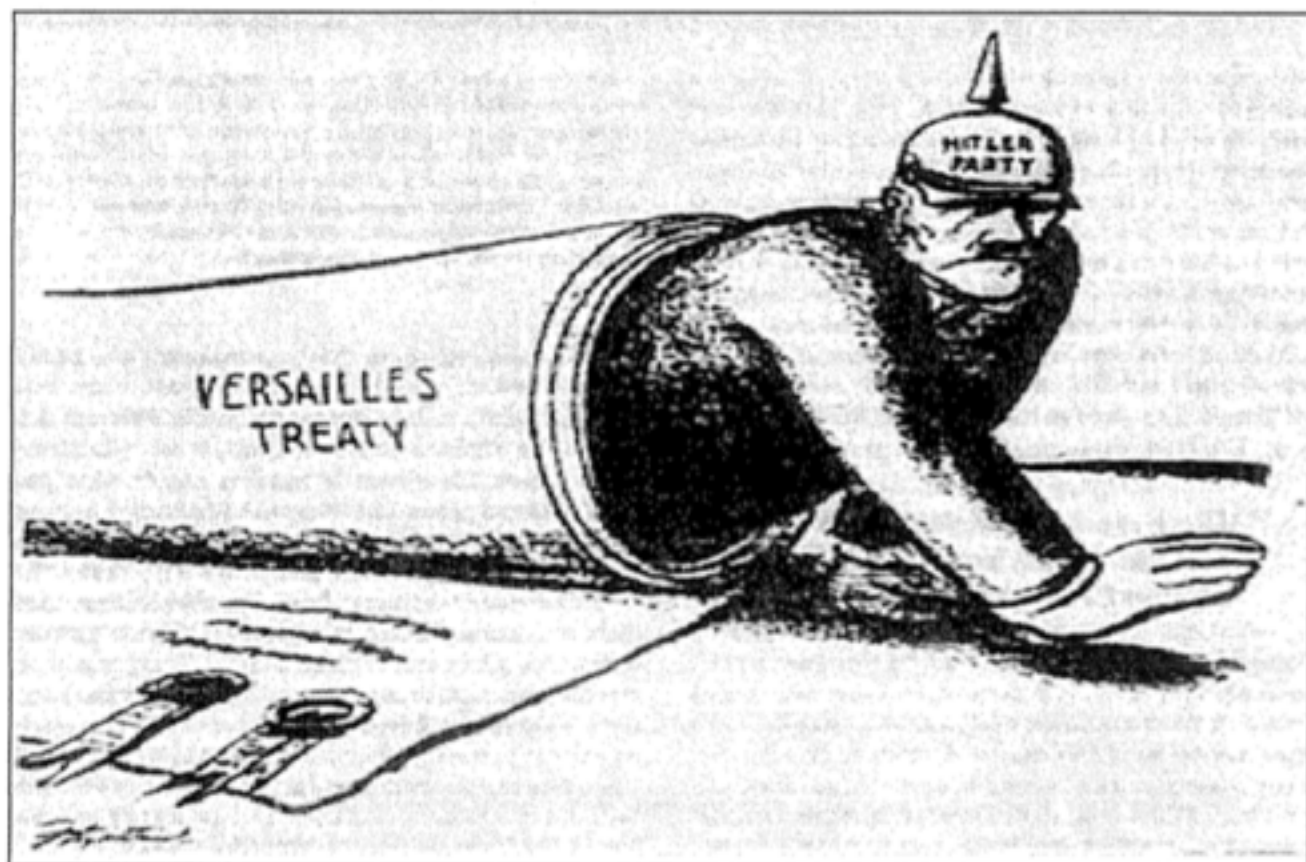


How Did the Versailles Treaty Help Cause World War II?



Daniel Fitzpatrick, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 19, 1930.

Overview: On June 28, 1919 – seven and a half months after the horrific fighting of World War I ended in November 1918 – the Versailles Treaty was signed by the victorious Allied nations of Great Britain, France, and the United States and by a defeated Germany. The framers of the treaty hoped that it would stabilize Europe and ensure that another catastrophic war would never happen again. But just over two decades later, the flames of war consumed Europe. This Mini-Q examines the ways in which the treaty contributed to the Second World War.

The Documents:

- Document A: German Territorial Losses (map)
- Document B: Treaty of Versailles, Article 160; Troop Levels, 1920 (cartoon)
- Document C: Treaty of Versailles, Articles 232 and 233; Reparations
- Document D: Treaty of Versailles, Article 231; War Guilt Clause

A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

Document A

Source: German Territorial Losses, Versailles Treaty, 1919. Map created from various sources.



Note: The Treaty took coal-producing areas away from Germany, reducing German coal production by 40%.

Source: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1924.

It should scarcely seem questionable to anyone that ... the restoration of the frontiers of 1914 could be achieved only by blood. Only childish and naive minds can lull themselves in the idea that they can bring about a correction of Versailles by wheedling and begging.... No nation can remove this hand from its throat except by the sword.

Note: Adolf Hitler published *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle") in 1924, well before he came to power but when he was beginning to make his mark as a German political figure.

Document Analysis

1. What territories did Germany lose due to the Versailles Treaty?
2. East Prussia remained a part of Germany. Why might the loss of the Polish Corridor and Danzig have been especially difficult for Germans?
3. Why might life have been difficult for Germans who lived in the lost territories?
4. How does Hitler suggest Germans should respond to the Versailles Treaty?
5. How can you use this document to explain how the Versailles Treaty helped cause World War II?

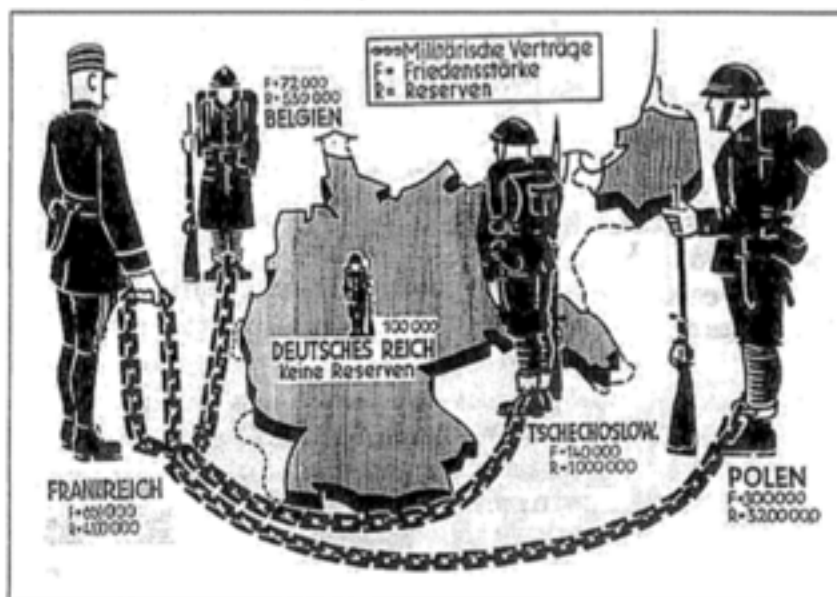
Document B

Source: Treaty of Versailles, 1919. Article 160.

By a date which must not be later than March 31, 1920, the German Army must not comprise more than seven divisions of infantry and three divisions of cavalry... After that date the total number of [military troops]... in... Germany must not exceed one hundred thousand men, including officers... The Army shall be devoted exclusively to the maintenance of order within the territory and to the control of the frontiers... The total effective strength of officers, including the personnel of staffs, whatever their composition, must not exceed four thousand.

Source: German political cartoon, 1920s.

Troop Levels, 1920



Translations:

Frankreich (France)

Belgien (Belgium)

Deutsches Reich (Germany)

Tschechoslow (Czechoslovakia)

Polen (Poland)

Friedensstärke (peacekeepers;
full-time military troops)

Reserven (military reserves
available when required)

Militärische Verträge (military
alliances)

Document Analysis

1. What is the total number of German military troops allowed by Article 160 of the Versailles Treaty?
2. How does Article 160 define the role of the army?
3. Which of the countries in the cartoon image has the largest combined army of reservists and peacekeepers?
4. What is implied by the imagery showing the chain held by the large figure representing France? How does this image suggest German politicians and citizens might have felt about their military security compared to that of their neighbors?
5. How does this document explain how the Versailles Treaty helped cause World War II?

Document C

Source: Treaty of Versailles, 1919.

Article 232: The [Allies] ... require, and 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 during the period of the belligerency...

Article 233: The amount of ... [reparations or payments] to be made by Germany shall be determined by an Inter-Allied Commission. ... [which will] consider the claims and give to [Germany] a just opportunity to be heard... The Commission shall...draw up a schedule of payments prescribing the time and manner for securing and discharging the entire obligations within a period of thirty years from May 1, 1921. If, however...Germany fails to [meet] her obligations, any balance remaining unpaid may...be postponed for [future payment] or may be handled [in another way that] the Allied and Associated Governments ... shall determine.

Source: Chart compiled from varied sources including John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, 1920 ; Charles Mee, *The End of Order: Versailles, 1919*.

Reparations Established by Versailles Treaty with Later Revisions

Date	Amount of Reparations	Value in 2010 US Dollars	German Response and Payment
1921	132 billion gold marks	\$367 billion to be paid over 30 years	Anger/humiliation. Paid little in 1920s.
1929	112 billion gold marks (reduced from 1921)	\$341 billion	Not counting American loans, Germans pay only 2 billion marks over next three years.
1933			Hitler comes to power. Stops all reparations payments

Document Analysis

1. Why was Germany required to pay reparations for World War I?
2. When were the reparation payments set to begin and what was the date by which they were required to be fulfilled?
3. In 1929, what was the reduced amount of reparations Germany was required to pay?
In German gold marks? In 2010 US dollars?
4. What could the Inter-Allied Reparations Commission do in the case that Germany fell behind or failed to make reparations payments?
5. How does this document help explain how the Treaty of Versailles contributed to World War II?

Document D

Source: Treaty of Versailles, 1919, Article 231.

Note: This Article of the Versailles Treaty is often referred to as the War Guilt Clause.

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and 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.

Source: Laurence V. Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War 1914–1918*, 1995.

The Allies continued in the years after 1919 to regard the [Versailles] Treaty as an international contract...but most Germans saw it as an atrocious injustice, an evil thing which must be destroyed. This feeling persisted long after most of the provisions had been carried out, long after many Germans could even name its provisions. What they knew of the treaty was etched indelibly in their minds and could be abbreviated in [a] single word: humiliation. Nations, as with individuals, do not like to be made to feel disgraced and cast off...It undermines... a sense of worth, their value of themselves... Much of the exaltation [enthusiasm] within Germany arising from the Nazi regime arose [from] the way in which Hitler restored a sense of pride, reawakened a sense of self-respect, forcing the world to look at Germany anew.

Document Analysis

1. What is the main idea of Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles?
2. How did most Germans feel about the Treaty of Versailles?
3. According to historian Laurence Moyer, why did many Germans admire Adolf Hitler?
4. How does this document explain how the Treaty of Versailles helped cause World War II?