

Excerpts from the Treaty of Versailles

Art. 45 "As compensation for the destruction of the coal-mines in the north of France and as part payment towards the total reparations due from Germany . . . Germany cedes to France in full and absolute possession . . .the coal mines situated in the Saar basin"

Arts. 198, 199, 201 The armed forces of Germany must not include **any** military or naval air forces" (also forbids manufacture or importation of aircraft).

Art. 231 ". . . Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies"

Arts. 232, 233, 235 ". . . Germany undertakes that she will make compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property by . . . aggression by land, by sea and from the air . ." [including complete restoration of Belgium]. The amount of damage and the schedule of payments to be notified to the German government on or before May 1, 1921; 20 billion gold marks to be paid on account up to May 1921

Art. 244 "Compensation may be claimed from Germany . . in respect of . . damage to injured persons and to surviving dependents by personal injury to or death of civilians caused by acts of war . . ; (in respect of) all pensions . .to naval and military victims of war; (in respect of) allowances by (Allied governments) to the families and dependants of mobilized persons or persons serving with the armed forces; damage in respect of all property wherever situated belonging to (nationals of the Allied states)"

Art. 428 "As a guarantee for the execution of the present Treaty by Germany, the German territory situated to the west of the Rhine, together with the bridgeheads, will be occupied by Allied and Associated troops for a period of 15 years"

Arts. 429/30 provides for progressive withdrawal of occupation forces if Germany faithfully carries out treaty terms at expiration of each 5 year period (refusal of Germany to observe the treaty after the expiration of the 15 year period will result in immediate reoccupation by Allied and associated forces)

A German View of the Treaty of Versailles

The resulting treaty was delivered to the Germans on May 7, 1919 and was immediately denounced on all sides, especially in regard to the imputation of the 'war guilt' of Germany and the incompatibility of the harsh terms with the broad principles stated in Wilson's Fourteen Points.

I have the honor to transmit herewith the observations of the German Delegation on the Draft of the Treaty of Peace. We had come to Versailles in the expectation of receiving a proposal of peace on the basis actually agreed upon. . . We hope to get the Peace of Right which has been promised us. We were aghast when, in reading (the treaty), we learned what demands Might Triumphant has raised against us. The deeper we penetrated into the spirit of this Treaty, the more we became convinced of its impracticability. The demands raised go beyond the power of the German Nation.

In spite of such monstrous demands the rebuilding of our economic system is at the same time made impossible. We are to surrender our merchant fleet. We are to give up all foreign interests. We are to transfer to our opponents the property of all German undertakings abroad, even of those situated in countries allied to us. Even after the conclusion of peace the enemy states are to be empowered to confiscate all German property. No German merchant will then, in their countries, be safe from such war measures. We are to completely renounce our colonies, not even in these are German missionaries to have the right of exercising their profession. We are, in other words, to renounce every kind of political, economic and moral activity.

But more than this, we are also to resign the right of self-determination in domestic affairs. Dictatorial powers are conferred on the International Reparation Commission over our whole national life in economic and cultural matters, its power by far exceeding those ever enjoyed within the German Empire by the Emperor, the German Federal Council and the Reichstag put together. This Commission has the unrestrained power of disposal over the economic system of the state, of the municipalities and of private individuals. All matters of education and public health likewise depend on it. . . . The Commission . . . can, in order to augment the payments of Serfdom, inhibit the whole system of social care for the working classes in Germany.

(signed) Brockdorff-Rantzau [German Foreign Minister]

- What did you notice about the two selections? How were they similar? How were they different?
- Was the Versailles Treaty unfair to Germany? How so?
- Was the German response to the Versailles Treaty legitimate? Why or why not?