

## FP Could the treaties be justified at the time?

The Versailles Settlement soon became the subject of fierce debate though it was the Versailles Treaty that attracted the most attention. Opinions on the treaty can be divided three ways.

### Those who thought the treaty was too harsh

Most Germans would have taken this view although it was shared by many others.

SOURCE 8

Extract from a speech made by a German member of the Reichstag in 1919.  
*The criminal madness of this peace will drain Germany's national life-blood. It is a shameless blow in the face of common sense. It is inflicting the deepest wounds on us Germans as our world lies in wreckage about us.*

SOURCE 9

Extract from an article written by a British journalist in 1922 quoted in *International Relations* by K. Shephard published in 1992.  
*It was a peace of revenge. It was full of injustice. It was incapable of fulfilment. It sowed a thousand seeds from which new wars might spring. The wild impossibility of extracting those vast reparations from the defeated enemy ought to have been obvious to the most ignorant schoolboy.*

### Those who thought the Versailles Treaty was not harsh enough

Many French supported this view.

SOURCE 10

Comment by Marshal Foch at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919.  
*This is not a peace treaty, it is an armistice for twenty years.*

SOURCE 11

Extract from a memorandum given by President Raymond Poincaré of France to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.  
*Germany is supposedly going to undertake to have neither troops nor fortresses on the left bank and within a zone extending 50 kilometres east of the Rhine. But the Treaty does not provide for any permanent supervision of troops and armaments on the left bank any more than elsewhere in Germany. ... We can thus have no guarantee that after ... fifteen years and the evacuation of the left bank, the Germans will not filter troops by degrees into this district.*



The Tiger: "Curious! I seem to hear a child weeping!"  
▲ Fig. 1.13 Peace And Future Cannon Fodder, *Daily Herald*, 13 May 1919. The caption reads, The Tiger: "Curious, I seem to hear a child weeping!"

### Those who thought that the Versailles Treaty was fair

There were some that believed the treaty to be fair or that it represented the best that could have been achieved in the circumstances.

SOURCE 12

Extract from the diary of Edward M. House, an American diplomat, June 1919.  
*To those who are saying that the Treaty is bad ... 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. To create new boundaries is always to create new troubles. The one follows the other. While I should have preferred a different peace, I doubt whether it could have been made.*

SOURCE 13

Extract from a speech by President Wilson delivered to the League of Nations, September 1919.  
*Do not think of this treaty of peace as merely a settlement with Germany. It is that. It is a very severe settlement with Germany, but there is not anything in it that she did not earn. Indeed, she earned more than she can ever be able to pay for, and the punishment exacted of her is not a punishment greater than she can bear, and it is absolutely necessary in order that no other nation may ever plot such a thing against humanity and civilization.*

### KEY POINTS

- ▶ The aims and motives of Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson between November 1918 and the signing of the peace treaties.
- ▶ The terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- ▶ The reactions of the "Big Three" to the Treaty.
- ▶ How the Treaty affected Germany up to 1923.
- ▶ The main terms of the treaties that dealt with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey.
- ▶ The range of contemporary opinions on the peace settlement.

### Revision tips

- Make sure you know why the "Big Three" held the positions they did with regard to Germany. You will find that the differences between the "Big Three" reflected their different wartime experiences and defensive positions. You will need to be familiar with Wilson's Fourteen Points and the reasons Lloyd George's views changed after November 1918.
- The terms of the Treaty of Versailles have to be learnt. You will also need to be able to identify which terms pleased or displeased each of the "Big Three".
- You will need to be able to explain the various reasons why Germany objected to the Versailles Treaty.
- You should also cover the terms that each of the minor treaties had in common, together with an understanding of how Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were formed out of the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

### DISCUSSION

1. How useful is Source 8 as evidence of German objections to the Treaty of Versailles?
2. Does Source 9 surprise you? Explain your answer using the source and your own knowledge.
3. Does Figure 1.12 show that Sources 8 and 9 were wrong? Explain your answer using the sources and your own knowledge.
4. What message is the cartoonist trying to give in Figure 1.13?
5. How far do Sources 8 to 10 and Figures 1.12 and 1.13 support the view that the Treaty of Versailles was a compromise that satisfied no-one?