

The Treaty of Versailles

In January 1919 seventy delegates representing the twenty-seven Allied nations met outside of Paris at Versailles to draft peace terms. None of the nations known as the Central Powers were invited. Russia, which had dropped out of the war in 1917, was not invited either. Although each of the Allied nations was represented, all major decisions were made by a group known as the Big Four. This group included President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Premier Georges Clemenceau of France, and Premier Vittorio Orlando of Italy.

From the start of the conference, it was obvious that Prime Minister George, Premier Orlando, and Premier Clemenceau wished to severely punish Germany. Clemenceau was particularly enraged. France had lost fifty percent of its male population between the ages of 20 and 32, and many of its cities, farms, and forests had been destroyed. Clemenceau blamed Germany for this destruction.

The peace agreement drawn up for Germany to sign was called the Treaty of Versailles. Its terms were harsh. According to the treaty, Germany

- was required to give up territory to France and to a newly formed Poland
- was stripped of its overseas colonies in Africa and the Pacific
- was forced to limit its army to a reserve of 100,000 men
- was not allowed to manufacture armaments or have an air force and could only maintain a small navy
- was required to accept responsibility for starting the war. (This clause infuriated the Germans and aided Adolf Hitler in his rise to power fourteen years later.)

Separate treaties were signed by Germany's allies: Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. With the signing of the treaties, World War I officially came to an end.

Match the names of the leaders with their countries.

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| 1. ____ Italy | A. Woodrow Wilson |
| 2. ____ Great Britain | B. Georges Clemenceau |
| 3. ____ France | C. Vittorio Orlando |
| 4. ____ United States | D. David Lloyd George |

5. Why was Georges Clemenceau particularly determined to punish Germany?

6. Were the Allies justified in imposing a very harsh treaty on Germany? Why or why not?
