees

MAIN IDEA

Developing Historical Perspective

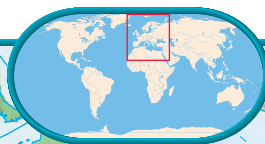
A Why did the Allies reject Wilson’s plan?



WOODROW WILSON
1856–1924

At the end of the war, President Wilson wanted the United States to become more involved in international affairs. He believed the nation had a moral obligation to help maintain peace in the world. Wilson’s sense of moral purpose had a lasting influence on American foreign policy.





Debating the Treaty of Versailles

On June 28, 1919, the Big Four and the leaders of the defeated nations gathered in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles to sign the peace treaty. After four years of devastating warfare, everyone hoped that the treaty would create stability for a rebuilt Europe. Instead, anger held sway.

PROVISIONS OF THE TREATY The **Treaty of Versailles** (vər-sī') established nine new nations—including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia—and shifted the boundaries of other nations. It carved five areas out of the Ottoman Empire and gave them to France and Great Britain as mandates, or temporary colonies. Those two Allies were to administer their respective mandates until the areas were ready for self-rule and then independence.

The treaty barred Germany from maintaining an army. It also required Germany to return the region of Alsace-Lorraine to France and to pay **reparations**, or war damages, amounting to \$33 billion to the Allies.

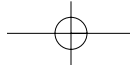
THE TREATY'S WEAKNESSES This treatment of Germany weakened the ability of the Treaty of Versailles to provide a lasting peace in Europe. Several basic flaws in the treaty sowed the seeds of postwar international problems that eventually would lead to the Second World War.

First, the treaty humiliated Germany. It contained a **war-guilt clause** forcing Germany to admit sole responsibility for starting World War I. Although German militarism had played a major role in igniting the war, other European nations had been guilty of provoking diplomatic crises before the war. Furthermore, there was no way Germany could pay the huge financial reparations. Germany was stripped of its colonial possessions in the Pacific, which might have helped it pay its reparations bill. **B**

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

B How did the Treaty of Versailles affect Germany?



In addition, for three years the Russians had fought on the side of the Allies, suffering higher casualties than any other nation. However, because Russia was excluded from the peace conference, it lost more territory than Germany did. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (or Soviet Union), as Russia was officially called after 1922, became determined to regain its former territory.

Finally, the treaty ignored claims of colonized people for self-determination, as in the case of Southeast Asia, where the Vietnamese people were beginning to demand the same political rights enjoyed by people in Western nations.

OPPOSITION TO THE TREATY When Wilson returned to the United States, he faced strong opposition to the treaty. Some people, including Herbert Hoover, believed it was too harsh. Hoover noted, “The economic consequences alone will pull down all Europe and thus injure the United States.” Others considered the treaty a sell-out to imperialism because it simply exchanged one set of colonial rulers for another. Some ethnic groups objected to the treaty because the new national boundaries it established did not satisfy their particular demands for self-determination. For example, before the war many Poles had been under German rule. Now many Germans were under Polish rule.

DEBATE OVER THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS The main domestic opposition, however, centered on the issue of the League of Nations. A few opponents believed that the League threatened the U.S. foreign policy of isolationism. Conservative senators, headed by **Henry Cabot Lodge**, were suspicious of the provision for joint economic and military action against aggression, even though it was voluntary. They wanted the constitutional right of Congress to declare war included in the treaty.

POINT

“The League of Nations was the world’s best hope for lasting peace.”

President Wilson campaigned for the League of Nations as “necessary to meet the differing and unexpected contingencies” that could threaten world peace. Wilson believed that the League would create a forum where nations could talk through their disagreements. He also hoped it would provide collective security, in which nations would “respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League,” and thereby prevent devastating warfare.

Critics complained that membership in the League would limit American independence in international affairs. However, Wilson argued that League membership included “a moral, not a legal, obligation” that would leave Congress free to decide its own course of action. Wilson tried to assure Congress as well as the general public that the League was “not a straightjacket, but a vehicle of life.” It was also a definite guaranty . . . against the things that have just come near bringing the whole structure of civilization into ruin.”

COUNTERPOINT

“The League of Nations posed a threat to U.S. self-determination.”

Senator William Borah was one of the foremost critics of the Treaty of Versailles because he objected to U.S. membership in the League of Nations. Borah feared that membership in the League “would draw America away from her isolation and into the internal affairs and concerns of Europe” and involve the United States in foreign wars. “Once having surrendered and become a part of the European concerns,” Borah wondered, “where, my friends, are you going to stop?”

Many opponents also feared that the League would nullify the Monroe Doctrine by limiting “the right of our people to govern themselves free from all restraint, legal or moral, of foreign powers.”

Although Wilson argued that the League of Nations would have no such power of restraint, Borah was unconvinced. He responded to Wilson’s argument by asking, “What will your League amount to if it does not contain powers that no one dreams of giving it?”

THINKING CRITICALLY

- 1. CONNECT TO HISTORY Summarizing** Both supporters and opponents of the League hoped to preserve peace. How did each group propose to secure peace for the United States?



SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R4.

- 2. CONNECT TO TODAY Identifying Problems** What are some contemporary arguments against United States participation in international organizations such as the United Nations or the World Court?



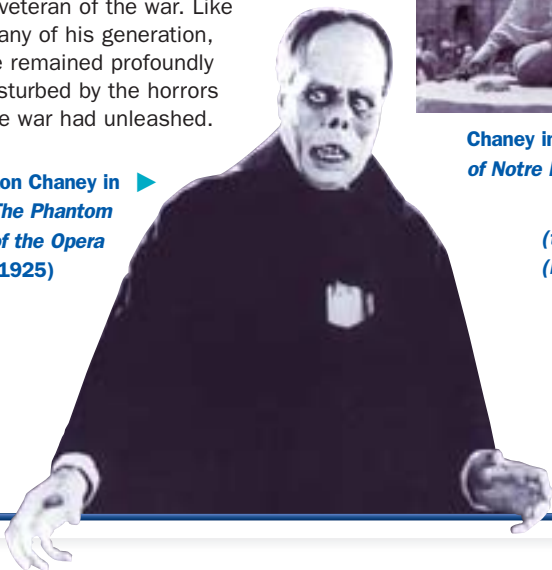
History Through *Film*

ECHOES OF THE GREAT WAR

In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of Hollywood horror films were influenced by memories of the Great War. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *The Phantom of the Opera* featured men who, like many veterans, were forced to live with shameful disfigurements.

Other films recalled the war's bleak landscapes. For example, parts of the movie *Frankenstein* were filmed on the same sets as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the famous war film. James Whale, who directed *Frankenstein*, was a veteran of the war. Like many of his generation, he remained profoundly disturbed by the horrors the war had unleashed.

Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925)



Chaney in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923)

(top) *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) ▲
(bottom) *Frankenstein* (1931)



SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Visual Sources

1. Why might the theme of human disfigurement be especially powerful to the generation that lived through World War I?
2. How do horror films of your time reflect specific fears and anxieties of the current generation?

SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R23.

WILSON REFUSES TO COMPROMISE Wilson unwisely ignored the Republican majority in the Senate when he chose the members of the American delegation. If he had been more willing to accept a compromise on the League, it would have been more likely that the Senate would have approved the treaty. Wilson, however, was exhausted from his efforts at Versailles.

Despite ill health, Wilson set out in September 1919 on an 8,000-mile tour. He delivered 34 speeches in about 3 weeks, explaining why the United States should join the League of Nations. On October 2, Wilson suffered a stroke (a ruptured blood vessel to the brain) and lay partially paralyzed for more than two months, unable to even meet with his cabinet. His once-powerful voice was no more than a thick whisper.

When the treaty came up for a vote in the Senate in November 1919, Senator Lodge introduced a number of amendments, the most important of which qualified the terms under which the United States would enter the League of Nations. It was feared that U.S. membership in the League would force the United States to form its foreign policy in accord with the League. Although the Senate rejected the amendments, it also failed to ratify the treaty.

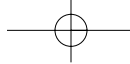
Wilson refused to compromise. "I will not play for position," he proclaimed. "This is not a time for tactics. It is a time to stand square. I can stand defeat; I cannot stand retreat from conscientious duty." The treaty again came up for a vote in March 1920. The Senate again rejected the Lodge amendments—and again failed to muster enough votes for ratification.

The United States finally signed a separate treaty with Germany in 1921, after Wilson was no longer president. The United States never joined the League of Nations, but it maintained an unofficial observer at League meetings. **C**

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

- C** Why were some people afraid of the treaty's influence over American foreign policy?



The Legacy of the War

When World War I ended, many Americans looked forward to a return of what Warren G. Harding called “normalcy.” However, both the United States and the rest of the world had been utterly transformed by the war. At home, World War I had strengthened both the U.S. military and the power of government. It had also accelerated social change, especially for African Americans and women. In addition, the propaganda campaign had provoked powerful fears and antagonisms that were left unchanneled when the war finally came to an end.

In Europe the destruction and massive loss of life severely damaged social and political systems. In many countries the war created political instability and violence that persisted for decades. During the war years, the first Communist state was established in Russia, while after the war, militant fascist organizations seized control in Italy, Spain, and Germany.

Appalled by the scale of destruction, Americans began to call World War I “the war to end all wars,” in the hope that humanity would never again be willing to fight such a war. However, unresolved issues in Europe would eventually drag America into an even wider war. The Treaty of Versailles had settled nothing. In fact, some Europeans longed to resume the fight. The ominous shape of things to come emerged in the writings of an Austrian named Adolf Hitler, an angry veteran of World War I: “It cannot be that two million [Germans] should have fallen in vain. . . . No, we do not pardon, we demand—vengeance!” Two decades after the end of the Great War, Adolf Hitler’s desire for vengeance would plunge the world into an even greater war, in which the United States would play a leading role.

Vocabulary

fascist:

characteristic of or relating to fascism, a system of totalitarian government

Domestic Consequences of World War I

- accelerated America’s emergence as the world’s greatest industrial power
- contributed to the movement of African Americans to Northern cities
- intensified anti-immigrant and anti-radical sentiments among mainstream Americans
- brought over one million women into the work force



ASSESSMENT

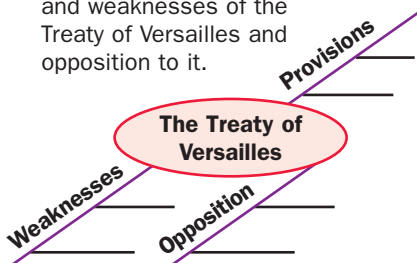
1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Fourteen Points
- League of Nations
- Georges Clemenceau
- David Lloyd George
- Treaty of Versailles
- reparations
- war-guilt clause
- Henry Cabot Lodge

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Re-create the spider diagram shown below. Fill in the web with information about the provisions and weaknesses of the Treaty of Versailles and opposition to it.



Do you think Congress should have rejected the treaty?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. DEVELOPING HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Why didn’t the Treaty of Versailles lay the foundations for a lasting peace?

4. SUMMARIZING

Why did so many Americans oppose the Treaty of Versailles?

5. HYPOTHESIZING

Predict Germany’s reaction to the Treaty of Versailles. Give reasons for your predictions.

Think About:

- what Germans thought of the war-guilt clause
- German reaction to reparations
- how Germans felt about the loss of territory