

4

The peace treaties after the First World War

Were they fair?

The Paris Peace Conference

FOCUS

In 1919 the leaders of the victorious powers met in Paris to decide how to deal with the defeated powers. The leaders of Britain, France and the USA found it very hard to agree on what to do.

In this chapter you will:

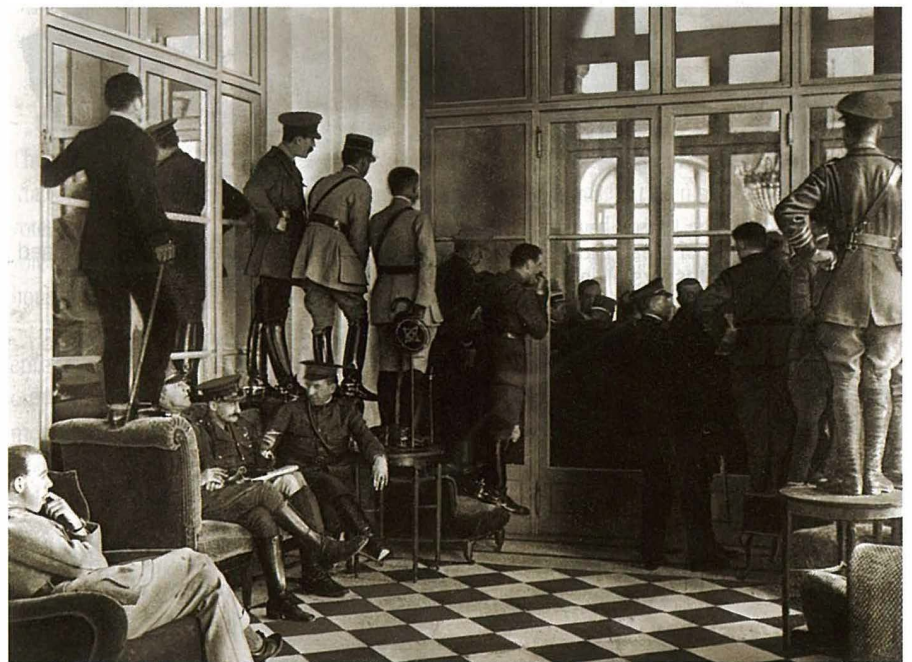
- consider why the leaders had different aims at the Peace Conference, and why each could not get what they wanted
- find out how the Treaty of Versailles affected Germany
- investigate why the various treaties have been criticised, and make up your own mind about whether the peace treaties were fair.

FACTFILE

The Paris Peace Conference, 1919–1920

- ★ The Conference took place in the palace of Versailles (a short distance from Paris).
- ★ It lasted for 12 months.
- ★ Thirty-two nations were supposed to be represented, but no one from the defeated countries was invited.
- ★ Five treaties were drawn up at the Conference. The main one was the Treaty of Versailles which dealt with Germany. The other treaties dealt with Germany's allies.
- ★ All of the important decisions on the fate of Germany were taken by the 'Big Three': Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson.
- ★ The Big Three were supported by many diplomats and expert advisers, but they often ignored their advice.
- ★ The Big Three got on badly from the start and relations between them got worse throughout the Conference, especially the relationship between Wilson and Clemenceau.
- ★ Wilson was very ill during parts of the Conference.

SOURCE 1



Allied soldiers and officials watch the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

Source 1 was taken at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference. It was a spectacular occasion and a momentous event. Months of hard negotiation, argument and compromise ended when the two German representatives who had been summoned to sign the Treaty did so on 28 June 1919.

When the treaty terms were announced the Germans complained that it was unfair. Many historians have criticised it since. To understand this, we need to look at the mood in 1919.

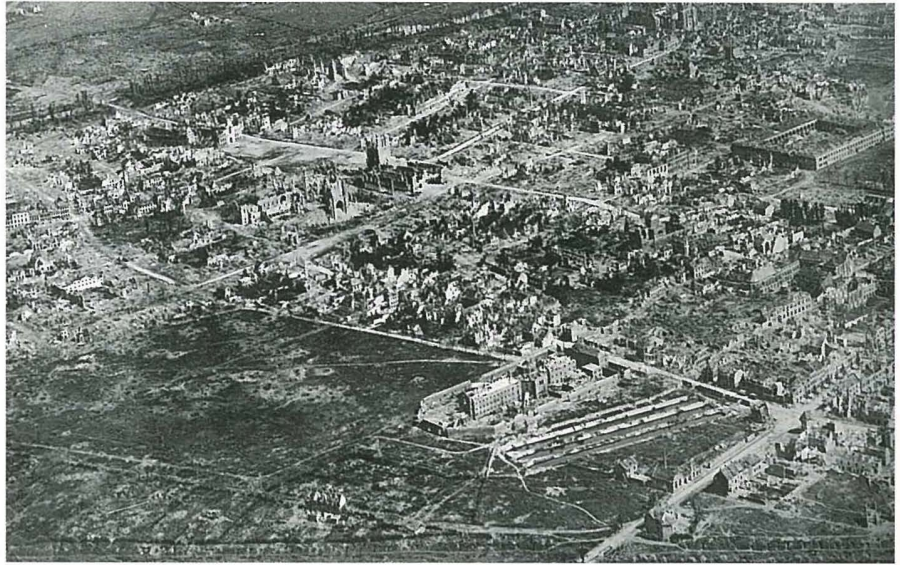
The mood in 1919

When the leaders of Britain (Lloyd George), France (Clemenceau) and the USA (Wilson) arrived in Paris in January 1919 to draw up a treaty, they were already under pressure to deal severely with Germany. The people of the victorious countries, particularly in France and Britain, felt strongly that Germany was responsible for the war and should be punished.

There was also a strong feeling that Germany should pay for all the damage and destruction caused by the war. Apart from the USA, all of the countries that had fought in the war were exhausted. Their economies and their industries were in a bad state. Millions of young men had been killed or injured on both sides. Total British and French casualties, killed or injured, probably amounted to over 9 million. Ordinary civilians had faced shortages of food and medicine. Villages and towns in large areas of Belgium and France had been devastated.

1 You are a reporter for a Belgian newspaper. Write a caption to go with Source 2. Your caption should aim to persuade the Allied leaders to punish Germany.

SOURCE 2



An aerial photograph of Ypres in Belgium showing the almost complete destruction of the town by four years of heavy gun bombardment.

Although no fighting took place on British soil, the huge casualties left their mark on public opinion in Britain. Almost every family had lost a member in the fighting. In the British general election campaigns of 1918 politicians knew they could rely on the support of the British people if they demanded a harsh peace settlement with Germany.

SOURCE 4

If I am elected, Germany is going to pay . . . I have personally no doubt we will get everything that you can squeeze out of a lemon, and a bit more. I propose that every bit of [German-owned] property, movable and immovable, in Allied and neutral countries, whether State property or private property, should be surrendered by the Germans.

Sir Eric Geddes, a government minister, speaking to a rally in the general election campaign, December 1918.

The case for treating Germany harshly was strengthened when it became public how harshly Germany had treated Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 (see page 118). The Treaty stripped Russia of huge amounts of land and 25 per cent of its population. From the point of view of the Allies this was further proof of the evil ambitions of the German regime. The Allies felt that this was what Germany would have done to Britain and France if it had won.

Although the war and the fighting had ended in November 1918, the bitterness, hatred and enmity between the warring countries was far from over.

SOURCE 5

To the Allied Powers the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was almost as significant as to the Russians and Germans who signed it. The naked and brutal policy of annexation [take-over of land] as practised by a victorious Germany weakened the arguments of well-meaning but misguided pacifists in the countries of the Entente.

An extract from Purnell's *History of the War*, written in 1969.

ACTIVITY

Source 4 comes from a speech in the 1918 British general election campaign. Write an extra paragraph for the speech giving reasons for this harsh treatment of Germany.

At the end of the speech Geddes is holding a question time. What questions do you think might be asked, or what criticisms or comments might be made?

SOURCE 3



British Empire Union cartoon, 1919. The BEU was a pressure group which campaigned for people to buy British Empire goods.

- 2 Explain in your own words what Source 3 is trying to say about 'the German'.
- 3 Read Source 5. What sort of treaty do you think the 'well-meaning but misguided pacifists' might have wanted?

1 If you had been there to advise the Big Three, in what order of priority would you put the four aims described on the right?

The aims of the leaders at the Paris Peace Conference

As soon as the Paris Peace Conference began, there was disagreement about what the Conference was aiming to do.

- Some felt that the aim was to punish Germany.
- Others felt that the aim was to cripple Germany so that it could not start another war.
- Many felt that the point of the Conference was to reward the winning countries.
- Others believed that the aim of the Conference should be to establish a just and lasting peace.

PROFILE

Georges Clemenceau
(Prime Minister of France)



Background

- ★ Born 1841 (he was aged 77 when the Paris Conference began).
- ★ First entered French politics in 1871.
- ★ Was Prime Minister from 1906 to 1909. From 1914 to 1917 he was very critical of the French war leaders. In November 1917 he was himself elected to lead France through the last years of the war.

Character

A hard, tough politician with a reputation for being uncompromising. He had seen his country invaded twice by the Germans, in 1870 and in 1914. He was determined not to allow such devastation ever again.

FOCUS TASK

What were the aims of the Big Three at the Paris Peace Conference?

Using the information and sources on pages 80–83, draw up a chart like the one below summarising the aims of the three leaders at the Paris Peace Conference.

NB Leave the fifth column blank. You will need it for a later task.

Leader	Country	Attitude towards Germany	Main aim	

Georges Clemenceau (France)

France had suffered enormous damage to its land, industry, people – and self-confidence. Over two-thirds of the men who had served in the French army had been killed or injured. The war affected almost an entire generation. By comparison, Germany seemed to many French people as powerful and threatening as ever.

Ever since 1870, France had felt threatened by its increasingly powerful neighbour, Germany. The war increased this feeling. German land and industry had not been as badly damaged as France's. France's population was in decline compared to Germany's. Clemenceau and other French leaders saw the Treaty as an opportunity to cripple Germany so that it could not attack France again. The French President (Poincaré) even wanted Germany broken up into a collection of smaller states, but Clemenceau knew that the British and Americans would not agree to this. Clemenceau was a realist and knew he would probably be forced to compromise on some issues. However, he had to show he was aware of public opinion in France. He demanded a treaty that would weaken Germany as much as possible.

Woodrow Wilson (USA)

Wilson has often been seen as an idealist whose aim was to build a better and more peaceful world from the ruins of the Great War. This is partially true, but Wilson did believe that Germany should be punished. However, he also believed that the treaty with Germany should not be too harsh. His view was that if Germany was treated harshly, some day it would recover and want revenge. Wilson's main aim was to strengthen democracy in the defeated nation so that its people would not let its leaders cause another war.

He believed that nations should co-operate to achieve world peace. In January 1918 he published his Fourteen Points to help achieve this. The most important for Wilson was the fourteenth. In this he proposed the setting up of an international body called the League of Nations.

He also believed in self-determination (the idea that nations should rule themselves rather than be ruled by others). He wanted the different peoples of eastern Europe (for example, Poles, Czechs and Slovaks) to rule themselves rather than be part of Austria–Hungary's empire.

PROFILE

Woodrow Wilson
(President of the USA)

**Background**

- ★ Born 1856.
- ★ Became a university professor.
- ★ First entered politics in 1910.
- ★ Became President in 1912 and was re-elected in 1916.

Character

An idealist, and a reformer. As President, he had campaigned against corruption in politics and business. He concentrated on keeping the USA out of the war. Once the USA had joined the war, he drew up the Fourteen Points as the basis for ending the war fairly, so that future wars could be avoided.

PROFILE

David Lloyd George
(Prime Minister of Britain)

**Background**

- ★ Born 1863.
- ★ First entered politics in 1890. A very able politician who became Prime Minister in 1916 and remained in power until 1922.

Character

A realist. As an experienced politician, he knew there would have to be compromise. Thus he occupied the middle ground between the views of Wilson and those of Clemenceau.

THE FOURTEEN POINTS

- 1 No secret treaties.
- 2 Free access to the seas in peacetime or wartime.
- 3 Free trade between countries.
- 4 All countries to work towards disarmament.
- 5 Colonies to have a say in their own future.
- 6 German troops to leave Russia.
- 7 Independence for Belgium.
- 8 France to regain Alsace–Lorraine.
- 9 Frontier between Austria and Italy to be adjusted.
- 10 Self-determination for the peoples of eastern Europe (they should rule themselves).
- 11 Serbia to have access to the sea.
- 12 Self-determination for the people in the Turkish Empire.
- 13 Poland to become an independent state with access to the sea.
- 14 League of Nations to be set up.

Many people in France and Britain did not agree with the ideas contained in Wilson's Fourteen Points. They seemed impractical. Take self-determination, for example. It would be very difficult to give the peoples of eastern Europe the chance to rule themselves because they were scattered across many countries. For example, 25 per cent of the population of the new state of Czechoslovakia were neither Czechs nor Slovaks. Some people were bound to end up being ruled by people from another group with different customs and a different language. Some historians have pointed out that while Wilson talked a great deal about eastern and central Europe, he did not actually know very much about the area.

David Lloyd George (Great Britain)

At the peace talks Lloyd George was often in the middle ground between Clemenceau and Wilson. He wanted Germany to be justly punished but not too harshly. He wanted Germany to lose its navy and its colonies because Britain thought they threatened the British Empire. However, like Wilson, he did not want Germany to seek revenge in the future and possibly start another war. He was also keen for Britain and Germany to begin trading with each other again. Before the war, Germany had been Britain's second largest trading partner. British people might not like it, but the fact was that trade with Germany meant jobs for them.

SOURCE 6

We want a peace which will be just, but not vindictive. We want a stern peace because the occasion demands it, but the severity must be designed, not for vengeance, but for justice. Above all, we want to protect the future against a repetition of the horrors of this war.

Lloyd George speaking to the House of Commons, before the Peace Conference.

Like Clemenceau, Lloyd George had real problems with public pressures at home for a harsh treaty (see Sources 3 and 4 on page 81). Even his own MPs did not always agree with him and he had just won the 1918 election in Britain by promising to 'make Germany pay', even though he realised the dangers of this course of action.

- 1 Look at Sources 7–9. All the cartoons are commenting on the Peace Conference. Say which you think would most appeal to each of the Big Three.
- 2 All the cartoons come from the same magazine, *Punch*. Why do you think they take different viewpoints?

SOURCE 7



GIVING HIM ROPE?

GERMAN CHIMNEY. (to Allied Police). "HERE, I SAY, STOP! YOU'RE HURTING ME! [Aside] IF I ONLY WHINE ENOUGH I MAY BE ABLE TO WRIGGLE OUT OF THIS YET."

SOURCE 8



SOURCE 9



THE FINISHING TOUCH.

Disagreements and compromises

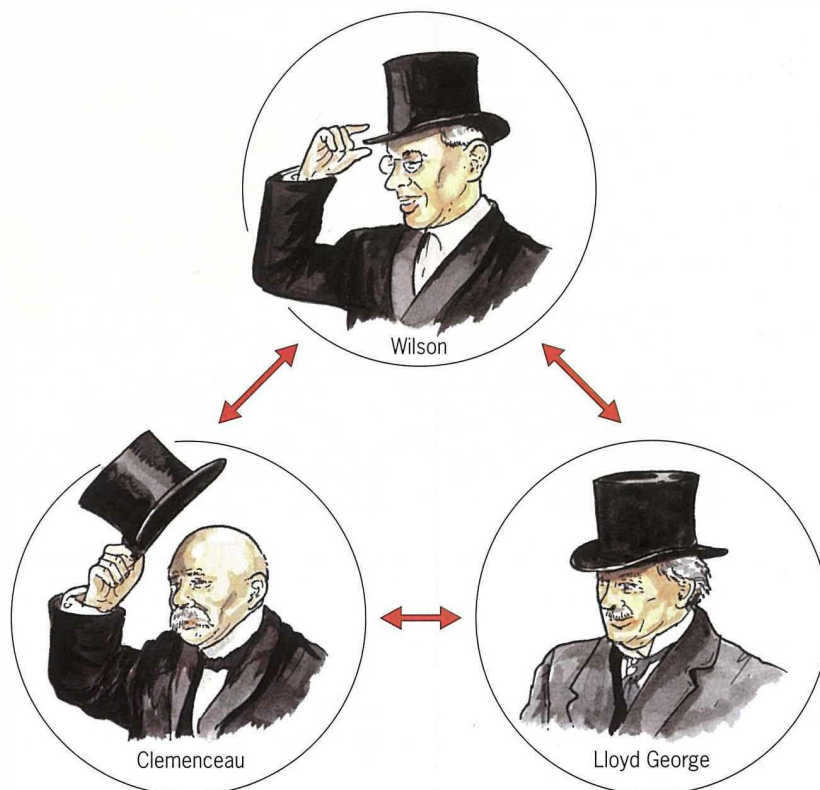
As the talks at Versailles went on, it became clear that the very different objectives of the three leaders could not all be met. Clemenceau clashed with Wilson over many issues. The USA had not suffered nearly as badly as France in the war. Clemenceau resented Wilson's more generous attitude to Germany. They disagreed over what to do about Germany's Rhineland and coalfields in the Saar. In the end, Wilson had to give way on these issues. In return, Clemenceau and Lloyd George did give Wilson what he wanted in eastern Europe, despite their reservations about his idea of self-determination. However, this mainly affected the other four treaties, not the Treaty of Versailles.

Clemenceau also clashed with Lloyd George, particularly over Lloyd George's desire not to treat Germany too harshly. For example, Clemenceau said: '... if the British are so anxious to appease Germany they should look overseas and make colonial, naval or commercial concessions.' Clemenceau felt that the British were quite happy to treat Germany fairly in Europe, where France rather than Britain was most under threat. However, they were less happy to allow Germany to keep its navy and colonies, which would be more of a threat to Britain.

Wilson and Lloyd George did not always agree either. Lloyd George was particularly unhappy with point 2 of the Fourteen Points, allowing all nations access to the seas. Similarly, Wilson's views on people ruling themselves were somewhat threatening to the British government, for the British Empire ruled millions of people all across the world from London.

ACTIVITY

- 1 Work in groups. Draw up a table to show what views:
 - a) Clemenceau
 - b) Lloyd George
 would have expressed on points 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 14 of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. You can find them on page 83.
- 2 On your own, write a letter from one of the two leaders to Wilson summarising your view of the Fourteen Points.
- 3 Copy the following diagram and use it to summarise the attitudes of the three leaders to each other.



The Treaty of Versailles

None of the Big Three was happy with the eventual terms of the Treaty. After months of negotiation, all of them had to compromise on some of their aims, otherwise there would never have been a treaty.

The main terms can be divided into five areas.

The terms of the treaty

1 War guilt

This clause was simple but was seen by the Germans as extremely harsh. Germany had to accept the blame for starting the war (see Source 21 on page 12).

2 Reparations

The major powers agreed, without consulting Germany, that Germany had to pay REPARATIONS to the Allies for the damage caused by the war. The exact figure was not agreed until 1921 when it was set at £6600 million – an enormous figure. If the terms of the payments had not later been changed under the Young Plan in 1929 (see page 146), Germany would not have finished paying this bill until 1984.

3 German territories and colonies

Germany's overseas empire was taken away (see Source 10). It had been one of the causes of bad relations between Britain and Germany before the war. Former German colonies became MANDATES controlled by the League of Nations, which effectively meant that France and Britain controlled them.

Germany's European borders were very extensive, and the section dealing with former German territories was a complicated part of the Treaty (see Source 11). In addition to these changes, the Treaty also forbade Germany to join together with its former ally Austria.

FOCUS TASK

Why did the Allied leaders not get the treaty they wanted?

- 1 Work in threes. Look back at the profiles of Clemenceau, Wilson and Lloyd George on pages 82–83. Choose one each. Study the terms of the treaty on these two pages. Think about:
 - which terms of the Treaty would please your chosen person and why
 - which terms would displease him and why
 - how far he seemed to have achieved his aims.

Report your findings to your partners.

- 2 Look back at the chart you compiled on page 82. There should be a blank fifth column. Put the heading 'How they felt about the Treaty' and fill it in for each leader with a one-sentence summary.
- 3 a) Choose one of the following phrases to finish off this sentence:
The Big Three did not all get the treaty they wanted because . . .
 - Clemenceau bullied Wilson and Lloyd George into agreeing to a harsh treaty
 - the leaders' aims were too different – they could not all have got what they wanted and someone was bound to be disappointed
 - public opinion in their home countries affected the leaders' decisions.
- b) Write a paragraph to explain why you chose that sentence.
- c) Write two more paragraphs to explain whether there is evidence to support the other two.

SOURCE 10

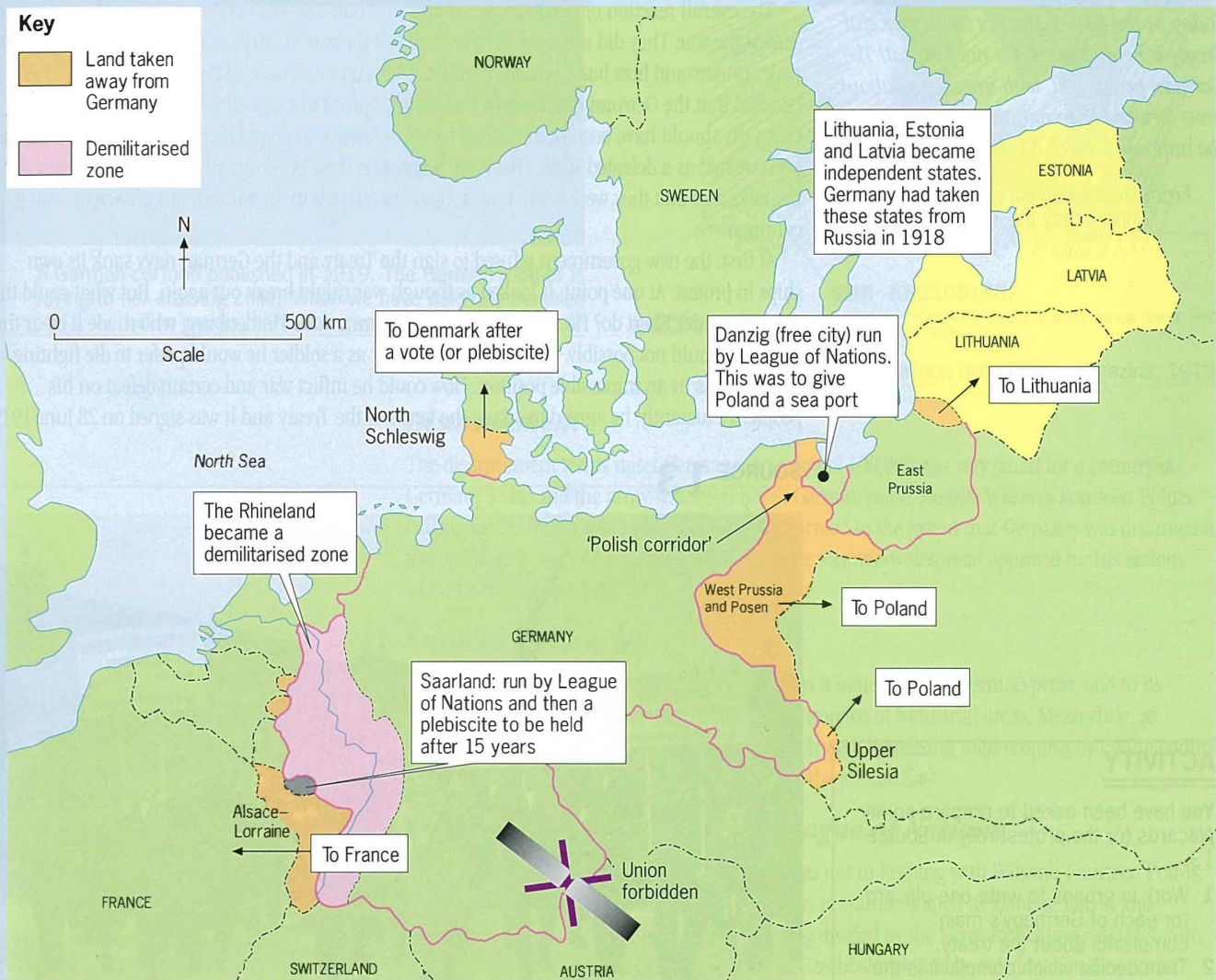


4 Germany's armed forces

The size and power of the German army was a major concern of all the powers, especially France. The Treaty therefore restricted German armed forces to a level well below what they had been before the war.

- The army was limited to 100,000 men.
- Conscription was banned – soldiers had to be volunteers.
- Germany was not allowed armoured vehicles, submarines or aircraft.
- The navy could build only six battleships.
- The Rhineland became a demilitarised zone. This meant that no German troops were allowed into that area. The Rhineland was important because it was the border area between Germany and France (see Source 11).

SOURCE 11



The impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the borders of Europe.

5 League of Nations

Previous methods of keeping peace had failed and so the League of Nations was set up as an international 'police force'. You will study the League in detail in Chapter 8. Germany was not invited to join the League until it had shown that it was a peace-loving country.

German reactions to the Treaty of Versailles

The terms of the Treaty were announced on 7 May to a horrified German nation. Germany was to lose:

- 10 per cent of its land
- all of its overseas colonies
- 12.5 per cent of its population
- 16 per cent of its coalfields and almost half of its iron and steel industry.

Its army was reduced to 100,000 men. It could have no air force, and only a tiny navy.

Worst of all, Germany had to accept the blame for starting the war and should therefore pay reparations.

The overall reaction of Germans was horror and outrage. They certainly did not feel they had started the war. They did not even feel they had lost the war. In 1919 many Germans did not really understand how bad Germany's military situation had been at the end of the war. They believed that the German government had simply agreed to a ceasefire, and that therefore Germany should have been at the Paris Peace Conference to negotiate peace. It should not have been treated as a defeated state. They were angry that their government was not represented at the talks and that they were being forced to accept a harsh treaty without any choice or even a comment.

At first, the new government refused to sign the Treaty and the German navy sank its own ships in protest. At one point, it looked as though war might break out again. But what could the German leader Ebert do? He consulted the army commander Hindenburg, who made it clear that Germany could not possibly win, but indicated that as a soldier he would prefer to die fighting.

Ebert was in an impossible position. How could he inflict war and certain defeat on his people? Reluctantly, he agreed to accept the terms of the Treaty and it was signed on 28 June 1919.

SOURCE 12

Today in the Hall of Mirrors the disgraceful Treaty is being signed. Do not forget it! The German people will, with unceasing labour, press forward to reconquer the place among the nations to which it is entitled.

From *Deutsche Zeitung* (German News), on the day the Treaty was signed.

SOURCE 13



Germans demonstrate against the Treaty, May 1919.

ACTIVITY

You have been asked to prepare some placards for the protest rally in Source 13.

- 1 Work in groups to write one placard for each of Germany's main complaints about the treaty.
- 2 Then decide which complaint is the most important. That one will be carried at the front of the march.

War guilt and reparations

The 'war guilt' clause was particularly hated. Germans felt at the very least that blame should be shared (see Witness 6, page 13). What made matters worse, however, was that because Germany was forced to accept blame for the war, it was also expected to pay for all the damage caused by it. The German economy was already in tatters. People had very little food. They feared that the reparations payments would cripple them.

SOURCE 14



A German cartoon published in 1919. The German mother is saying to her starving child: 'When we have paid one hundred billion marks then I can give you something to eat.'

SOURCE 15



THE RECKONING.

PAN-GRMAX. "MONSTROUS, I CALL IT. WHY, IT'S FULLY A QUARTER OF WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE MADE THEM PAY, IF WE'D WON."

A cartoon from *Punch* magazine, 1919.

SOURCE 16

The Allies could have done anything with the German people had they made the slightest move toward reconciliation. People were prepared to make reparations for the wrong done by their leaders . . . Over and over I hear the same refrain, 'We shall hate our conquerors with a hatred that will only cease when the day of our revenge comes.'

Princess Bleucher, writing in 1920. She was an Englishwoman married to a member of the German royal family.

Disarmament

The disarmament terms upset Germans. An army of 100,000 was very small for a country of Germany's size and the army was a symbol of German pride. Despite Wilson's Fourteen Points calling for disarmament, none of the Allies disarmed to the extent that Germany was disarmed in the 1920s. It is no great surprise that Adolf Hitler received widespread approval for his actions when he rebuilt Germany's armed forces in 1935.

German territories

Germany certainly lost a lot of territory. This was a major blow to German pride, and to its economy. Both the Saar and Upper Silesia were important industrial areas. Meanwhile, as Germany was losing land, the British and French were increasing their empires by taking control of German and Turkish territories in Africa and the Middle East.

The Fourteen Points and the League of Nations

To most Germans, the treatment of Germany was not in keeping with Wilson's Fourteen Points. For example, while self-determination was given to countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, German-speaking peoples were being divided by the terms forbidding ANSCHLUSS with Austria or hived off into new countries such as Czechoslovakia to be ruled by non-Germans.

Germany felt further insulted by not being invited to join the League of Nations.

'Double standards'?

German complaints about the Treaty fell on deaf ears. In particular, many people felt that the Germans were themselves operating a double standard. Their call for fairer treatment did not square with the harsh way they had treated Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 (see page 118). Versailles was much less harsh a treaty than Brest-Litovsk.

There was also the fact that Germany's economic problems, although real, were partly self-inflicted. Other states had raised taxes to pay for the war. The Kaiser's government planned to pay war debts by extracting reparations from the defeated states.

The impact of the Treaty on Germany

In 1919 Ebert's government was very fragile. When he agreed to the Treaty, it tipped Germany into chaos. You can read about this in detail on pages 140–41. Ebert's right-wing opponents could not bear the Treaty and they attempted a revolution against him.

This revolution, called the Kapp Putsch, was defeated by a general strike by Berlin workers. The strike paralysed essential services like power and transport. It saved Ebert's government but it added to the chaos in Germany – and the bitterness of Germans towards the treaty.

Worse was yet to come. Germany fell behind on its reparation payments in 1922, so in 1923 French and Belgian soldiers entered the Ruhr region and simply took what was owed to them in the form of raw materials and goods. This was quite legal under the Treaty of Versailles.

The German government ordered the workers to go on strike so that they were not producing anything for the French to take. The French reacted harshly, killing over 100 workers and expelling over 100,000 protesters from the region. More importantly, the strike meant that Germany had no goods to trade, and no money to buy things with.

The government solved this problem by simply printing extra money, but this caused a new problem – hyperinflation. The money was virtually worthless so prices shot up. The price of goods could rise between joining the back of a queue in a shop and reaching the front (see page 143)! Workers needed wheelbarrows to carry home their wages – billions of worthless marks. Wages began to be paid daily instead of weekly.

The Germans naturally blamed these problems on the Treaty. But the truth is more complex. Some say the French acted too harshly (even if the Treaty gave them the right). Others say that the Germans brought the problems on themselves by failing to pay reparations.

SOURCE 17

People coming from the bank with millions of paper marks in suitcases or wheelbarrows. People paying for seats at a theatre with eggs or pats of butter . . . Money that lost half its value in 12 hours. People who had been wealthy trying to sell watches or jewellery for food or articles instead of that hated money. A woman I knew had saved year by year, to assure her son's welfare. Her capital would have bought enough furniture for a decent house. Three months later it would not pay her tram fare.

An Englishman who before the war had lent £6000 in marks; when they were repaid, they were worth about 87p in English money. The middle class was wiped out in a matter of weeks.

A German woman describes her problems in 1923; from Vernon Bartlet, *Nazi Germany Explained*.

FOCUS TASK

What was the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany?

It is New Year's Eve 1923. You are a German living in Berlin. As a civilian you survived the shortages and the starvation of the war. You are writing to a friend in America describing what your life has been like since the war ended.

In your letter, tell your friend about:

- the general strike in Berlin in 1920 (see page 141)
- the French and Belgians taking over the Ruhr in 1923
- the awful inflation of 1923.

Explain how each of these problems has been caused by the Treaty of Versailles and how each problem has affected your life. Sources 14–18 will help you. You can also find out a lot more about these events on pages 140–45.

SOURCE 18



A German cartoon of 1923. The woman represents France. The text means 'Hands off the Ruhr!'

FOCUS TASK**Could the Treaty of Versailles be justified at the time?**

- In small groups decide on one thing you would have done differently in the Treaty of Versailles if your aim was to:
 - establish a lasting peace
 - punish Germany
 - cripple Germany
 - reward the winners.
- Discuss why each of these 'improvements' was impossible at the time.
- Discuss: Do you think the Big Three should have done better or do you think they did the best they could in difficult circumstances?

Verdicts on the Treaty of Versailles

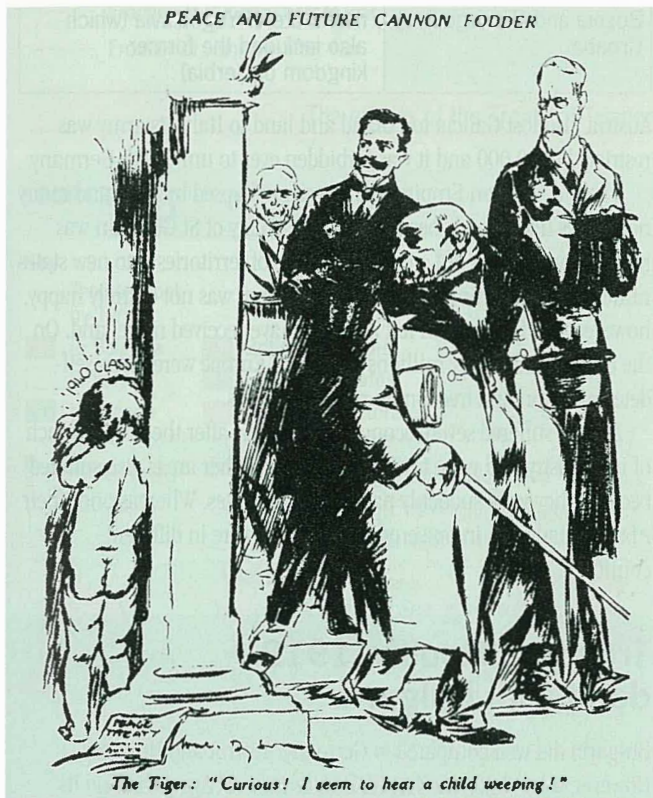
In 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was criticised not only by the Germans. As you saw on page 85, none of the Big Three who drew up the Treaty was satisfied with it.

Clemenceau's problem was that it was not harsh enough, and in 1920 he was voted out in a French general election.

Lloyd George received a hero's welcome when he returned to Britain. However, at a later date he described the treaty as 'a great pity' and indicated that he believed another war would happen because of it.

Wilson was very disappointed with the Treaty. He said that if he were a German he would not have signed it. The American Congress refused to approve the Treaty.

Sources 19–22 give you four views from Britain.

SOURCE 19

A 1920 British cartoon. The '1940 class', presented as a weeping child, represents the children born in the 1920s who might die in a future war.

SOURCE 20

The historian, with every justification, will come to the conclusion that we were very stupid men . . . We arrived determined that a Peace of justice and wisdom should be negotiated; we left the conference conscious that the treaties imposed upon our enemies were neither just nor wise.

Harold Nicolson, British diplomat, 1919. He was one of the leading British officials at the Conference.

SOURCE 21

. . . a fair judgment upon the settlement, a simple explanation of how it arose, cannot leave the authors of the new map of Europe under serious reproach. To an overwhelming extent the wishes of the various populations prevailed.

Winston Churchill, speaking in 1919. He had been a member of the government and a serving officer during the war.

SOURCE 22

Severe as the Treaty seemed to many Germans, it should be remembered that Germany might easily have fared much worse. If Clemenceau had had his way . . . the Rhineland would have become an independent state, the Saar would have been annexed [joined] to France and Danzig would have become a part of Poland . . .

British historian W Carr, *A History of Germany*, 1972.

So . . . could it be justified?

History has shown how the Treaty helped to create a cruel regime in Germany and eventually a second world war. This will always affect modern attitudes to the Treaty. It has certainly affected historians' judgements. They have tended to side with critics of the Treaty. At the time, however, the majority of people outside Germany thought it was fair. Some indeed thought it was not harsh enough. A more generous treaty would have been totally unacceptable to public opinion in Britain or France. Today historians are more likely to point out how hard a task it was to agree the peace settlement. They suggest that the Treaty was the best that could be hoped for in the circumstances.

The other peace settlements

All these allies had to disarm and pay reparations. The four treaties that dealt with this (see below) were not negotiated by the Big Three but by officers and diplomats working with the foreign ministers of the Allied powers. The treaties were made in consultation with representatives of the nationalities in eastern and central Europe (except those of the defeated countries). Because the empire of Austria-Hungary collapsed in 1918, the treaties made eastern Europe a 'patchwork' of new states.

SOURCE 23



The effects of the Treaty of St Germain.

Treaty of St Germain, 1919 – dealt with Austria

This treaty separated Austria from Hungary and confirmed that Austria was no longer a leading power. Under the treaty, Austrian territories were divided as follows:

Territory	From Austria to
Bohemia and Moravia	new state of Czechoslovakia
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia	new state of Yugoslavia (which also included the former kingdom of Serbia)

Austria also lost Galicia to Poland and land to Italy. Its army was restricted to 30,000 and it was forbidden ever to unite with Germany.

The old Austrian Empire had already collapsed by 1918 and many new states had already been set up. The Treaty of St Germain was really about sorting out a chaotic jumble of territories into new states rather than punishing Austria. One state that was not entirely happy, however, was Italy, which felt it should have received more land. On the other hand, many millions in eastern Europe were given self-determination and freedom to rule themselves.

Austria suffered severe economic problems after the war, as much of its industry had gone to Czechoslovakia. Other areas also suffered, because they were suddenly part of foreign states. Whereas once their markets had been in one empire, now they were in different countries.

SOURCE 24



The effects of the Treaty of Neuilly.

Treaty of Neuilly, 1919 – dealt with Bulgaria

Bulgaria did well compared to Germany, Austria and Hungary. However, it lost lands to Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia and its access to the Mediterranean. It, too, had to limit its armed forces to 20,000 and pay £100 million in reparations. Bulgaria had played a relatively small part in the war and was treated less harshly than its allies. Nevertheless, many Bulgarians were governed by foreign powers by 1920.

SOURCE 25



The effects of the Treaty of Trianon.

Treaty of Trianon, 1920 – dealt with Hungary

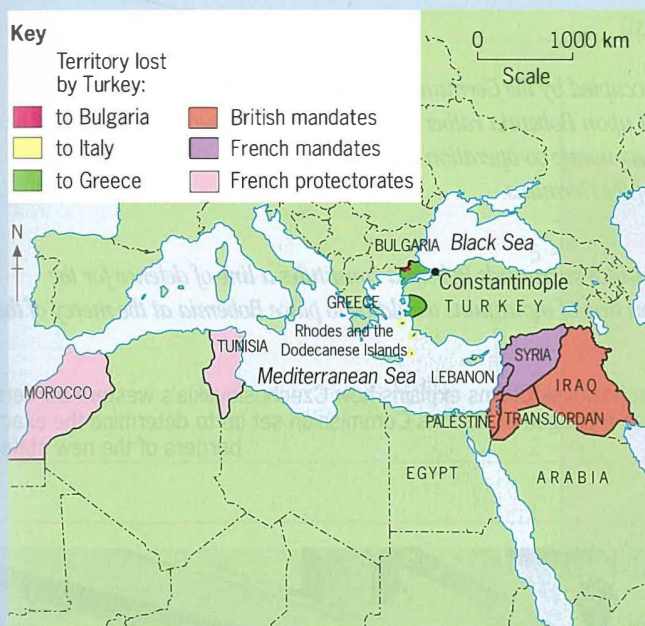
This treaty was not signed until 1920 but, like that of St Germain, its main terms involved the transfer of territories.

Territory	From Hungary to
Transylvania	Romania
Slovakia, Ruthenia	Czechoslovakia
Slovenia, Croatia	Yugoslavia

A number of other territories went to Romania.

Hungary lost a substantial amount of its territory and its population. (Three million Hungarians ended up in other states.) Its industries suffered from the loss of population and raw materials. It was due to pay reparations, but its economy was so weak it never did.

SOURCE 26



The effects of the Treaty of Sèvres.

Treaty of Sèvres, 1920 – dealt with Turkey

The last of the treaties to be arranged was the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey. Turkey was important because of its strategic position and the size of its empire. Its territorial losses are shown in the table below.

Territory	From Turkey to
Smyrna	Greece
Syria	Mandate under French control

Turkey also effectively lost control of the straits running into the Black Sea.

The Turks had formally to accept that many countries of their former empire, such as Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, were now independent or were under British or French protection. In practice, this was already true, but under the treaty Turkey had to accept and agree to this.

It was not a successful treaty. Turks were outraged by it. Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal challenged the terms of the treaty by force when they drove the Greeks out of Smyrna. The result was the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) which returned Smyrna to Turkey.

There were other criticisms of the Treaty of Sèvres. The motives of Britain and France in taking control of former Turkish lands were suspect. The Arabs who had helped the British in the war gained little. Palestine was also a controversial area and remains a troubled region to the present day.

FOCUS TASK

In this chapter you have investigated a number of different treaties. Choose two treaties and give them a score on a scale of 1 to 5 for fairness: 1 is very fair, 5 is very unfair. For each of the two treaties, write a paragraph to explain why you gave it the score you did.

SOURCE 27

Our firmest guarantee against German aggression is that behind Germany, in an excellent strategic position, stand Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Clemenceau, French Prime Minister, speaking in 1919.

FOCUS TASK A**What were the strengths and weaknesses of the new Czechoslovakia?**

Look at Sources 28–33 and make a list of strengths and weaknesses under the following headings:

- Borders
- Industry
- Population

SOURCE 29

We all know that our ancestors did not come to this land as conquerors, but as pioneers in the swamp and wilderness . . . There is no right which can be stronger than ours . . . All the culture here was made by the Germans, the prospering farms and villages, the flourishing industry are all German labour. This has been the work of 600 years.

The German minority in the Sudetenland arguing against inclusion in the new state of Czechoslovakia.

The impact of the treaties on eastern and central Europe

The treaties you have studied in this chapter had a major impact on the map of eastern and central Europe. The most important consequence of the treaties was the creation or recreation of three countries: Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia. The aim was to create states that were economically and politically stable, in an area of Europe that needed stability. In later chapters, you are going to see how successful the treaties were. For now, you are going to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the new countries that they created.

Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia was possibly the key country in the plans of the Western Allies for the future security of Europe.

- Czechoslovakia was mostly carved out of the old Austrian Empire, with the addition of land taken from Germany.
- The Allies wanted it to be economically and politically strong, so they made sure that it included industrial areas from the former empire.
- It included a wide range of nationalities.

SOURCE 28

All the members of the Commission on Czechoslovak Claims – British, French, Italian and American alike . . . agreed that the border of Bohemia should be adopted as the frontier of the new state . . .

Economic reasons

The whole of the region occupied by the Germans of Bohemia is industrially and commercially dependent upon Bohemia rather than Germany. The Sudetenland Germans cannot exist without the economic co-operation of the Czechs, nor the Czechs without the economic co-operation of the Germans.

Security reasons

The chain of mountains which surrounds Bohemia constitutes a line of defence for the country. To take away this line of mountains would be to place Bohemia at the mercy of the Germans.

The Commission on Czechoslovak Claims explains how Czechoslovakia's western borders were decided. This was a League of Nations Commission set up to determine the exact borders of the new state.

SOURCE 30

The Skoda factory. Skoda was one of the most important exporters of machinery and arms in the new Czechoslovakia.

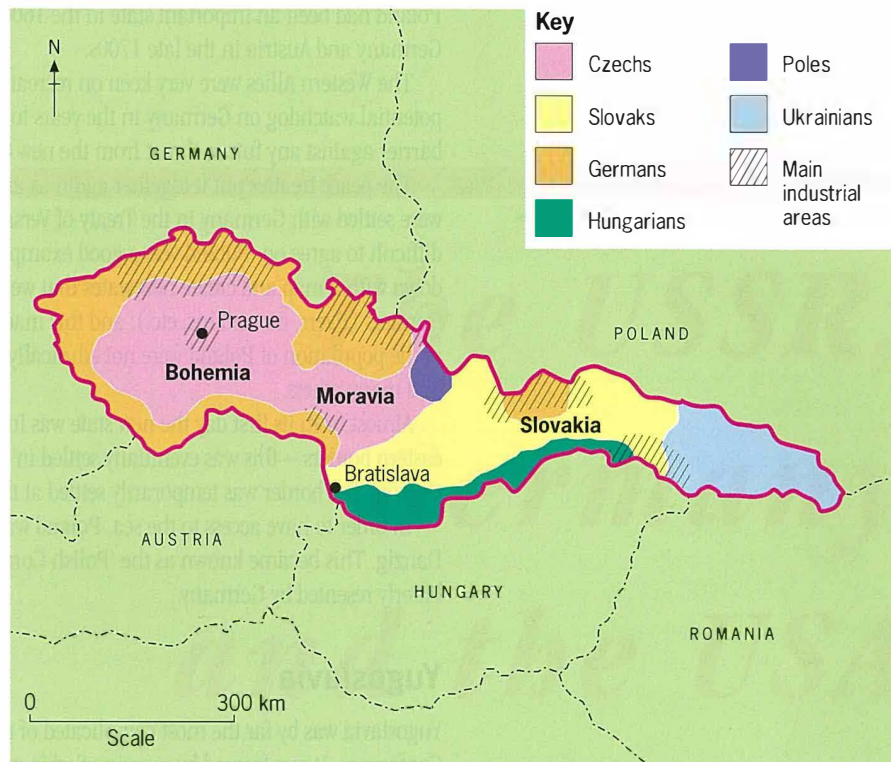
SOURCE 31

As far as is humanly possible the different races should be allocated to their motherlands . . . this should come before considerations of strategy or economics . . .

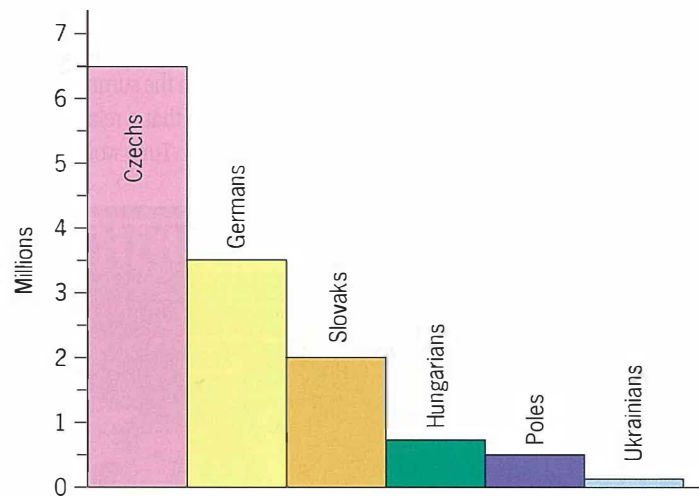
The Allied powers are creating a state inhabited by not only 6.5 million Czechs, but also some 3.5 million Germans, who will revolt from the very outset . . . also 2 million Slovaks who, in spite of their affinity with the Czech nation, have their own language and . . . have nothing in common with Bohemia and Moravia . . .

Lloyd George speaking in 1919 about plans for the formation of Czechoslovakia.

SOURCE 32



Czechoslovakia in the 1920s, showing regions, industry and nationalities.



FOCUS TASK B

Why was Czechoslovakia important?

1 Write a note to yourself in your file or notebook:

'Remember! Czechoslovakia comes back as a major issue in Hitler's foreign policy in 1938!'

2 Discuss with someone else in your class the following scenario (without cheating!). If Germany threatened Czechoslovakia in 1938:

- Would the new state be strong enough to stand up to Germany?
- What might be its major worries?
- Do you think the Western powers (for example, France and Britain) would support Czechoslovakia?

Poland

Poland had been an important state in the 1600s, but it had been swallowed up by Russia, Germany and Austria in the late 1700s.

The Western Allies were very keen on recreating the state of Poland. They wanted it to act as a potential watchdog on Germany in the years to come. They also hoped that Poland could form a barrier against any future threat from the new Communist government in Russia.

The peace treaties put it together again as an independent country. Poland's western frontiers were settled with Germany in the Treaty of Versailles. Poland's eastern frontiers were rather more difficult to agree on. Poland was a good example of the problems that arise when politicians sit down with a map and create new states that were not there before. Poland had no natural frontiers (rivers, mountains, etc.), and this made it vulnerable to attack. Also, around 30 per cent of the population of Poland were not ethnically Polish – it included Ukrainians, Jews, Germans and many others.

Almost from its first day the new state was involved in fighting with Russia over the line of its eastern borders – this was eventually settled in 1921 with the help of the British diplomat Lord Curzon. The border was temporarily settled at the Curzon Line.

In order to have access to the sea, Poland was given a strip of German land around the city of Danzig. This became known as the 'Polish Corridor' (see Source 10 on page 86) and its loss was bitterly resented by Germany.

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was by far the most complicated of the new states created at the Paris Peace Conference. It was formed by merging Serbia with a number of its neighbours, most of whom had been part of the old Austria–Hungary Empire before the war (see Source 5 on page 4).

It began life as the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but in 1929 it changed its name to Yugoslavia, which means 'land of the South Slavs'.

In a sense, Yugoslavia shows Wilson's idea of self-determination in action. It was partly the desire of the South Slav people to become independent from Austria–Hungary that had sparked off the First World War in the summer of 1914.

The Allies also hoped that a relatively large and powerful state could be a stabilising influence in the turbulent Balkans. Time would tell whether they succeeded . . .

SOURCE 34



Yugoslavia – and the different ethnic groups that it contained.