

The Paris Peace Conference

By the end of this spread you should be able to:

- 1 describe the aims and motives of each of the Big Three at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919-1920
- 2 explain what they agreed and disagreed on
- 3 give some reasons why all the peacemakers did not achieve all their aims

The Conference

Purpose

For the Allied Powers

- 1 to decide on the peace terms they would offer the Central Powers.
- 2 to sign peace treaties with them.

Countries present

The twenty-seven victorious Allied Powers

Countries excluded

- 1 Russia. Because
 - a although it had fought with the Allies, it had surrendered to Germany in 1917 (page 122).
 - b many Allied leaders distrusted its new Bolshevik government (page 121).
- 2 The Central Powers. They were not consulted about the terms of the Treaty.

The Big Three

Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France, President Woodrow Wilson of the USA and David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain, dominated the Conference and made the main decisions. They also met in secret, as the Council of Four, with the Prime Minister of Italy.

Although the Big Three agreed that their task was to make sure that such a terrible war could never happen again, each had very different ideas about what should be done.

Clemenceau was nicknamed 'The Tiger' because of his determination that France should not be defeated in the war. He had the strong backing of the French people. He wanted the peace treaties to protect France in the future and to compensate the French for their suffering. Most of the fighting had

1917	Dec	Cease-fire between Russia and Germany
1918	Jan	President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' speech
	Nov	Cease-fire between Allied and Central Powers
1919	Jan	Start of Paris Peace Conference
	June	Treaty of Versailles (with Germany)
	Sept	Treaty of St Germain (with Austria)
	Nov	Treaty of Neuilly (with Bulgaria)
1920	Jan	First meeting of the Council of the League of Nations
	June	Treaty of Trianon (with Hungary)
	Aug	Treaty of Sèvres (with Turkey)

been on French soil. It had

- 1 killed 1.4 million French soldiers and wounded nearly twice as many
- 2 devastated thousands of square kilometres of farmland
- 3 destroyed factories and homes.

Wilson was a high-minded man. In 1918 he had proposed Fourteen Points as a basis for future world peace. He hoped that the countries at the Peace Conference would agree to these points.

Fourteen Points The main points were:

- 1 Countries should stop making secret treaties with one another. The peace should be negotiated in the open. After that there should be no more secret diplomacy.
- 2 They should reduce their weapons and armed forces.
- 3 People living under the rule of foreign countries should be allowed to form their own nations and choose their own type of government. Wilson called this the principle of national self-determination.
- 4 Countries should belong to a new organization to be set up to protect the independence of all states.

Lloyd George was a clever politician and negotiator but, above all, he was not prepared to ignore British public opinion. Britain had suffered 750,000 killed and 1.5 million wounded. The British public, which had just re-elected his government, wanted to 'Hang The Kaiser' and 'Make Germany Pay'.

The aims of the Big Three

Lloyd George

- 1 end the German threat to the British navy and Empire
- 2 make Germany a non-aggressive country, without colonies
- 3 prevent Germany becoming so weak that a revival of European industry and trade is hindered
- 4 prevent Germans becoming so poor that they turn to Communism
- 5 avoid humiliation of Germans so that they have no reason to seek revenge
- 6 help secure France against Germany, but prevent France becoming too powerful
- 7 Create a balance of power so that no one European country can threaten the others

Clemenceau

- 1 have revenge on Germany for French suffering
- 2 make Germany pay for the cost of the damage
- 3 punish Germany for the humiliation she had inflicted on France after defeating her in 1871 (page 8)
- 4 ensure that Germany would never be able to attack France again: take away German land; weaken her industries; reduce her armed forces



Wilson

- 1 prevent Germany from becoming aggressive again
- 2 punish Germany for her aggression, but avoid forcing her to pay very heavy damages
- 3 base the peace treaties on his Fourteen Points

Why did the peacemakers have to compromise?

Pressure of time Although the peacemakers in Paris faced complicated problems, they had to work very quickly because:

- 1 the Austro-Hungarian Empire had started to break up before the war ended and the new states were already quarrelling about their frontiers.
- 2 the Armistice was only a truce, and the Allies were continuing their blockade of Germany (page 13) until a formal peace was signed. As a result, thousands of German civilians were dying of starvation.
- 3 the Allied leaders feared that if a settlement was not agreed quickly, the Germans, and other peoples, might follow the Russians' example and choose Communist governments.

Conflict of interests

- 1 All twenty-seven countries at the Conference made their own demands.
- 2 Even the Big Three disagreed on many points.
- 3 The peacemakers had to do too much work in too short a time.
- 4 To achieve a settlement quickly, everyone had to compromise.

- 1 Look at the aims of the Big Three at the start of the Peace Conference in 1919. On which issues did they
 - a agree
 - b disagree.
- 2 a Why was Clemenceau so determined to be harsh on Germany?
 - b The French believed they had suffered more than Britain or the USA in fighting Germany. Suggest two reasons for this.
- 3 Give two reasons why no country could achieve all its aims at the Conference.